



INDIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Revised and Updated

Bipan Chandra
Mridula Mukherjee
Aditya Mukherjee

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INDIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Bipan Chandra was born in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. He was educated at Forman Christian College, Lahore, and at Stanford University, California. He was Professor of Modern History at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, where he is currently Professor Emeritus. He is also National Professor and Chairperson of the National Book Trust. Prof. Chandra is the author of several books on nationalism, colonialism, and communalism in modern India.

Mridula Mukherjee was educated at Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi and at JNU. She is Professor of Modern Indian History at the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU and Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Her areas of special interest are agrarian history, peasant movements and the national movement.

Aditya Mukherjee was educated at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and at JNU. He is Professor of Contemporary Indian History at the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU and Director, Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Advanced Study at Jawaharlal Nehru University. His research interests are in modern business history and capitalist development, and contemporary economy and politics.

India Since Independence

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To
Late Professor V.D. Mahajan

Preface to the Revised Edition

This book was conceived as a sequel to our *Struggle for India's Independence*, (1857-1947) which was very well received, selling over 100,000 copies in English and many more in translations into Hindi and several other Indian languages. We were persuaded by David Davidar of Penguin, who had published this book, to write a companion volume covering the period from Indian independence to the end of the millennium. We did manage to finish the manuscript by end of 1999 so that it could come out in beginning of the new millennium as the first edition of this book titled *India After Independence: 1947-2000*.

We were persuaded to work on a second edition of this book for a number of reasons. The response the book got from the general public and especially students of history, sociology, economics, politics and contemporary affairs was very encouraging. It appeared to fill a major gap in the literature on contemporary history with several universities and management institutes adopting this work as a recommended text. This volume too was translated into Hindi and several other Indian languages. In recent years we received repeated requests from both our readers and publishers to bring out a revised edition bringing the book up to date.

Indeed, many significant developments did take place since the book was written in 1999 and needed to be incorporated in the book. The economy in the new millennium was at the verge of a breakthrough registering unprecedented rates of growth. A paradigm change in India's relationship with the outside world was being shaped not only by the major economic strides India was taking but also by the prolonged negotiations on a changed nuclear status for India among the nuclear powers. On the other hand Indian politics saw some unprecedented dips. The gravest threat to Indian democracy since independence was witnessed during the Gujarat killings following the Godhra tragedy in 2002. The state government, police and bureaucracy connived or remained silent spectators while thousands of Muslims were murdered or hounded and made

homeless. But then other segments of India's civil society and state institutions stood up and fought. The period also saw a brazen attempt to communalize our education system at the school textbook-level with the Central government's active participation. This too was followed by nationwide protest. A change of government in 2004 put a stop to this most dangerous trend. On the whole, though the period was characterized by spectacular economic growth it also was a period when the fruits of this growth did not spread very widely (with India's ranking in the Human Development Index actually falling) and the country faced a resurgence of the communal and caste divide.

It therefore was a very agreeable push from Ravi Singh of Penguin which got us to work on revising the book. We have added three substantive chapters trying to include some of the major events from 1999-2000 till 2007. There is a new chapter on *The Indian Economy in the New Millennium* which highlights the multiple dimensions of the economic breakthrough that occurred in the period while emphasizing the critical challenges that still remain to be adequately addressed. Another new chapter called *Communalism and the Use of State Power* analyses the Gujarat events and the issue of communalization of education in the context of state power being available to the communal forces to further their agenda. The third new chapter, *Land Reforms: Colonial Impact and the Legacy of the National and Peasant Movements* precedes three substantive chapters discussing land reforms in India since independence. This chapter shows the critical link between the colonial impact on Indian agriculture and the position taken by the Indian national and peasant movements on the agrarian question for over half a century and the nature of land reforms post independence. A thoroughly revised and considerably expanded chapter titled *Run up to the New Millennium and After* analyses the main political events and the major foreign policy issues that emerged during the tumultuous years following Rajiv Gandhi's assassination which saw numerous governments representing virtually the entire mainstream political spectrum of India right up to 2007. Additions and alterations have been made to a number of other chapters such as in the chapter called *The Dawn*

of the New Millennium Achievements, Problems and Prospects, bringing them up to date.

This work of contemporary history takes a holistic view of the political economy of Indian development since independence evaluating it in the context of the nearly two hundred years of colonial rule and a prolonged and powerful anti-imperialist mass movement which gave birth to the independent Indian Republic. We are particularly happy to be able bring this work to our readers on the sixtieth anniversary of India's independence.

November 2007

Bipan Chandra
Mridula Mukherjee
Aditya Mukherjee

Acknowledgements

In the making of this book, we have benefited immensely from our long-term interaction with and support of our colleagues at the Centre for Historical Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Many friends—Mohit Sen, Kewal Varma, V.P. Dutt, Barun De, Girish Mathur, Girish Mishra, Gopi Arora, S. Gopal, Romila Thapar, Irfan Habib, V.N. Datta, Ravinder Kumar, C.P. Bhambri, Darshan and Shiela Bhalla, Amit Bhaduri, Arjun Sengupta, Shireen Moosvi, Arun Kumar, Arjun Dev, K.P. Jain, G.M. Telang, Swadesh Mahajan, Madhu Kishwar, Shekhar Singh, Shantha Sinha, Narinder Bedi Amrita Patel and Bodh Prakash—have over the years helped us grapple with the contemporary world, often through a great deal of polemics and many heated discussions and disagreements.

A large number of colleagues and students—D.N. Gupta, Mohinder Singh, Sucheta Mahajan, Visalakshi Menon, Antony Thomas, Sudhir Mathur, Neerja Singh, Salil Mishra, Rakesh Batabyal, Bikash Chandra, Vikram Menon, Gyanesh Kudaisya, John Zavos, Amit Mishra, Tulika Sharan, Dipa Sinha, Himangshu, Bhuvan Jha, Kalyani and Amman Madan—have contributed to evolving our ideas and have also been of assistance in several other ways, and have helped us keep our optimism alive.

The Japan Foundation enabled us (Aditya Mukherjee and Mridula Mukherjee) to be at the Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, for a year since March 1999. A considerable part of the drafting and research for the book was done in Japan. Professor Asis Datta, Vice Chancellor, JNU, very kindly made it possible for us to avail of this opportunity to complete our book. A large number of friends and colleagues made our visit in Japan extremely fruitful intellectually and otherwise. They include Professors Nariaki Nakazato, Haruka Yanagisawa, Tsukasa Mizushima, Shingo Einoo, Toru Matsui, Nobuko Nagasaki, Takako Hirose, Hiroko Hara, Shigeru Akita, Fumiko Oshikawa, Mr Takashi Oishi, Dr Shuji Uchikawa, Mr Shusaku Matsumoto, Professor and Mrs Hisashi Nakamura, Mrs Emiko Kothari, Dr Kyoko Inoue, Umesh and Ruby Pawankar, Dr

Malavika Karlekar, Chieko Mizushima, Dr Jaishankar and Professor B.R. Tomlinson, Mr Shin'ichiro Horie of the Japan Foundation, Tokyo, enabled us to take time off from Japan and present many aspects of this book in several universities in the US. Manuela Albuquerque, Catherine Harned, Abha and Anil Pandya, Mohan Sood, Tom Metcalfe, Vasudha Dalmia, Blair Kling, Arjun Appadurai, Bernard Cohn and Carol Breckenridge were critical in making the US visit very rewarding.

We would like to thank the staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University Library and the India International Centre Library in New Delhi and the Institute of Oriental Culture Library and Institute of Developing Economies Library in Tokyo.

Luxmi and Om Prakash shared a great deal of the burden of typing a large part of the manuscript. Colleagues at the Academic Staff College, JNU, particularly Savitri Bisht, Ajay Sharma and S.C. Sharma, went beyond the call of duty to help the authors write the book situated thousands of miles from each other, using information technology.

As usual Usha Chandra has contributed in multiple ways to the making of this book.

We are very thankful to Raj Kamini Mahadevan of Penguin India for undertaking the arduous task of editing the manuscript and thus vastly improving it and also for seeing to it that we didn't fall too far behind schedule. We are also very thankful to David Davidar for encouraging us to undertake the writing of this work and then giving us great deal of latitude in terms of time.

For the revised edition we are particularly grateful to Ravi Singh and Avanija Sundaramurti for persuading us to work on the revisions and additions and then patiently egging us on till we completed the project.

Introduction

India's independence represented for its people the start of an epoch that was imbued with a new vision. In 1947, the country commenced its long march to overcome the colonial legacy of economic underdevelopment, gross poverty, near total illiteracy, wide prevalence of disease and stark social inequality and injustice. 15 August 1947 was only the first stop, the first break—the end of colonial political control: centuries of backwardness were now to be overcome, the promises of the freedom struggle to be fulfilled, and people's hopes to be met.

The tasks of nation-building were taken up by the Indian people and their leaders with a certain elan and determination and with confidence in their capacity to succeed. Jawaharlal Nehru's famous 'Tryst with Destiny' speech on the eve of independence, on 14 August, reflected this buoyant mood.

Starting off with a broad social consensus on the basic contours of the India that was to be built—on the values of nationalism, secularism and democracy and the goals of rapid economic development and radical social change—was a great advantage. These values and goals, and the road to their achievement, had been mapped over more than seventy years by the national movement. Yet, there was a realization that this consensus had to be continuously widened and built upon. Crucial in this respect was the role played by Nehru and the ideas he developed and propounded.

The Basic Goals

The first and the most important task was to preserve, consolidate and strengthen India's unity, to push forward the process of the making of the Indian nation, and to build up and protect the national state as an instrument of development and social transformation.

Indian unity, it was realized, was not to be taken for granted. It had to be strengthened by recognizing and accepting India's immense regional, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity. Indianness was to be further developed by acknowledging and accommodating the Indians' multiple identities and by giving different parts of the country and various sections of the people adequate space in the Indian Union. The project was, moreover, rightly seen to be a long-term and continuing process with the concept of Indianness being constantly redefined.

Basic, in this respect, was also the secular vision. The nation's leaders set out to build a secular society and state, undaunted by the Partition of India and the ensuing riots.

It was also clear that India's revolution had to be taken beyond the merely political to include economic and social transformation. Independent India had to begin its upward economic climb from an abysmally low level. The technological and productivity levels of Indian agriculture and industry were to be constantly and rapidly raised. Moreover, the Indian economy, even while being an integral part of the world economy, was to be based on self-reliance, free of subordination to the metropolitan interests or domination by foreign capital. This could not be accomplished through the unhampered working of market forces and private enterprise. It would require planning and a large public sector. India, therefore, set out to achieve, especially after 1955, an integrated/national economy based on an indigenous industry, catering primarily to its domestic market. While socialism was also set out as an objective, the essence of India's effort was towards the structural transformation of her economy, leading to its becoming an independent, national economy.

The social scene also called for rapid transformation. Despite lower-caste movements in several parts of the country and Gandhiji's campaign against untouchability, the caste system still dominated rural society and untouchability was the prevailing mode—the lower castes had still not 'stood-up'. Male domination was still nearly total, and women suffered immense social oppression in the family. Polygamy prevailed among both Hindus and Muslims.

Women had no right of inheritance, nor the right of divorce, and were still by and large denied access to education. For Indians, illiteracy and ignorance were the norm in 1951; only 25 per cent of males and 7.9 per cent of females were literate.

The founders of the Indian Republic had the farsightedness and the courage to commit themselves to two major innovations of historical significance in nation-building and social engineering: first, to build a democratic and civil libertarian society among an illiterate people and, second, to undertake economic development within a democratic political structure. Hitherto, in all societies in which an economic take-off or an early industrial and agricultural breakthrough had occurred, effective democracy, especially for the working people, had been extremely limited. On the other hand, from the beginning, India was committed to a democratic and civil libertarian political order and a representative system of government based on free and fair elections to be conducted on the basis of universal adult franchise. Moreover, the state was to encroach as little as possible on rival civil sources of power such as universities, the Press, trade unions, peasant organizations and professional associations. The many social, economic and political challenges that the country was to face were to be dealt with in a democratic manner, under democratic conditions.

One of the major political tasks facing the leadership was to further develop the democratic consciousness among the people initiated during the period of the freedom struggle. The leadership completely rejected the different versions of the 'rice-bowl theory', that the poor in an underdeveloped country were more interested in a bowl of rice than in democracy, and that, in any case, democracy was useless to them if it could not guarantee them adequate food, clothing and shelter.

Further, it was realized that given India's diversity, a democratic political structure was necessary for promoting national integration. Democracy was also considered essential for bringing about social change. Jawaharlal Nehru, in particular, upheld perhaps the Utopian notion that the poor would sooner or later assert their power through

their vote and bring into being a social order responsive to their needs.

Economic development and a democratic political order were to be accompanied by rapid social transformation so that existing gross economic, caste and gender inequalities were rapidly eliminated, poverty was removed and the levels of living raised. The structure of Indian society was to be rapidly transformed in a broadly socialist direction, but not necessarily to resemble Soviet-style communism. It was also realized that these objectives required the broadest unity of the Indian people. Therefore, a large social consensus had to be evolved around the vision of the freedom struggle and the democratic forms through which the objectives would be achieved.

The national movement had aroused expectations of a rapid rise in personal and societal prosperity, of social and economic equity and equality, of the good life. Indira Gandhi's slogan of 'Garibi Hatao' in 1971 further fuelled these expectations as did the process of continuous politicization since 1950. The constantly rising aspirations and expectations had to be fulfilled as rapidly as possible, and without letting too wide a gap develop between expectations and fulfilment. In short, the Indian people and their leaders hoped to achieve in a few decades what others had achieved in a century or more. And this was to be on the basis of democracy, avoiding bloodshed and authoritarianism, and through a process of accommodating diverse social, economic and regional interests. Agrarian reforms, state planning and a strong public sector were to serve as the major instruments for the purpose.

At the same time, political stability had to be ensured for the accomplishment of all these tasks. The political system had to combine stability with growth, social transformation and deepening of the political process. The Indian revolution had to be gradual, non-violent and based on political stability, but it had to be a revolution all the same.

A Troubled Democracy

Since 1947, many Indians and foreigners, critics and admirers, have expressed doubts about India's ability to develop or continue its advance, or even sustain its societal and developmental design. From the beginning there have existed vocal prophets of doom and gloom who have been predicting that neither freedom, nor democracy, nor socialism would survive in India for long, that the Indian political system would collapse sooner or later, that the Indian Union would not survive and the nation state would disintegrate into linguistic and ethnic fragments. They have repeatedly argued that India's numerous religious, caste, linguistic and tribal diversities, besides its poverty, social misery and inequity, growing disparities of wealth, rigid and hierarchical social structure, massive unemployment and multiple socio-economic problems were bound to undermine its national unity, its democratic institutions and its developmental efforts. India would, therefore, either break up or alternatively be held together by a civilian or military authoritarian, dictatorial regime.

Ever since regional parties started emerging in the 1960s and much more during the 1980s and 1990s, many commentators have been speculating—some with enthusiasm—as to when the disintegration of India would take place. Even the success in holding together and working a secular and democratic political system over the years has not deterred the prophets of doom. At every instance of turmoil or perceived political crisis, as for example the wars with China and Pakistan, the death of the towering Nehru, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, communal, linguistic or caste violence, Naxalite uprisings, secessionist movements in Kashmir, the Northeast, Punjab and earlier in Tamil Nadu, these critics articulated and renewed their foreboding.

As early as 1960, the American scholar-journalist Selig S. Harrison predicted: 'The odds are almost wholly against the survival of freedom and . . . the issue is, in fact, whether any Indian state can survive at all.'¹ In 1967, Neville Maxwell, a *Times* correspondent, in a series of articles entitled 'India's Disintegrating Democracy' declared, 'The great experiment of developing India within a democratic framework has failed.' He predicted that the fourth general elections

which were then forthcoming would be surely the last elections to be held in India.²

Many of the Cassandras felt justified when the Emergency was imposed. Many argued that it provided a signpost to India's political future. Some went further and said that the democratic system in India was finally and permanently in eclipse, or at least that it would never be the same again. Another set of doom-wallas stressed the incapacity of India to achieve economic development. India's political institutional structure, according to them, did not coincide with the developmental goals that had been set as these required a degree of coercion if not dictatorship to be achieved.

Then there were left-wing sceptics who held that no social, economic or political development was possible without a violent revolution and that nation-building, political democracy, economic development, national unity and nationalism were mere shams meant to delude the oppressed and the exploited. They, therefore, argued for or anticipated a peasant-based revolution as in China during 1925–49 or a worker-peasant-based revolution as in Russia in 1917. According to them, poverty, inequality, class domination and social oppression would sooner or later lead the vast majority of the people on the path of revolution, putting an end not only to capitalism and feudalism but also to 'bourgeois democracy' and the 'multi-nation state'. In the early 1970s, many observers, including the writer of a note prepared by the Home Ministry, predicted that the Green Revolution would turn Red since it would benefit only rich farmers and displace small peasants from the land and create further unemployment among agricultural labourers. Some of the left-wing prophets of doom even denied the possibility of independent economic development in India and continued to maintain over the years that India was entering a phase of dependency and neo-colonialism, if it had not already done so.

It is also interesting that those who did not share this scepticism of the left or the non-left were usually portrayed by them as apologists of the Establishment. As W.H. Morris-Jones, perhaps the most perceptive of the political scientists studying India, put it as early as 1966: 'It has become customary to adopt highly sceptical views on

Indian developments . . . The position is now reached where failure to share such attitudes is taken as the mark, in an Indian, of some kind of government public relations man and, in an outsider, of a misguided sentimentalist.³

Another set of observers of the Indian scene, who were less pessimistic about the democratic political system, were puzzled by India's success in sustaining itself in the face of its failure on so many fronts—inadequacy of land reforms and the existence of large-scale landlessness in the rural areas, the slow rate of growth in industry and the national income, the failure to check the high rate of population growth, persistence of gross inequalities, caste oppression, discrimination against women, a dysfunctional education system, environmental degradation, growing pollution in the cities, human rights abuses, factionalism in politics, chaotic party situation, growing political unrest, secessionist demands and movements, administrative decline and even chaos, police inefficiency, high levels of corruption and brutality, and criminalization of politics. The perplexity of many of these 'puzzled' observers was also fuelled by the truism that democratic institutions cannot be transferred by the fiat of the framers of a constitution. But what they failed to appreciate is that democracy had already been indigenized and rooted in the Indian soil by the freedom struggle and the modern Indian intelligentsia during the previous hundred years or so.

In our view the prophets of doom were basically wrong in their prophecies, but they were quite often right on the target as critics. Many other analysts of Indian developments, who have not shared their scepticism and predictions, have pondered over the problems of democracy and development in an extremely diverse society having an underdeveloped economy and facing economic scarcity. They, too, have been worried by the fragility of India's political stability. They do not believe that there is a situation for administrative or political breakdown but many of them would argue that India is beginning to face 'a crisis of governability'. Over the years they have continuously emphasized that basic structural and institutional changes were necessary for desirable social development and the deepening and effective functioning of

democracy. Even while arguing against the supporters of authoritarianism, the feasibility or desirability of a violent revolution, and predictions of the break up of the country, they have advocated and worked for the implementation of a programme of radical reforms, more or less around the Gandhian and Nehruvian agenda and its further development.

Political Leadership

India's survival and growth as a nation and a democratic polity, as also the achievement of the national objectives set by the freedom struggle depended on the configuration and development of long-term socio-economic and political forces. But the quality, skills and approach of the political leaders would inevitably play a significant role.

An asset for India's early efforts at progress, starting in 1947, was the personal calibre of her leaders. They were dedicated, imaginative and idealistic. They enjoyed tremendous popular support among the people and had the capacity to communicate with them, to enthuse them around a national programme and national goals, to reflect their urges and aspirations, and to provide them strong leadership. The leaders had tremendous confidence and faith in the people and therefore in democratic institutions and depended for their power and legitimacy on them. During the national movement the leaders had also acquired the vast capacity to negotiate and accommodate diverse interests and approaches and to work within a consensual framework. They could take a long-term and all-India view and work through state and local leaders.

This high quality of leadership was not confined only to the Congress party. The conservative Swatantra Party was headed by C. Rajagopalachari, the dissident Congressmen by J.B. Kripalani, the Hindu communalists by Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the non-Congress dalits by B.R. Ambedkar, the Socialists by Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan, and the Communists by P.C. Joshi, Ajoy Ghosh and E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

In contrast, it can be asserted that a serious problem in the past few decades has been the paucity of political leaders with the qualities and skills of the founders of the Republic. Indira Gandhi did possess some of their qualities. But after her and even during the period that she dominated—and perhaps to some extent because of it—a gradual decline occurred in the stature of leadership, with few having wide appeal or acceptability or the larger vision. Most political leaders increasingly appealed to a region or a religion or a caste, or a conglomerate of castes. The outcome of this has been that while many Indians have looked for wider, all-India leadership to the descendants of Nehru and Indira Gandhi, others have given allegiance to leaders and parties following populist or opportunist or communal and casteist politics.

Our Approach

This work is the story of a people on the move, of a ‘gradual revolution’, of the efforts of the Indian people to realize the vision of the freedom struggle. For us writers it has also been a journey into our personal past, involving an effort at cool and dispassionate analysis though, perhaps, failing at times to avoid the passion which informs all those who are deeply involved in the effort to raise the social conditions of their people, and the biases acquired when living through the events. As readers will see, we have adopted a critical approach to our recent past and contemporary events but within a broadly optimistic framework.

The year 1947 ushered in a period of change and development. Inevitably, new problems, often engendered by the change itself, were added to the old ones, requiring fresh solutions. The questions needing to be addressed were of the nature of the problems and how, when and with what consequences they were tackled. After all, had not Gandhiji predicted on the eve of independence that ‘with the end of slavery and the dawn of freedom, all the weaknesses of society are bound to come to the surface’. He, however, also saw ‘no reason to be unnecessarily upset about it. If we keep our balance at such a time, every tangle will be solved.’⁴ Historians will have to

evaluate in the coming years, how far the aspirations aroused by the freedom struggle's legacy, in terms of national unity, democracy, secularism, independent economic development, equality, and removal of poverty, have been fulfilled in a substantive manner.

In the early years, during much of the Nehru era, there was an air of optimism and a sense of achievement. This was reflected in Nehru's letter to the chief ministers, written with self-confidence and satisfaction just after watching the Republic Day parade at Delhi in 1955: 'My heart was filled with pride and joy at this sight of our nation on the march realising its goals one by one. There was a sense of fulfilment in the air and of confidence in our future destiny.'⁵ And he repeated a few months later: 'There is the breath of the dawn, the feeling of the beginning of a new era in the long and chequered history of India. I feel so and in this matter at least I think I represent innumerable others in our country.'⁶ And what made Nehru so optimistic? To quote Nehru's biographer, S. Gopal: 'Individual freedom, social justice, popular participation, planned development, national self-reliance, a posture of self-respect in international affairs—all high and noble goals, yet all being steadily achieved under the guidance of the prime minister . . .'⁷

It is true that Nehru and the generation that witnessed the coming of independence had hoped for far more progress than the country was able to make. Still, the people and the intelligentsia remained optimistic, not only during the Nehru era but even under Indira Gandhi, at least till 1973–1974. But gradually the euphoria and the self-confidence, the enthusiasm and the pride in achievement began to disappear and give way to frustration, cynicism and a sense of despair.

Yet, as this work will bring out, while much more was needed and could have been achieved, but was not, especially in terms of the quality of life of the people (and which would justify a great deal of criticism and even despair), there was considerable gain. Our hopes and confidence in the future of the country and its people is justified by this achievement.

We believe what Verrier Elwin, the British scholar-missionary who made India his home and took up its citizenship, wrote in 1963 largely expresses our views and sentiments: 'All the same I am incurably optimistic about India. Her angry young men and disillusioned old men are full of criticism and resentment. It is true that there is some corruption and a good deal of inefficiency; there is hypocrisy, too much of it. But how much there is on the credit side! It is a thrilling experience to be part of a nation that is trying, against enormous odds, to reshape itself.'⁸

Perhaps the attitude for us to take towards our many failures is the one adopted by Gopal Krishna Gokhale towards those of the Moderate nationalists:

Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying. That is the place which it has pleased Providence to assign to us in this struggle, and our responsibility is ended when we have done the work which belongs to that place. It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes; we, of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures. For, hard though it be, out of those failures the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks.⁹

The Colonial Legacy

India's colonial past has weighed heavily on her development since 1947. In the economic sphere, as in others, British rule drastically transformed India. But the changes that took place led only to what has been aptly described by A. Gunder Frank as the 'development of underdevelopment'. These changes—in agriculture, industry, transport and communication, finance, administration, education, and so on—were in themselves often positive, as for example the development of the railways. But operating within and as part of the colonial framework, they became inseparable from the process of underdevelopment. Further, they led to the crystallization of the colonial economic structure which generated poverty and dependence on and subordination to Britain.

Basic Features

There were four basic features of the colonial structure in India. First, colonialism led to the complete but complex integration of India's economy with the world capitalist system but in a subservient position. Since the 1750s, India's economic interests were wholly subordinated to those of Britain. This is a crucial aspect, for integration with the world economy was inevitable and was a characteristic also of independent economies.

Second, to suit British industry, a peculiar structure of production and international division of labour was forced upon India. It produced and exported foodstuffs and raw materials—cotton, jute, oilseeds, minerals—and imported manufactured products of British industry from biscuits and shoes to machinery, cars and railway engines.

This feature of colonialism continued even when India developed a few labour-intensive industries such as jute and cotton textiles. This

was because of the existing peculiar pattern of international division of labour by which Britain produced high technology, high productivity and capital-intensive goods while India did the opposite. The pattern of India's foreign trade was an indication of the economy's colonial character. As late as 1935–39, food, drink, tobacco and raw materials constituted 68.5 per cent of India's exports while manufactured goods were 64.4 per cent of her imports.

Third, basic to the process of economic development is the size and utilization of the economic surplus or savings generated in the economy for investment and therefore expansion of the economy. The net savings in the Indian economy from 1914 to 1946 was only 2.75 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) (i.e., national income). The small size may be contrasted with the net savings in 1971–75 when they constituted 12 per cent of GNP. The paltry total capital formation, 6.75 per cent of GNP during 1914–46 as against 20.14 per cent of GNP during 1971–75, reflects this jump. Moreover, the share of industry in this low level of capital formation was abysmally low, machinery forming only 1.78 per cent of GNP during 1914–46. (This figure was 6.53 for 1971–75.)

Furthermore, a large part of India's social surplus or savings was appropriated by the colonial state and misspent. Another large part was appropriated by the indigenous landlords and moneylenders. It has been calculated that by the end of the colonial period, the rent and interest paid by the peasantry amounted to Rs 1,400 million per year. By 1937, the total rural debt amounted to Rs 18,000 million. According to another estimate, princes, landlords and other intermediaries appropriated nearly 20 per cent of the national income. Only a very small part of this large surplus was invested in the development of agriculture and industry. Most of it was squandered on conspicuous consumption or used for further intensifying landlordism and usury.

Then there was the 'Drain', that is, the unilateral transfer to Britain of social surplus and potential investable capital by the colonial state and its officials and foreign merchants through excess of exports over imports. India got back no equivalent economic, commercial or material returns for it in any form. It has been estimated that 5 to 10

per cent of the total national income of India was thus unilaterally exported out of the country. How could any country develop while undergoing such a drain of its financial resources and potential capital?

The fourth feature of colonialism in India was the crucial role played by the state in constructing, determining and maintaining other aspects of the colonial structure. India's policies were determined in Britain and in the interests of the British economy and the British capitalist class. An important aspect of the underdevelopment of India was the denial of state support to industry and agriculture. This was contrary to what happened in nearly all the capitalist countries, including Britain, which enjoyed active state support in the early stages of development. The colonial state imposed free trade in India and refused to give tariff protection to Indian industries as Britain, western Europe and the United States had done.

After 1918, under the pressure of the national movement, the Government of India was forced to grant some tariff protection to a few industries. But this was inadequate and ineffective. Moreover, since the 1880s, the currency policy was manipulated by the government to favour British industry and which was to the detriment of Indian industry.

As pointed out earlier, a very large part of India's social surplus was appropriated by the colonial state, but a very small part of it was spent by it on the development of agriculture or industry or on social infrastructure or nation-building activities such education, sanitation and health services.

The colonial state devoted almost its entire income to meeting the needs of British Indian administration, making payments of direct and indirect tribute to Britain and in serving the needs of British trade and industry. The bulk of public revenue was absorbed by military expenditure and civil administration which was geared to maintenance of law and order and tax collection. After 1890, military expenditure absorbed nearly 50 per cent of the central government's income. In 1947–48, this figure stood at nearly 47 per cent.

Besides, the Indian tax structure was highly inequitable. While the peasants were burdened with paying a heavy land revenue for most of the colonial period and the poor with the salt tax etc., the upper-income groups—highly paid bureaucrats, landlords, merchants and traders—paid hardly any taxes. The level of direct taxes was quite low. The number of income-tax payers was 360,000 in 1946–47. It was under the pressure from the national and peasant movements that the land revenue and salt tax started coming down in the twentieth century. As late as 1900–01 land revenue and salt tax formed 53 per cent and 16 per cent of the total tax revenue of the government.

Economic Backwardness

Colonialism became a fetter on India's agricultural and industrial development. Agriculture stagnated in most parts of the country and even deteriorated over the years, resulting in extremely low yields per acre, and sometimes even reaching zero. There was a decline in per capita agricultural production which fell by 14 per cent between 1901 and 1941. The fall in per capita foodgrains was even greater, being over 24 per cent.

Over the years, an agrarian structure evolved which was dominated by landlords, moneylenders, merchants and the colonial state. Subinfeudation, tenancy and sharecropping increasingly dominated both the zamindari and ryotwari areas. By the 1940s, the landlords controlled over 70 per cent of the land and along with the moneylenders and the colonial state appropriated more than half of the total agricultural production.

The colonial state's interest in agriculture was primarily confined to collecting land revenue and it spent very little on improving agriculture. Similarly, landlords and moneylenders found rack-renting of tenants and sharecroppers and usury far more profitable and safe than making productive investment in the land they owned or controlled. All this was hardly conducive to agricultural development.

In many areas, a class of rich peasants developed as a result of commercialization and tenancy legislation, but most of them too preferred to buy land and become landlords or to turn to moneylending. As a result capitalist farming was slow to develop except in a few pockets. On the other hand, impoverished cultivators, most of them small peasants, tenants-at-will and sharecroppers, had no resources or incentive to invest in the improvement of agriculture by using better cattle and seeds, more manure and fertilizers and improved techniques of production. For most of the colonial period, landlessness had been rising, so that the number of landless agricultural labourers grew from 13 per cent of the agricultural population in 1871 to 28 per cent in 1951. The increase in tenant farming and sharecropping and overcrowding of agriculture was followed by an extreme subdivision of land into small holdings and fragmentation. Further, these holdings were scattered into non-contiguous parcels which led to cultivation becoming uneconomic and incapable of maintaining the cultivator even at a subsistence level.

Of course, the linkage with the world market and development of roads and railways did lead to a large part of rural produce entering the urban and world markets and to the production of commercial crops. However, commercialization of agriculture did not lead to capitalist farming or improved technology. Its chief result was that better soil, available water and other resources were diverted from food crops to commercial crops.

At a time when agriculture in the developed countries was being modernized and revolutionized, there was a near absence of change in the technological and production base of Indian agriculture. Indian peasants continued to use the primitive implements they had used for centuries. For example, in 1951, there were only 930,000 iron ploughs in use while wooden ploughs numbered 31.3 million. The use of inorganic fertilizers was virtually unknown, while a large part of animal manure—cow dung, night soil and cattle bones—was wasted. In 1938–39, only 11 per cent of all cropped land was under improved seeds, their use being largely confined to non-food cash crops.

Agricultural education was completely neglected. In 1946, there were only nine agricultural colleges with 3,110 students. There was hardly any investment in terracing, flood-control, drainage, or desalination of soil. Irrigation was the only field in which some progress was made so that by the 1940s nearly 27 per cent of the total cultivated area was irrigated. But, then, India had always been quite advanced in irrigation cultivation.

Another central aspect of India's economic backwardness was the state of its industry. During the nineteenth century, there was a quick collapse of Indian handicraft and artisanal industries largely because of the competition from the cheaper imported manufactures from Britain together with the policy of free trade imposed on India. The ruined artisans failed to find alternative employment. The only choice open to them was to crowd into agriculture as tenants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers.

Modern industries did develop in India from the second half of the nineteenth century. But, both in terms of production and employment, the level of industrial development was stunted and paltry compared with that of the developed countries. It did not compensate even for the handicraft industries it displaced. Industrial development was mainly confined to cotton, jute and tea in the nineteenth century and to sugar, cement and paper in the 1930s. There had been some development of the iron and steel industry after 1907, but as late as 1946, cotton and jute textiles accounted for nearly 30 per cent of all workers employed in factories and more than 55 per cent of the total value added by manufacturing. The share of modern industries in national income at the end of British rule was only 7.5 per cent. India also lagged in the development of electric power. Similarly, modern banking and insurance were grossly underdeveloped.

An important index of India's industrial backwardness and economic dependence on the metropolis was the virtual absence of capital goods and machine industries. In 1950, India met about 90 per cent of its needs of machine tools through imports. The underdeveloped character of this modern part of the economy can be seen by comparing certain economic statistics for 1950 and 1984

(the figures for 1984 are given within brackets). In 1950 India produced 1.04 million tons of steel (6.9 million tons), 32.8 million tons of coal (155.2 million tons), 2.7 million tons of cement (29.9 million tons), Rs. 3 million worth of machine tools and portable tools (Rs. 3.28 million), 7 locomotives (200), 99,000 bicycles (5,944,000), 14 million electrical lamps (317.8 million), 33,000 sewing machines (338,000), and generated 14 kWh electricity per capita (160 kWh). In 1950, the number of bank offices and branches was 5,072; in 1983 the figure had risen to 33,055. In 1950, out of a population of 357 million only 2.3 million were employed in modern industries.

Another index of economic backwardness was the high rural–urban ratio of India’s population because of growing dependence on agriculture. In 1951, nearly 82.3 per cent of the population was rural. While in 1901, 63.7 per cent of Indians had depended on agriculture, by 1941 this figure had gone up to 70. On the other hand the number of persons engaged in processing and manufacturing fell from 10.3 million in 1901 to 8.8 million in 1951 even though the population increased by nearly 40 per cent.

Till the late 1930s, foreign capital dominated the industrial and financial fields and controlled foreign trade as also part of the internal trade that fed into exports. British firms dominated coal mining, the jute industry, shipping, banking and insurance, and tea and coffee plantations. Moreover, through their managing agencies, the British capitalists controlled many of the Indian-owned companies. It may be added that many of the negative effects of foreign capital arose out of state power being under alien control.

Lopsided industrial development was yet another striking feature. Industries were concentrated only in a few regions and cities of the country. This not only led to wide regional disparities in income but also affected the level of regional integration.

But there were some major changes that occurred in the Indian economy, especially during the 1930s and 1940s that did impart a certain strength to it and provided a base for post-independence economic development.

One positive feature was the growth of the means of transport and communication. In the 1940s, India had 65,000 miles of paved roads and nearly 42,000 miles of railway track. Roads and railways unified the country and made rapid transit of goods and persons possible. However, in the absence of a simultaneous industrial revolution, only a commercial revolution was produced which further colonialized the Indian economy. Also, railway lines were laid primarily with a view to link India's inland raw material-producing areas with the ports of export and to promote the spread of imported manufactures from the ports to the interior. The needs of Indian industries with regard to their markets and sources of raw materials were neglected as no steps were taken to encourage traffic between inland centres. The railway freight rates were also so fixed as to favour imports and exports and to discriminate against internal movement of goods. Moreover, unlike in Britain and the United States, railways did not initiate steel and machine industries in India. Instead, it was the British steel and machine industries which were the beneficiaries of railway development in India. The Government of India also established an efficient and modern postal and telegraph system, though the telephone system remained underdeveloped.

Another important feature was the development of the small but Indian-owned industrial base. It consisted of several consumer industries such as cotton and jute textiles, sugar, soap, paper and matches. Some intermediate capital goods industries such as iron and steel, cement, basic chemicals, metallurgy and engineering had also begun to come up, but on a paltry scale. By 1947, India already possessed a core of scientific and technical manpower, even though facilities for technical education were grossly inadequate, there being only seven engineering colleges with 2,217 students in the country in 1939. Also, most of the managerial and technical personnel in industry were non-Indian.

There was also, after 1914, the rise of a strong indigenous capitalist class with an independent economic and financial base. The Indian capitalists were, in the main, independent of foreign capital. Unlike in many other colonial countries, they were not intermediaries or middlemen between foreign capital and the Indian

market, or junior partners in foreign-controlled enterprises. They were also perhaps more enterprising than the foreign capitalists in India, with the result that investment under Indian capital grew considerably faster than British and other foreign investment. By the end of the Second World War, Indian capital controlled 60 per cent of the large industrial units. The small-scale industrial sector, which generated more national income than the large-scale sector, was almost wholly based on Indian capital.

By 1947, Indian capital had also made a great deal of headway in banking and life insurance. Indian joint-stock banks held 64 per cent of all bank deposits, and Indian-owned life insurance companies controlled nearly 75 per cent of life insurance business in the country. The bulk of internal trade and part of foreign trade was also in Indian hands.

These positive features of the Indian economy have, however, to be seen in a wider historical context. First, the development of Indian industry and capitalism was still relatively stunted and severely limited. Then, occurring within the framework of a colonial economy, this industrialization took place without India undergoing an industrial revolution as Britain did. The economy did not take off. Whatever development occurred was not because of, but in spite of colonialism and often in opposition to colonial policies. It was the result of intense economic and political struggle against colonialism in the context of Britain's declining position in the world economy and the two world wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Lastly, fuller, unfettered or autonomous economic development or take-off could not have taken place without break with and destructuring of colonialism.

The end result of colonial underdevelopment was the pauperization of the people, especially the peasantry and the artisans. Extreme and visible poverty, disease and hunger and starvation were the lot of the ordinary people. This found culmination in a series of major famines which ravaged all parts of India in the second half of the nineteenth century; there were regular scarcities and minor famines in one or the other part of the country throughout

British rule. The last of the major famines in 1943 carried away nearly 3 million people in Bengal.

There were many other indications of India's economic backwardness and impoverishment. Throughout the twentieth century, per capita income had stagnated if not declined. During 1941–50, the annual death rate was 25 per 1,000 persons while the infant mortality rate was between 175 and 190 per 1,000 live births. An average Indian born between 1940 and 1951 could expect to live for barely thirty-two years. Epidemics of smallpox, plague and cholera and diseases like dysentery, diarrhoea, malaria and other fevers carried away millions every year. Malaria alone affected one-fourth of the population.

Health services were dismal. In 1943, there were only 10 medical colleges turning out 700 graduates every year and 27 medical schools turning out nearly 7,000 licentiates. In 1951, there were only about 18,000 graduate doctors, most of them to be found in cities. The number of hospitals was 1,915 with 116,731 beds and of dispensaries 6,589, with 7,072 beds. The vast majority of towns had no modern sanitation and large parts of even those cities which did, were kept out of the system, modern sanitation being confined to areas where the Europeans and rich Indians lived. A modern water supply system was unknown in villages and absent in a large number of towns. The vast majority of towns were without electricity, and electricity in the rural areas was unthinkable.

Already by the end of the nineteenth century it was fully recognized that education was a crucial input in economic development, but the vast majority of Indians had almost no access to any kind of education and, in 1951, nearly 84 per cent were illiterate, the rate of illiteracy being 92 per cent among women. There were only 13,590 middle schools and 7,288 high schools. These figures do not adequately reflect the state of the vast majority of Indians, for they ignore the prevalence of the extreme inequality of income, resources and opportunities. A vast human potential was thereby left untapped in societal development for very few from the poorer sections of society were able to rise to its middle and upper levels.

It is also to be noted that a high rate of population growth was not responsible for the poverty and impoverishment, for it had been only about 0.6 per cent per year between 1871 and 1941.

Thus, a stagnating per capita income, abysmal standards of living, stunted industrial development and low-productivity and semi-feudal agriculture marked the economic legacy of colonialism as it neared the end.

The Colonial State

The British evolved a general educational system, based on English as the common language of higher education, for the entire country. This system in time produced an India-wide intelligentsia which tended to have a similar approach to society and common ways of looking at it and which was, at its best, capable of developing a critique of colonialism—and this it did during the second half of the nineteenth century and after. But English-based education had two extremely negative consequences. One, it created a wide gulf between the educated and the masses. Though this gulf was bridged to some extent by the national movement which drew its leaders as well as its cadres from the intelligentsia, it still persisted to haunt independent India. Second, the emphasis on English prevented the fuller development of Indian languages as also the spread of education to the masses.

The colonial educational system, otherwise, also suffered from many weaknesses which still pervade India's schools and colleges. It encouraged learning by rote, memorization of texts, and proof by authority. The rational, logical, analytical and critical faculties of the students remained underdeveloped; in most cases the students could reproduce others' opinions but had difficulty in formulating their own. A major weakness of the colonial educational system was the neglect of mass education as also of scientific and technical education. There was also the almost total lack of concern for the education of girls, so that in 1951 only eight out of 100 women in India were literate.

The character of the colonial state was quite paradoxical. While it was basically authoritarian and autocratic, it also featured certain liberal elements, like the rule of law and a relatively independent judiciary. Administration was normally carried out in obedience to laws interpreted by the courts. This acted as a partial check on the autocratic and arbitrary administration and to a certain extent protected the rights and liberties of a citizen against the arbitrary actions of the bureaucracy. The laws were, however, often repressive. Not being framed by Indians, or through a democratic process, they left a great deal of arbitrary power in the hands of civil servants and the police. There was also no separation of powers between administrative and judicial functions. The same civil servant administered a district as collector and dispensed justice as a district magistrate.

The colonial legal system was based on the concept of equality of all before the law irrespective of a person's caste, religion, class or status, but here too it fell short of its promise. The court acted in a biased manner whenever effort was made to bring an European to justice. Besides, as court procedures were quite costly, the rich had better access to legal means than the poor.

Colonial rulers also extended a certain amount of civil liberties in the form of the freedoms of the Press, speech and association in normal times, but curtailed them drastically in periods of mass struggle. But, after 1897, these freedoms were increasingly tampered with and attacked even in normal times.

Another paradox of the colonial state was that after 1858 it regularly offered constitutional and economic concessions while throughout retaining the reins of state power. At first, British statesmen and administrators strongly and consistently resisted the idea of establishing a representative regime in India, arguing that democracy was not suited to India. They said only a system of 'benevolent despotism' was advisable because of India's culture and historical heritage. But under Indian pressure, elections and legislatures were introduced both at the Centre and in the provinces. Nevertheless, the franchise, or the right to vote, was extremely narrow. Only about 3 per cent Indians could vote after 1919, and

about 15 per cent after 1935. The government thus hoped to coopt and thereby weaken the national movement and use the constitutional structure to maintain its political domination. The legislatures, however, did not enjoy much power till 1935 and even then supreme power resided with the British. The government could take any action without the approval of the legislatures and, in fact, could do what it liked, when it liked. But legislators did have the possibility to expose the basic authoritarian character of the government and the hollowness of colonial constitutional reforms.

The legislatures did, however, provide some Indians with the experience of participating in elections at various levels and working in elected organs. This experience was useful after 1947 when Indians acquired representative institutions. Meanwhile, the nationalists used the constitutional space in conjunction with mass struggles and intense political, ideological campaigns to overthrow colonial rule.

The colonial legacy with regard to the unity of India was marked by a strange paradox. The colonial state brought about a greater political and administrative unification of India than ever achieved before. Building on the Mughal administrative system, it established a uniform system which penetrated the country's remotest areas and created a single administrative entity. The British also evolved a common educational structure which in time produced an India-wide intelligentsia which shared a common outlook on society and polity, and thought in national terms. Combined with the formation of a unified economy and the development of modern means of communication, colonialism helped lay the basis for the making of the Indian nation.

But having unified India, the British set into motion contrary forces. Fearing the unity of the Indian people to which their own rule had contributed, they followed the classic imperial policy of divide and rule. The diverse and divisive features of Indian society and polity were heightened to promote cleavages among the people and to turn province against province, caste against caste, class against class, Hindus against Muslims, and princes and landlords against

the national movement. They succeeded in their endeavours to a varying extent, which culminated in India's Partition.

The British ruled India through a modern bureaucracy headed by the highly paid Indian Civil Service (ICS) whose members were recruited through merit based on open competition. The bureaucracy was rule-bound, efficient and, at the top, honest. Following Indian pressure the different services were gradually Indianized after 1918 —by 1947, nearly 48 per cent of the members of the ICS were Indian —but positions of control and authority were up to the end retained by the British. Indians in these services too functioned as agents of British rule.

Though their senior echelons developed certain traditions of independence, integrity, hard work, and subordination to higher political direction they also came to form a rigid and exclusive caste, often having a conservative and narrow social, economic and political outlook. When massive social change and economic development was sought after 1947, the rigidity and the outlook of the bureaucracy became a major obstacle.

While the ICS was more or less free of corruption, corruption flourished at the lower levels of administration, especially in departments where there was scope for it, such as public works and irrigation, the Royal Army Supply Corps, and the police. During the Second World War, because of government regulation and controls, corruption and black marketing spread on a much wider scale in the administration as also did tax evasion, once rates of income tax and excise were revised to very high levels. There was also the rise of the parallel black economy.

The British left behind a strong but costly armed forces which had acted as an important pillar of the British regime in India. The British had made every effort to keep the armed forces apart from the life and thinking of the rest of the population, especially the national movement. Nationalist newspapers, journals and other publications were prevented from reaching the soldiers' and officers' messes. The other side of the medal, of course, was the tradition of the army being 'apolitical' and therefore also being subordinated, as was the

civil service, to the political authorities. This would be a blessing in the long run to independent India, in contrast to the newly created Pakistan.

Referring reproachfully to the legacy bequeathed by colonialism, Rabindranath Tagore wrote just three months before his death in 1941:

The wheels of fate will some day compel the English to give up their Indian Empire. But what kind of India will they leave behind, what stark misery? When the stream of their centuries' administration runs dry at last, what a waste of mud and filth will they leave behind them.

The National Movement and its Legacy

An appreciation of the hundred-year-old freedom struggle is integral to an analysis of developments in post-1947 India. While India inherited its economic and administrative structures from the precolonial and colonial period, the values and ideals—the vision—and the well-defined and comprehensive ideology that were to inspire it in nation-building were derived from the national movement. Representing the Indian people, it incorporated various political trends from the right and the left which were committed to its ideological goals; it excluded only communalists and those loyal to the colonial rulers.

These goals and values were, moreover, not confined to the intellectuals and the middle classes. During the era of mass politics, tens of thousands of the most humble cadres disseminated them among the common people in urban as well as rural areas. Consequently, these ideals were to play a critical role in integrating and keeping together Indian society and polity. They served to link the national liberation movement with the efforts to develop India, in what Jawaharlal Nehru characterized as ‘a continuing revolution’. It is, in fact, these ideals by which people and parties are still evaluated and judged.

Character of the National Movement

The Indian freedom struggle was perhaps the greatest mass movement in world history. After 1919, it was built around the basic notion that the people had to and could play an active role in politics and in their own liberation, and it succeeded in politicizing, and drawing into political action a large part of the Indian people. Gandhiji, the leader who moved and mobilized millions into politics, all his life propagated the view that the people and not leaders created a mass movement, whether for the overthrow of the colonial

regime or for social transformation. He added, though, that the success or failure of a movement depended a great deal on the quality of its leadership.

Satyagraha, as a form of struggle, was based on the active participation of the people and on the sympathy and support of the non-participating millions. In fact, unlike a violent revolution, which could be waged by a minority of committed cadres and fighters, a non-violent revolution needed the political mobilization of millions and the passive support of the vast majority.

It may be pointed out, parenthetically, that it was because of the long experience of this kind of political participation by common people that the founders of the Indian republic, who also led the freedom struggle in its last phase, could repose full faith in their political capacity. The leaders unhesitatingly introduced adult franchise despite widespread poverty and illiteracy.

The Indian national movement was fully committed to a polity based on representative democracy and the full range of civil liberties for the individual. It provided the experience through which these two could become an integral part of Indian political thinking.

From the very beginning the movement popularized democratic ideas and institutions among the people and struggled for the introduction of parliamentary institutions on the basis of popular elections. Starting from the turn of the twentieth century, the nationalists demanded the introduction of adult franchise. Much attention was also paid to the defence of the freedom of the Press and speech against attacks by the colonial authorities besides the promotion of other political and economic policies. Throughout, the movement struggled to expand the semi-democratic political arena and prevent the rulers from limiting the existing space within which legal political activities and peaceful political agitations and mass struggle could be organized.

Congress ministries, formed in 1937, visibly extended civil liberties to the resurgent peasants', workers' and students' movements as

also to radical groups and parties such as the Congress Socialist party and Communist Party.

From its foundation in 1885, the Indian National Congress, the main political organ of the national movement, was organized on democratic lines. It relied upon discussion at all levels as the chief mode for the formation of its policies and arriving at political decisions. Its policies and resolutions were publicly discussed and debated and then voted upon. Some of the most important decisions in its history were taken after rich and heated debates and on the basis of open voting. For example, the decision in 1920 to start the Non-Cooperation Movement was taken with 1,336 voting for and 884 voting against Gandhiji's resolution. Similarly, at the Lahore Congress in 1929, where Gandhiji was asked to take charge of the coming Civil Disobedience movement, a resolution sponsored by him condemning the bomb attack on the Viceroy's train by the revolutionary nationalists was passed by a narrow majority of 942 to 794. During the Second World War, Gandhiji's stand on cooperation with the war effort was rejected by Congress in January 1942.

Congress did not insist on uniformity of viewpoints or policy approach within its ranks. It allowed dissent and not only tolerated but encouraged different and minority opinions to be openly held and freely expressed. In fact, dissent became a part of its style. At independence, Congress, thus, had the experience of democratic functioning and struggle for civil liberties for over sixty years. Furthermore, the democratic style of functioning was not peculiar to Congress. Most other political organizations such as the Congress Socialist Party, trade unions and Kisan Sabhas, students', writers' and women's organizations, and professional associations functioned in the manner of political democracies.

The major leaders of the movement were committed wholeheartedly to civil liberties. It is worth quoting them. For example, Lokamanya Tilak proclaimed that 'liberty of the Press and liberty of speech give birth to a nation and nourish it'.¹ Gandhiji wrote in 1922: 'We must first make good the right of free speech and free association . . . We must defend these elementary rights with our lives.' And again in 1939: 'Civil liberty consistent with the observance

of non-violence is the first step towards *Swaraj*. It is the breath of political and social life. It is the foundation of freedom. There is no room there for dilution or compromise. It is the water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted.’² It thus becomes clear that Gandhiji was fully committed to liberal, democratic values—only he also saw their deficiencies and believed that the existing liberal democratic structure, as prevailing in the West, was not adequate in enabling the people to control the wielders of political power. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in 1936: ‘If civil liberties are suppressed a nation loses all vitality and becomes impotent for anything substantial.’³ Further, the resolution on Fundamental Rights, passed by the Karachi Congress in 1931, guaranteed the rights of free expression of opinion through speech or the Press, and freedom of association.

The consensus on the practice of non-violence during the national movement also contributed to the creation of a temper of democracy in the country. Discussion, debate and persuasion, backed by public opinion, was emphasized for bringing about political and social change as opposed to glorification of violence which lies at the heart of authoritarianism.

The defence of civil liberties was also not narrowly conceived in terms of a single group or viewpoint. Political trends and groups otherwise critical of each other and often at opposite ends of the political or ideological spectrum vigorously defended each other’s civil rights. The Early Nationalists (then called Moderates)—Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Surendranath Banerjea and others—defended the Radical Nationalist (then called Extremist) leader Tilak’s right to speak and write what he liked. And Congressmen, votaries of non-violence, defended Bhagat Singh and other revolutionary nationalists being tried in the Lahore and other conspiracy cases as also the Communists being tried in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. In 1928, the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, aimed at suppressing trade unions, the left wing and the Communists, were opposed in the Central Legislative Assembly not only by Motilal Nehru but also by Conservatives such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and M.R. Jayakar,

besides political spokespersons of Indian capitalists such as Ghanshyam Das Birla and Purshottamdas Thakurdas.

The basic notions of popular sovereignty, representative government and civil liberties to be exercised even against the rulers were not part of India's tradition nor were they, as some wrongly hold, 'the lasting contribution of colonialism'. It was the national movement and not the bureaucratic, authoritarian colonial state that indigenized, popularized and rooted them in India. As pointed out earlier, the colonial administration and ideologies not only tampered with civil liberties and resisted the nationalist demand for the introduction of a parliamentary system based on popular elections but, from the middle of the nineteenth century, promoted the view that for geographical, historical and socio-cultural reasons India was unfit for democracy. It was in opposition to this colonial ideology and practice that the national movement, influenced deeply by democratic thought and traditions of the Enlightenment, succeeded in making democracy and civil liberty basic elements of the Indian political ethos. If free India could start and persist with a democratic polity, it was because the national movement had already firmly established the civil libertarian and democratic tradition among the Indian people. It was this tradition which was reflected in the Indian constitution and which proved wrong the Cassandras who had repeatedly predicted that democracy and civil liberties would not survive in a society so divided by language, religion, caste and culture and in the absence of a minimum of prosperity or economic development and literacy as was the case in western Europe and the United States. It is this tradition which explains why multi-party democracy and civil liberties have met different fates in India and Pakistan, though both equally constituted colonial India. The political party that brought about Pakistan was not known for its defence of civil liberties, or its functioning on democratic lines, or its tolerance towards its political opponents. Democracy was not a significant part of its political culture. Besides, the national movement and its political culture were weak precisely in the areas which came to constitute Pakistan.

To conclude, over the years, the nationalist movement successfully created an alternative to colonial and precolonial political culture based on authoritarianism, bureaucratism, obedience and paternalism. Its ideology and culture of democracy and civil liberties were based on respect for dissent, freedom of expression, the majority principle, and the right of minority opinion to exist and develop.

Economic Underpinnings of the National Movement

The Indian national movement developed a complex and sophisticated critique of the basic features of India's colonial economy, especially of its subordination to the needs of the British economy. On the basis of this critique, the movement evolved a broad economic strategy to overcome India's economic backwardness and underdevelopment. This was to form the basis of India's economic thinking after independence.

The vision of a self-reliant independent economy was developed and popularized. Self-reliance was defined not as autarchy but as avoidance of a subordinate position in the world economy. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it in 1946, self-reliance 'does not exclude international trade, which should be encouraged, but with a view to avoid economic imperialism'.⁴ At the same time, the nationalists accepted from the beginning and with near unanimity the objective of economic development towards modern agriculture and industry on the basis of modern science and technology—India, they held, had to industrialize or go under. They also emphasized the close link between industry and agriculture. Industrial development was seen as essential for rural development, for it alone could reduce population pressure on land and rural unemployment. Within industrialization, the emphasis was on the creation of an indigenous heavy capital goods or machine-making sector whose absence was seen as a cause both of economic dependence and underdevelopment. Simultaneously, for essential consumer goods, the nationalists advocated reliance on medium, small-scale and cottage industries. Small-scale and cottage industries were to be

encouraged and protected as a part of the development strategy of increasing employment.

Indian nationalists were opposed to the unrestricted entry of foreign capital because it replaced and suppressed Indian capital, especially under conditions of foreign political domination. According to them, real and self-reliant development could occur only through indigenous capital. On the other hand, the nationalists averred that if India was politically independent and free to evolve its own economic policies, it might use foreign capital to supplement indigenous efforts, because of India's vast capital requirements and need to import machinery and advanced technology from other countries.

During the 1930s and 1940s a basic restructuring of agrarian relations also became one of the objectives of the national movement. All intermediary rent receivers such as the zamindars and other landlords were to be abolished and agriculture based on peasant proprietors.

An active and central role was envisaged for the state in economic development by the nationalists. Rapid industrialization, in particular, needed a comprehensive policy of direct and systematic state intervention. Economic planning by the government and the massive development of the public sector were widely accepted in the 1930s. The state was to develop large-scale and key industries apart from infrastructure, such as power, irrigation, roads and water supply, where large resources were needed, and which were beyond the capacity of Indian capital. As early as 1931, the Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme, adopted at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress, declared that in independent India 'the State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport'.⁵ Interestingly, the session was presided over by Sardar Patel, the Resolution drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru and moved in the open session by Gandhiji. To promote planning as an instrument of integrated and comprehensive development Congress sponsored in 1938 the National Planning Committee while the Indian capitalists formulated the Bombay Plan in 1943.

Gandhiji was the only major nationalist leader who disagreed with the emphasis on modern industry. But, in time, even he met the dominant view halfway. In the 1930s, he repeatedly asserted that he was not opposed to all machine industries but only to those which displaced human labour. He added that he would 'prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all'. But this was subject to one condition: all large-scale industries should be owned and controlled by the state and not by private capitalists. Nevertheless, Gandhiji did not insist that the national movement should accept his economic approach or agenda, as he did in the case of non-violence, Hindu–Muslim unity and opposition to untouchability. He also did not counterpose his views to those of the other nationalists as witnessed by his moving the resolution at the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 which favoured development of large-scale industry under state ownership or control. It is also significant that in 1942 he made Jawaharlal Nehru his heir despite the latter's total commitment to the development of industry and agriculture on the basis of modern science and technology. At the same time, the nationalist movement accepted the Gandhian perspective on cottage and small-scale industries. This perspective was to find full reflection in the Nehruvian Second Five Year Plan.

The Indian national movement was quite radical by contemporary standards. From the beginning it had a pro-poor orientation. For example, the poverty of the masses and the role of colonialism as its source was the starting point of Dadabhai Naoroji's economic critique of colonialism. With Gandhiji and the rise of a socialist current this orientation was further strengthened. The removal of poverty became the most important objective next to the overthrow of colonialism.

From the late 1920s, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress socialists, the Communists, the Revolutionary Nationalists and various other socialist groups strove to give the national movement a socialist orientation and to popularize the vision of a socialist India after independence. Socialist ideas assumed prominence within the movement, attracting the younger nationalist

cadre and large sections of the nationalist intelligentsia, but they did not become the dominant current. Jawaharlal Nehru, the major ideologue of socialism in pre-1947 India, readily conceded that Congress had not in any way accepted socialism as its ideal. Rather the goal it sought was the creation of an egalitarian society in which all citizens would have equal opportunities and 'a civilised standard of life . . . so as to make the attainment of this equal opportunity a reality'.⁶

Nevertheless, even while the question of the basic economic structure of free India remained open and undecided, the Socialists did succeed in giving the national movement a leftist tilt. It was committed to carrying out basic changes in society, economy and polity. It went on defining itself in more and more radical terms, based on equity and social justice and greater social and economic equality. It accepted and propagated a programme of reforms that was quite radical by contemporary standards: compulsory and free primary education, lowering of taxes on the poor and lower middle classes, reduction of the salt tax, land revenue and rent, debt relief and provision of cheap credit to agriculturists, protection of tenants' rights and ultimately the abolition of landlordism and 'land to the tiller', workers' right to a living wage and a shorter working day, workers' and peasants' rights to organize themselves, and reform of the machinery of law and order. A dramatic moment in the evolution of this radical orientation of the national movement was the Karachi Resolution of the 1931 Congress session which declared that 'in order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions'.⁷

And to crown this growing radicalism was that of Gandhiji who declared in 1942 that 'the land belongs to those who work on it and to no one else'.⁸

An aspect of its commitment to the creation of an egalitarian society was the national movement's opposition to all forms of inequality, discrimination and oppression based on gender and caste. It allied itself with and often subsumed movements and organizations for the social liberation of women and the lower

castes. The national movement brought millions of women out of the home into the political arena. Its reform agenda included the improvement of their social position including the right to work and education and to equal political rights. As part of its struggle against caste inequality and caste oppression, abolition of untouchability became one of its major political priorities after 1920. The movement, however, failed to form and propagate a strong anti-caste ideology, though Gandhiji did advocate the total abolition of the caste system itself in the 1940s. It was because of the atmosphere and sentiments generated by the national movement that no voices of protest were raised in the Constituent Assembly when reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were mooted. Similarly, the passage of the Hindu Code Bills in the 1950s was facilitated by the national movement's efforts in favour of the social liberation of women.

Secularism

From its early days, the national movement was committed to secularism. Secularism was defined in a comprehensive manner which meant the separation of religion from politics and the state, the treatment of religion as a private matter for the individual, state neutrality towards or equal respect for all religions, absence of discrimination between followers of different religions, and active opposition to communalism. For example, to counter communalism and give expression to its secular commitment, Congress in its Karachi Resolution of 1931 declared that in free India 'every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion', that all citizens would be 'equal before the law, irrespective of caste, creed or sex', that no disability would attach to any citizen because of caste, creed or gender 'in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling', and that 'the State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions'.⁹

It is true that in his early years, Gandhi, a deeply religious person, emphasized the close connection between religion and politics. This