

What went wrong with Indian Independence?

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Chapter 1: Tryst with Destiny

It is now 50 years since British rule in India officially came to an end on August 15, 1947. This year is being celebrated throughout the country as the golden jubilee of India's independence .

After so many years of slavery the dawn of freedom came to India and the country awoke from centuries of slumber; we became the masters of our destiny. The general sentiment was that with the transfer of power the problems of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, superstition, communalism and casteism, afflicting the country for centuries, would soon be resolved. If any citizen in 1947 had been asked what the situation in the country would be in 1997, that is 50 years after independence, he would have said with full self-confidence, "Independent India will have climbed to the pinnacle of the world's nations in fifty years." In a moving speech made in the central hall of the old council Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, "The country awakes after long slumber and struggle, vital, free and independent....We have a tryst with destiny." A popular song often recited during the struggle for independence reflects even more admirably the expectations of the people of India: "We will not stop until we have the world in our hands."

Ominous forebodings

Even then, there were not a few Indians who struck a jarring note. "Ah, only British know how to rule. What kind government can these Nehrus and Patels run? Chaos and anarchy will make a mess of the country." Such forebodings were given scant regard as coming from the Rao Sahebs, Rao Bahadurs, government pensioners and others living off the largess of the Raj and unhappy at the departure of the British.

The British prime minister during the war years, Winston Churchill, was opposed to giving freedom to the colonies of the empire. "I have not become the Prime Minister of the Emperor in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire" was his proclamation. He argued that most colonies did not know civilisation before the advent of the empire. It was the law of the jungle, big fish eating the small. Social fissures, untouchability, child marriage, immolation of widows and such primitive practices were rampant in India before the British came. Churchill was convinced that the British empire had come as a blessing to the millions of helpless, poverty-stricken people of the colonies. The common man was happy under British rule and had no particular craving for freedom; those leading the freedom movement were a coterie of mediocre people spreading disaffection and violence in pursuit of power and selfish interests. If the power were transferred to them, they would ruin the lives of the poor and the weak, provoke communal conflict and cause bloodshed. Have mercy on the Indian people and do not wind up the Empire. This is what Churchill stood for.

Independence by Accident

Hitler was defeated in the World War II, and the Japanese forces that were knocking at India's door capitulated. The war effort exhausted the British people. The British Empire on which the sun never set could be maintained no longer. In countries like India discontent was spreading in armed forces as well. Sailors in the navy even rose in revolt. It was clear that to continue to rule over India under such conditions would require the extreme efforts of a world war. It was also clear that the price would have to be paid not only in money and materials but also in blood. A few thousand Britishers had ruled India for a century and a half by using local officials and a local army; this was no longer possible. Now the natives were estranged. Even if all the people of England were mobilised and deployed from Delhi to the villages, it would still not be possible to keep the empire. Even to maintain it for a short time would involve a terrible cost in blood, sweat and tears and if such a struggle took place it would be impossible for Britain to maintain its status as champions of liberty in

the comity of nations. In such a situation, granting independence to the colonies and, particularly, to India was inevitable. The lion, wounded in the world war, could not keep under its control a people awakened by the Mahatma. In the midst of the fanfare and cacophony of the celebration of independence, few paid any attention to the forebodings expressed in India or to the inauspicious warnings of Churchill.

Forebodings come true?

Fifty years have passed since the end of British rule. The tryst with destiny has never truly occurred. The dreams of becoming the pinnacle of the world community have been shattered. The dilemma of poverty persists, the numbers of illiterate have risen, inflation and unemployment continue to cause havoc; bureaucrats, black marketeers, thieves and criminals have come to dominate; the goondas have manipulated the political leaders and then displaced them. Thanks to the progress of science and technology abroad, the country has, at least, been able to produce enough grain to feed itself. Due to the near eradication of infectious diseases such as smallpox, plague, cholera and malaria, life expectancy has risen. Undoubtedly, industries have grown in large cities, but it cannot be said that if the British had stayed such industries would not have grown. Compared to the rest of the world India has not progressed after independence; on the contrary, it has deteriorated. Countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, which were more backward than India fifty years ago, have gone many times farther ahead.

It is unnecessary to marshal comprehensive statistics to establish the relative decline of India after independence. When independence came, the per capita income was less than Rs 250; now it stands at around Rs 12,000. The present rupee is barely worth 3 paise of the 1947 one. The per capita income in terms of prices prevailing 50 years back increased from Rs 250 to Rs 400. In terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), which United Nations' economists use to compare incomes of different countries in terms of their actual purchasing power, the income of an Indian citizen was US \$1348 in 1995. Bangladesh with \$1331 is a little behind. Pakistan at \$2154 is significantly ahead - by almost 60%. China (\$2604), Sri Lanka (\$2377), Thailand (\$7104), Malaysia (\$8865), Korea (\$10,656) and Singapore (\$20,987) were all behind India 50 years ago, but have made rapid strides forward. The countries that were defeated and devastated in the war have reconstructed and made dazzling progress. Japan now has a per capita income of \$21,581, Germany \$19,675 and Italy \$19,365.

Silver lining in the dark clouds

It is not that there has been no progress. Life expectancy has practically doubled. At independence, the country was in the jaws of famine; it has since become self-sufficient in foodgrains. With the exception of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and some thousands square kilometers of area on the northeast frontier, the Indian republic has continued to hold sovereignty over all areas transferred to it by the British. Elections are held regularly; the army has not even attempted a coup to establish a military dictatorship. Except for a brief period when Indira Gandhi clamped down her Emergency, parliamentary democracy continues to function. Quite a few other instances of advancement since independence can be cited. Schools, however ill-equipped and ill-staffed, have been opened in most villages; the proportion of illiterates has diminished and the facilities and opportunities for higher education in urban areas have multiplied. But it is also true that the absolute number of illiterates has risen. Roads have been built to connect villages, State-run buses ply them and postal services connect most settlements. At the same time, poverty in rural areas is not significantly diminished. Hundreds of thousands of rural refugees continue to migrate to cities like Mumbai and Delhi in search of livelihood, and the cities have swollen beyond all proportion; even district towns are expanding at a galloping rate. At independence, the rural poor who moved to the cities lived in tin

hutments and cement tenements. Now they settle down in slums and on footpaths. Briefly, the history of the last fifty years is far from being a proud chronicle of success.

India, as a newly independent country, followed the path of socialism under the leadership of Pandit Nehru. Socialism and its institutions have since met a world-historic defeat. There has been some talk of liberalisation; but it was short lived. No one on the scene appears to be tall enough to guide the nation. In its 50th anniversary of independence, the nation is standing on the edge of a precipice and its people are more confused than at any time in their long history.

Chapter 2 SELF-CRITICISM AND SELF-DECEPTION

Whither Ecstasy

Preparations for celebrating the golden jubilee of independence began; committees were appointed and even those occupying the seats of power were in confusion. Fifty years have passed since Independence; of course the event has to be celebrated, but no one could say exactly what there was to celebrate or how it was to be celebrated. Expressing joy was the primary objective of the celebrations from the beginning, but all concerned felt that, side by side with celebrations there needed to be some exercise in introspection, an effort to draw up a balance-sheet of the gains and, even more importantly, of the losses. A review to consider what caused India's degradation and why the trust with destiny remained unfulfilled was called for. On 9 August 1997 the celebrations began at the historical Gowalia Tank grounds in Mumbai. On the midnight of 14th August, an impressive ceremony took place in the parliament's central hall. For the whole year, some celebrations or programme continued to be held. Newspapers and other media drummed up all these events with great enthusiasm. But, within a month since the beginning of the festival, the hollowness of it all was patent.

15th August 1947 saw the stark tragedy of India's partition. Millions of refugees poured into the country. The nation was thrown into a state of shock by the horrendous stories of brutality in communal rioting. Mahatma Gandhi distanced himself from the panoply of independence day celebrations and walked through the riot-stricken areas of Noakhali. Millions of citizens, nevertheless, danced as if drunk with happiness, unmindful of the pouring rain, in the joy of welcoming the advent of independence.

That ecstasy is a thing of the past. It was the people who spontaneously celebrated the first independence day. The celebration of the golden jubilee of independence was all government-managed.

Diverse diagnoses

How did this happen? What went wrong with independence? It is not that there was no discussion of this. Those sections which did not get the benefits of power after independence are making diverse comments -- this should have been done, that should not have been done. Some say that population has grown beyond the bounds of what can be managed. Some say corruption has spread, some that independence has been spoiled because the people at large lack patriotism and are not ready to sacrifice for the country.

Some hold that ushering in democracy to a poor and backward country was itself a mistake, arguing that "our people are comfortable with dictatorship, adult suffrage has made a mess of everything." Some hold that the country has become fragmented because of division of states on a linguistic basis. Some protest that our downfall comes from forgetting our old traditions, and adopting secular and republican notions of western origin. Some recommend planting trees, some opening more schools; some preach benevolence to the poor, others suppression of inequality. It is a tower of Babel, each one trying to surpass the other in a show of wisdom.

The Congressites who wielded political power for most of the fifty years make it sound as if everything was all right under their rule. They could hardly be expected to sign a confession that the country has been brought to devastation by the policies implemented during the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty in the Congress regime. "What Nehru did was right for his time; there was then no alternative to socialism and planning; the economic reforms that are being brought in now aim to go

ahead in the same direction, to make the country self-reliant and powerful." They themselves cannot really accept this kind of convoluted reasoning, so there is no question of others accepting it.

The left parties and casteists have joined in a new and strange Grand Alliance. Those who at one time opposed Nehru are now supporting and justifying the policies that were taken under the name of Nehruvian socialism. They are hoping to be able to appropriate, under the name of caste or under the name of religion, some booty from the crumbling mansion of statism.

Parliament's review session

The special session of parliament called for an exercise in introspection is over. A terrible truth has been brought to the people that there is not even the remotest chance that a leadership capable of giving new direction for the country will come out of present house of parliament.

This is a country that has made a disaster of its freedom within a space of fifty years! Five hundred and fifty members of parliament had the good fortune of discussing how this happened and what different road should be taken up in the future. During most of the time of the discussion, the majority of members were in the canteen. The number inside the house remained between 50 to 100. Those who spoke wanted to say something that would sound forceful and weighty. But they were at a loss to know what to say. If schoolchildren had been told to write an essay on fifty years of independence they would have given a better performance than the MPs. Worn-out statistics readily available in textbooks on the Indian economy were paraded with the air of originality and the gusto of a historical pronouncement. In what was supposed to be an exercise in self-criticism, we heard repetition of age-old ideas and populist programmes announced with both eyes on the forthcoming elections. Some gave a description of the utopian India of their dreams; some narrated sob stories of how, even though the country became free, their community had not gotten justice. Some gave wishing lists of what they should get in the future. The entire debate in the Lok Sabha was so poor, we could not have believed it happen had we not seen it on TV.

In September 1997 the parliament forfeited its claim to leadership of the country.

Reviews galore

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary celebrations of Indian independence, various balance sheets for the years of Independence have been drawn up from the Lok Sabha in Delhi down to amateur NGOs in by-lanes. The Lok Sabha held a special session to discuss what has been gained and what has been lost after independence. From village to village public institutions, organisations of merchants and industrialists, even study circles in schools and colleges have organised speeches, seminars and training camps to set out balance sheets of independence. What have been the mistakes made since independence? Those leaders who have held power during these fifty years were invited, as well as those in opposition. The Prime Minister and all those currently holding power have been in great demand. It is clear that the intention of the organisers was more to gain publicity for themselves and to strengthen their links with those in power, than to encourage self-criticism.

All newspapers took out special issues and supplements on the 15 of August 1997. The opinion was unanimous that the post-independence performance has not been particularly admirable. However, each writer had his own diagnosis of where the dreams of independence went sour. The common position was not to rattle the skeletons in the cupboard. "Let it go; what has happened has happened" was the convenient posture. As to what should be done in the future, no common tune was discernible. Corruption has been practically the only common point in all the writings and

speeches. The prescription has been simply to weed out the widespread corruption to make everything all right.

Discussions everywhere, from the parliament to the village *sammelans* up to now have been largely inane and commonplace. This has been the general reaction. Briefly, everyone recognises that the balance sheet of independence has not been properly drawn. However, no one has an inkling as to where exactly they go astray in the exercise.

A second Republic

Delhi today is very much like it was after the death of Aurangzeb. It matters little which Shehjada occupies the throne and which one is pulled down from it. Even if a Deve Gowda sits there, the bards will sing his praises with full gusto, as if he were the greatest of all rulers, have departed.

It is clear in the fiftieth year of independence ceremonies that the first Indian republic that dawned on 15 August 1947 and was proclaimed in 1950 has come to an end. The ways of that republic will no longer assure even bare survival for the country, leave alone development. Now a second republic will have to be brought in. And for that a second freedom struggle will have to be waged.

"A second Republic," "a second freedom fight" -- these were the words used by the Speaker of the House in the special session of parliament that began on 16 August. These words are familiar to Shetkari Sanghatana activists. In the last seventeen years the Shetkari Sanghatana has brought out both the illusory character of the independence of 1947 and the need for a new, true independence.

Creating of a second Republic should not be interpreted to mean tinkering with the Constitution. The BJP government that came to power in 1998 has openly announced its intention to make a comprehensive review of the dispositions of the Constitution. Several leaders of the Congress party have spoken in favour of a presidential system in preference to the parliamentary system. Many innocents believe that constitutional amendments would act like a magic wand and remedy any given existing flaw. They propose amendments permitting recall of elected representatives, adequate representation for backward classes, fuller representation for women, etc.

The Constitution is, in a way, a giant source of power; in another way it is nothing but a bunch of paper. In a situation where Law and Order have collapsed and mischief-mongers publicly make obscene references to the National Anthem and to the national flag, little will be gained by merely amending the Constitution. Dispositions of the constitution do not appear to be all that important. In the last fifty years, the one institution that has brought the most misery to the nation has been the Planning Commission. It encompasses the jurisdiction of all the ministries and much more. But the planning commission is not even mentioned in all the pages of the Constitution. Given political will, the dispositions of the Constitution appear to have neither helped nor obstructed any action.

The requirements of introspection

Self-criticism is not an easy task. To turn inward and admit to one's own mistakes requires tremendous integrity and strength of will.

The terrible situation of the country today has to be considered seriously and in totality. The country has been on a downslide in the fifty years of independence: how has this happened? Why did a country with the heritage of a man like Gandhi go into decline even while his disciples were in power? How did the martyrdom of those valiant young men who walked undaunted to scaffolds go to waste? How did the freedom fighters turn so easily treacherously corrupt?

Fifty years have been completed since the British departed from this country. On this occasion, it behooves us to analyze the nature and content of the freedom movement itself and the character of the post-independence period regime and put forth some clear thoughts about why independence went wrong and why the first republic has crumbled.

The diagnosis should be comprehensive

In the discussions on the gains and losses of independence some very strange and mutually contradictory points have been expressed.

Some recommend greater democracy, others dictatorship; some prescribe greater devolution of power, others more centralisation. Some think that in the period after independence education has been ignored; others that a proper foundation of roads, transportation, water, energy, and economic services has not been laid; poverty has been overlooked; the backward sections have been neglected, etc. There are those who blame linguistic reorganisation of states and even adult franchise. They have also forcefully stated that in the future these flaws have to be remedied to set the nation on the right path. This is the equivalent of prescribing cold pills for a deadly disease.

There may be some truth in all of these diagnoses and prescriptions, but the entire list does not explain sufficiently the seriousness of the patient's condition. It also leaves important questions unanswered. How could basic things such as education, infrastructure and social development be so grossly ignored? If they had not been ignored, would the terrible situation the country finds itself in today have been avoided? And finally, if these flaws can be remedied will the country go ahead on the path of progress? The answer to these questions is "No." The diagnoses of the disease and the remedies given by those who have attempted to draw the balance sheets of independence are scanty and hardly of any help to understand today's situation.

Don't spare the guilty

There is another strange aspect of these exercises of supposed serious reflection. It is universally agreed that after independence some gross blunders were made, but those who were in power during the period of independence and who are responsible for the downfall are all venerated like demi-gods! There is not even a breath of criticism against them. The country has gone to rack and ruin in the fifty years of independence, but the Nehru dynasty which ruled for 38 of those fifty years is held in high respect for their competence and moral character. Even the future, many insist, lies in following the path shown by Pandit Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi! The explanation that this is because of the Indian tradition of speaking no evil of the dead, is unconvincing. People say nasty things about Mahatma Gandhi himself. But one dare not say a word against the Nehru dynasty that actually presided over the downfall. It is clear that those who draw the balance sheets lack either integrity or the calibre necessary for such a serious exercise.

Is the tragedy exclusively post-independence?

Those attempting this analysis of the gains and the losses since independence fall into yet another error. They attribute all the degeneration that has occurred to the years following independence. The Indian freedom movement is supposed to have been carried out according to the great principles of Mahatma Gandhi in which a whole people struggled dedicatedly under his leadership, suffered hardships, accepted sacrifices and even gave up their lives, forcing the English to give independence. It was in the period following independence that the principles of the freedom movement were eclipsed and the country's decline began. In brief, the logic is that before the 15th of August 1947 everything was high and noble, and that the rot set in only after this. This could not

be true. Whatever happened after independence must have had its seeds, however sparse, in the period of the freedom movement itself.

Did the downfall begin only after independence? Pandit Nehru, after all, was Gandhiji's most beloved disciple and heir. He himself was prime minister for 17 years after independence. At least in that period, the country should have advanced. Why didn't this happen? All these questions will have to be faced with rigorous self-criticism and much more. It will also be necessary to examine the relation between the decline after independence and the happenings before independence. The reasons for the frustration of independence will also have to be sought in the time of the freedom movement. If it should turn out that the inspiration of the freedom movement was basically false, this bitter truth must be faced without hesitation if a genuine self-criticism is to take place.

If the inspiration of the freedom movement was basically false and dishonest then it is understandable that we are reaping as we sowed. On the other hand, if we are convinced that the freedom movement was pure and true, then we will have to analyze exactly what went wrong after independence and search for the villains who schemed to frustrate the sacrifice of martyrs in the freedom struggle. We will have to analyze why they could carry their vile plans to successful conclusions. The kind of logic that says Gandhi was good, Nehru also was good and so were the Gokhales and Tilak who preceded them, but even then independence went wrong represents intellectual prostitution.

An analysis of the post-independence collapse must observe three kinds of precautions. It will not do to give a ticky-tacky diagnosis of the disease of the country; we need the certainty of ending the country's adverse fortune through an effective remedy for a properly diagnosed disease. No individual should be spared, however high his prestige. Finally, there should be no negligence in the blunt dissection of the trends in the freedom movement.

Chapter 3: The Character of the Freedom Movement

There were diverse streams in the freedom movement. It is true that the mainstream freedom struggle took place under the leadership of Gandhi and the Congress. But there is no historical basis to say that there were no other trends in the freedom movement and that all classes and castes had stood united to fight under the flag of the Gandhian Congress. There was a consensus throughout the country only about some broad notions such as that dependence and slavery are a disgrace; that the rule of foreigners coming from far away is not good for the people; that political slavery results in economic exploitation and impoverishment. But about the goals of the freedom struggle, its methods, its programme, its timetable, there were numerous ideological trends.

The firebrand nationalists

British dominion became established throughout the country. With it, the princes who had lost their dominion, the Thugs and Pindaris unhappy at the advent of the rule of law, in short, all those who had lorded over the country before the British came and their courtiers, satraps and caste-fellows were very fiercely opposed to the British. Along with them the jahagirdars and zamindars who were enraged at getting tied to the revenue system of the new government were also unhappy. Their grievance was not due to the nature of British rule but that they had lost power. Their hope was that once the white rulers were thrown out of the country, then, with none other capable of claiming political power, they could once again become paramount rulers. Why did the country become enslaved? Why had it remained so far behind in all the fields of Civic Life, Economics, Education, Science and Technology? Such problems were irrelevant to them. "We were and are in all ways and in every respect superior, and we shall remain so for all times to come. Bad times have come to us only through a cycle of fortune, a turn of the wheel of fate; once the British left all this misfortune will end": such was the understanding of this group. They were the fomenters of the 1857 revolt. Not only did the ordinary people not support the revolt, they were not even sympathetic to it. Even this coterie of feudalists could not present a united front. One could not be sure as to who among them would accede to power once the British were thrown out? Many of them felt it easier to offer their loyalty to the alien rulers.

Naturally, the revolt was smashed. However, the British were so disturbed by the revolt that the Queen herself gave a proclamation promising non-intervention in the Indian social system. The Company Sarkar had followed the policy of encouraging dalits and backward castes and consciously lessening the domination of brahmans and ksatriyas; its officials showed considerable zeal in suppressing customs like sati. This was ended by the Queen's proclamation, and the principle of non-interference was applied. The decision not to disturb the social order, not even for helping the oppressed sections to stand up, meant that the field was left open for the old high caste Hindus and thugs. The British administration was to emerge as a carbon copy of the hierarchy of the traditional social system. It would henceforward be dominated by the high caste Hindus. It became possible through studying two or three books to gain employment in the British bureaucracy. The new commerce and textile mills in cities like Mumbai and Calcutta also absorbed some.

The heirs of the former feudalists wished for much more than the benefits of the British raj. It was from this discontented upper caste community that the cults of bombs and pistols emerged. This was the background of the Radicals who agitated only for political independence, relegating social reform to an uncertain future. Thus emerged the nationalist tradition that ignored all economic and social action and tried through nationalist patriotic cacophony to drown the voices of the masses against the injustices and exploitation they faced. The Arya Samaj, Vivekananda, Hedgewar and his

RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha and Jan Sangh, and today the Bharatiya Janata Party, Shiv Sena, Vishwa Hindu Parishad etc. are all offspring of this feudal extremist nationalist tradition.

The Moderates

Even those who benefited from the British Raj had reason to be vexed. There was a large, powerful community that spoke English, used English education, technology, the commercial system and the industrial infrastructure to build up their influence and rose to eminence in large cities like Mumbai, Calcutta and Madras. The members of this community felt that there was little likelihood that the Raj would end in any foreseeable future or that the British would grant full independence and quit the country. They were also convinced that the immediate departure of the British would not really be in the interest of the country. They honestly felt that the British Raj was a boon that had brought a regime of peace, security, justice and prosperity. This class could get little benefit from ending British rule or spreading terrorism through the cult of bombs and pistols. The community included English-educated gentlemen whose most cherished ambition was to get an invitation to the Governor's darbar or a banquet in a Collector's house and attend the same in full English evening costume. They had modest demands: there should be more places for Indians in the ICS examinations; the age limit for the examinations should be relaxed; they should be held in India in order to make it easier for young Indians to sit for them; revenue rates and taxes should be decreased; customs duties on imports should, in contrast, be increased; expenditure on the military should be decreased; and responsible legislative assemblies should be established to ensure popular representation. In short, this was a class with high hopes of obtaining increased power under the umbrella of British rule.

Congress was born out of this class. The activities of the Congress as well as its demands reflected the Moderates' aspirations. Assembling in some large city every year during Christmas vacation, the delegates deliberated in impeccable English, dressed in equally impeccable western clothes, sending memoranda to the government, hoping that in due course of time the Congress would get the stamp of approval, formal or informal, as a representative assembly. This was the style of the Congress.

The Viceroy himself agreed that there should be a forum that would work as an opposition party in the country. The government accepted and even implemented some of the demands in the numerous memoranda, but very soon started having some serious doubts about the representative character and the utility of the Congress. The outlook and aspirations of the majority of peasants were, in a way, closer to the programme of the Moderates. During the British rule the village artisan system declined to extinction, agriculture was crushed under revenue dues and debts. The upper castes, though deprived of political power, fortified their social and economic position. But the bahun samaj, like the Moderates, had no special interest in seeing the British leave immediately. However, they felt greater affinity for the nationalist Radicals. The Moderates only organised meetings and conferences. The Radicals were at least fearlessly speaking out and writing against the alien government. Because of this they could win a growing sympathy among the people. A high caste feudal activist could become "lokmanya" as a leader of Telis and Tambolis. In Congress itself a joust started between Radicals and Moderates. The Moderate programme was, with a few changes, acceptable to the British power. In contrast, they were determined to use all means to break the entire Extremist movement -- and even so the popularity of the Radicals was rising.

The bahun samaj

Moderates and Radicals together represented barely 5% of the population. The majority of the society, the farmers, artisans and labourers who were former shudras and untouchables, had neither

protector nor leader. This bahujan samaj that had been ground down for generations under the tyranny of the caste system saw a ray of hope in the British Raj of breaking their shackles of slavery and finding a better life with the opening of education and economic opportunities. After the revolt of 1857, the traditional caste hierarchy had won a fresh lease of life in the proclamation of the Queen. The domination of brahmanas was incorporated into the British Raj. No one came forth to champion the cause of the artisans and farmers of the villages ruined by English commerce and land revenue. What was the political position of this section?

The rule of the British would not endure for eternity. Sooner or later, they would have to leave; but, thanks to the British, the doors of education are opening up to the shudras and ati-shudras. Only if the caste system was broken and inequality ended would a nation of unified people emerge. Only then would a true national freedom movement begin. Until that time, merely calling an organisation a "National Congress" would not cause a nation in the sense of a "unified people" to come into existence. There was no reason for the bahujan samaj to have any sense of oneness with an independence movement run by the vanguard of the traditional high caste communities, whether Moderates or Radicals. These sons of the high castes are misleading shudras and ati-shudras by spreading disaffection among them about the British and putting pistols and bombs in their hands. Swaraj would not be won by such methods, and even if it were won it would only be a new incarnation of the old "Peshwai" - caste rule in which the road to development and progress would be closed to the masses. These ideas were clearly put forward by such leaders of the bahujan samaj as Jotiba Phule.

The policy of those moderates who saw the British Raj as providential was not so different. The debate between Agarkar and Tilak over "social reform versus political reform" had the same basic theme. Later, severe doubts about the true intentions of the high caste leaders of the so-called national movement were also expressed in the Ambedkarite dalit movement. Very recently Arun Shourie has criticised Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar for his pro-British policy during the independence movement. Babasaheb's followers have condemned this criticism. This itself is a clear indication of the failure of Babasaheb's movement. Up to, at least, 1936 it was the position of the bahujan samaj as a whole that to agitate for independence before the caste system was uprooted and destroyed could not constitute a true national freedom movement, but was only a gimmick of native elites to secure bits and pieces of power from the hands of the white English. There is and was absolutely nothing to be ashamed of in this position. Mahatma Phule put it cleanly. It is Babasaheb's misfortune that the Ambedkarites claim the heritage of Mahatma Phule but fail to show how the tenets of Babasaheb's freedom movement were different from those of Tilak and Nehru.

The advent of Mahatma Gandhi

Lokmanya Tilak was incarcerated for six years at Mandalay. This shattered the radical nationalist movement, but the Moderates could not take advantage of the downfall of the Radicals. A new freedom movement appeared to be gathering force. The new freedom movement would represent the vast majority of the oppressed, throwing aside both Moderates and Radicals. It was then that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India from South Africa. He did not form any new organisation for the freedom movement; rather, he entered Congress itself to stand up in the assembly of the suited and booted Congressmen. Gandhi repeatedly affirmed his faith in the British sense of fair play and justice. He built up a movement on tenets steeped in Indian tradition -- spiritualism, truth, non-violence, simple living. This was the cult of devotion at its highest and had a nation-wide appeal irrespective of caste divisions. At the same time, he put programmes for social reform and the economic welfare of the down trodden on the agenda, thus creating a huge

awakening in the country. The Radicals lost their glamour and Congress became a movement rather than a conference of speechifying, anglicized gentry.

With the coming of Gandhi, Congress rose up with determination, went forth, blossomed and expanded. Thus triumphed the right wing of the high caste movement. The Radicals subsided, the Moderates won; but all this was only a mock tussle among the high-born. Due to Gandhi's halo, the movements of the bahujan samaj lost their appeal and began to fade out.

Under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhai Patel and others, Congress created an awakening among peasants. It reached out to adivasis. Finally, it became impossible for the movement of the bahujan samaj to maintain its momentum and its leaders joined the national mainstream of the freedom movement at the Faizpur Congress (December 1936).

Gandhian spiritualisation of politics may or may not have worked with the British rulers or the Muslim leaders. It certainly silenced for half a century the voice of the subaltern Hindus. In the Gandhian mainstream of the freedom movement, the two streams, that of the bahujans and that of the high castes, never really came together. Even though many prominent leaders of the bahujan samaj joined Congress, leaders like Babasaheb Ambedkar and Periyar distanced themselves from the Congress mainstream and confronted the Congress and Mahatmaji himself in polemics and on the ground. Muslims, as a community, remained deeply skeptical of Gandhism. The majority of Muslims also got alienated from the freedom movement. This finally resulted in the partition of the country and the creation of Pakistan.

The transfer of power

The satyagraha of 1930 was unsuccessful. Gandhi was in a dilemma, searching for some new direction, keeping Congress activists involved here and there in the responsive satyagraha and constructive programmes, hoping to see some light in the midst of surrounding darkness. At this time, the waves of socialist ideology began to blow in India and a new leadership appeared to emerge, keen on resolving the problems of the masses on the basis of a socialist ideology and programme. As the clouds of World War II gathered and the storm broke, the socialist movement was divided and sidetracked by the need felt by some to support the British as an ally of the Soviet Union

The great war erupted. The British could win victory in it, but the British lion lay prostrate, exhausted in the effort. It became clear that the empire in India could no longer be run through the Indian elite. If the Raj were to be maintained it would be necessary to keep hundreds of thousands of British soldiers and citizens here, and even then, even at such a terrible cost, the Raj would not endure for long. The British decided to leave the country and return home.

At the time of transfer of power, Congress had, it is true, recognition as the representative of the majority of people. But Congress itself was a mixture of numerous streams of urban, commercial, industrial, landlord, peasant, Gandhian and socialist thinking. A new movement based on protecting the interests of the masses, supremely indifferent to fruitless debates on violence and nonviolence, and influenced by socialist thought, had sprouted in the 1942 campaign. The British realised that if Gandhism collapsed then very rapidly a socialist bahujan movement would proliferate, and then it would be very difficult to have a peaceful and orderly transfer of power. It was thus in the interest of the British to partition the country and give power in India to the anglicized elite of the Congress.

Gandhi - The first victim

Independence came; Pandit Nehru became prime minister. Power fell to a leadership that was English in everything but the colour of their skin, a leadership represented those that had achieved wealth, knowledge and power under British rule. Now, this urban elite no longer required the support of Mahatma Gandhi's popular movement. Godse ended Gandhiji's life; immediately after that Nehru started subverting Gandhi's economic and political thinking. Rather than giving priority to agriculture and village industries and panchayat raj institutions, the country began to move towards a system dominated by urban industries with total power concentrated in the hands of the state – a system of "brahmanic socialism." And, within fifty years, the country came to brink of calamities.

The bahujan samaj, which had been enslaved for thousands of years, had at least three opportunities during the British Raj to organise and improve their position, but each of these occasions was lost. Once the benefit of the liberal policy of the Company Sarkar began to appear, the revolt of 1857 burst into conflagration. With the retreat of the British rulers from commitment to social reform, the bahujan samaj was pushed backward. After the Extremist movement crumbled, the bahujan samaj movement could have arisen, but this opportunity was also lost when Gandhi's mixture of nationalism and social reform within the framework of a traditionalist spiritualism came to influence the country and rejuvenate the Congress. Finally, due to the eruption of World War II, the socialist bahujan movement was sidetracked and uprooted. When independence came, just as Jotiba Phule had predicted, it came as a new form of the Peshwai. The black British took the place of the white British. Though they had come to power on the basis of a Gandhian-dominated Congress, they could not digest a Gandhian village-based economic system. Consequently, once they had power in their hands, under the name of socialism, the anglicized Congress casually threw away the mask of Gandhism. After independence the new avatar of "brahmanic socialism" descended on the subcontinent and a chain of calamities ensued.

A review of the various streams and their internal contradictions in the freedom movement would give some idea how difficult inning evaluation of 50 years of Independence would be. An analysis of post-independence downfall requires a strict discipline including three precautions. The diagnosis should not be tricky-tracky and there should be some assurance that if the identified ill is taken care of the nation can get out of the present difficulties. The evaluation exercise should not be inhibited by considerations of personality cult. And finally, whenever necessary even the freedom movement should not escape close scrutiny so that the causes of downfall may be better understood.

Chapter 4: From Gandhism to "Brahmanic Socialism"

Bloodshed of non-violence

Independence came with the partition of the country. It came with massacres in widespread communal rioting and millions of refugees fleeing from Pakistan to India, India to Pakistan. Partition smashed Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Hindu-Muslim unity and brotherhood. Very few historic figures have had the misfortune of seeing their ideas so demolished before their very eyes. The idea of Hindu-Muslim unity was destroyed; nonviolence became a subject for mockery. More bloodshed came at the end of the so-called "nonviolent" freedom movement than if the entire movement had taken place with bombs and guns. The prestige of Gandhian thinking was finished not only among the people, but within the Congress also. "Better that the old man is far from Delhi and wanders among the refugees" was the opinion of his disciples in the ministry. No one was in a mood to honour Gandhi's urging that 55 crores of rupees due to be paid to Pakistan should be given. It was only when his life was in danger that the ministry very reluctantly agreed to it.

Communalism contained - Gandhism thwarted.

Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948. It very often happens that the death of great men produces in an instant, as if by a miracle, the changes they could not bring about with a whole life-time's hard work. In the wave of grief that spread with Gandhi's death all the poison of Hindu-Muslim hatred was washed away. It took forty years for religious fundamentalism to regain legitimacy in India.

However, Gandhi was no more, and his overwhelming charisma became a memory. It was Mahatma Gandhi's ideas that had built the struggle for swaraj into a people's movement. The original Congress leadership had been the Anglicized urban elite. During the freedom struggle they had put on a thin Gandhian veneer. With Gandhi's going, it was natural that those who were westernized in manners, eating and life-style and Indian only in blood should throw away this veneer which had been so useful for the freedom movement. As power came into their hands, they foresook Gandhism to push the country towards socialism.

In Gandhi's idea of independence the village was the all-important pivot; agriculture and village industries were given priority, political power had little significance, he often said. He proudly called himself as an anarchist and claimed that the freedom movement in India was the first step in a broad movement towards the withering away of the state. His anarchism was in some ways greatly confused and mixed with religious traditionalism. On one hand Gandhi would say that power is not an instrument for social change; on the other hand he would make statements like, "if power comes for a day into my hands, I will use it to enforce prohibition." But it was far different from the statist orientation of those who called themselves his heirs.

The abnormal situation at the time of independence helped greatly in the sidelining of Gandhi's thinking. With Partition, the resulting riots, the movement of refugees and the problem of princely states such as Kashmir, Hyderabad and others, law and order had become a subject of serious concern. The situation on the economic front was also serious. Shortages of foodgrain and inflation due to the world war had raised havoc. With the greatest wheat-producing regions going to Pakistan, the shortages became even more serious. No other machinery except the state administration existed or could be built to deal with these problems. The survival of the republic was at stake; at least until normality was restored the implementation of Gandhi's programme could not be contemplated. For now the country must be saved; the rest could be seen to later. That at least was the argument given for public consumption.

But factors more important than the crisis environment in the immediate post-independence years helped the triumph of the Nehru line. These included Indian collectivist traditions, the disdain for the business community, the interest of the high caste officials of the British bureaucracy, and the ability of the elites to win over the bahujans and their proclaimed leaders. These all have to be examined carefully.

The disdained entrepreneur

The Indian caste system holds the business community in disdain for its mundane pursuits. The private sector in industry was never powerful or well organised in our country. Its leaders had no social prestige. The vaishyas and shudras who constituted the industrial groups were at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. The brahmans who claimed the intellectual and spiritual leadership and the ksatriyas who ruled and made war had the highest status. They used to deride those involved in trade and production as merely selfish; throughout the history of the varna system "banias" were treated with ridicule and contempt

The shudra artisans were even worse off. Under British rule the traditional occupations of the villages were badly affected. As the cheaper, higher quality and more sophisticated products of English factories spread from village to village, many sections of artisans found their livelihoods destroyed. In particular, as weavers, leather workers, blacksmiths etc. lost their bread. Such balutedars were never entrepreneurs. They were artisans using their simple skills to meet the needs of people in the villages. There was never any reason for them to improve products, to search for more efficient means of manufacturing them or to increase production. Their task in life was simply to meet the needs of the villagers as they arose, produce a few extra goods to sell in the weekly markets or at festival times, and pass their time in one way or another. Because they were born in a particular caste, according to their karma, this was their ordained life; they had no alternative, and even if an alternative existed, searching for it would lead them to hell. This was their own belief as well as that of the society around them.

After the coming of the English, trade began through the ports of Mumbai and Calcutta. Raw materials began to flow to England and ships filled with English goods began to come to these ports. A rudimentary network was established to purchase raw materials in village markets throughout the rural areas and export them to England. Roads, railways and other infrastructure began to be built. Within this framework, Indian merchants and industrialists began to expand their business. Foreign trade was colonial and played an important part in India's plunder. But, as in the cotton trade, it helped the establishment of a native commercial system. With time, some traders moved on from exporting to building and managing mills and importing machinery. Cotton textile mills began to flourish. A few of these traders undertook the heroic enterprise of establishing steel factories. The leadership of the new industrialist class which arose out of trading profits was primarily from communities like the Muslims and Parsis outside the caste system. Among Hindus it was only Vanis, Marwaris and others with the traditional vaishya values who showed the courage to gain an important place in the new industries.

This industrialist community was small in numbers; its economic strength was insignificant. Their main skill lay in buying and selling. Aside from one or two exceptions like Tata, no one had the vision and capacity to explore new technology, increase productivity or build the required infrastructure. The common people felt no sense of closeness, love or respect for this industrial class. Marwadis and banias were objects of ridicule even among the bahujan samaj. At a time the entire country was falling into the clutches of poverty, many must have felt jealous of the growing prosperity of this newly rich class. The elite brahmans and ksatriyas who felt their own power declining could not

stomach their prosperity and rise to prominence. Due to the feeling that these were the allies of the government which was keeping the country in slavery, the hatred against them became even fiercer. Except for Birla and Bajaj who kept connections with the leaders of the freedom movement, the new industrialists were all felt to be enemies of swaraj. Lokmanya Tilak's swadeshi movement encouraged small manufacturers only. Until the advent of Gandhi, the swadeshi movement had lauded textile manufacturers also. Because of Gandhi's opposition to machinery itself, an antipathy for all native factories and their owners developed even though their products were swadeshi by any definition. The khadi movement created hostility about such native mills; their produce was also thrown on the bonfires.

These newly rising industrialists confronted the British economic might with great intrepidity under very difficult circumstances. Wherever it could intervene, the state machinery favoured British industrialists. The competition was fierce. Indian industrialists had only three advantages in the competition with foreign mills. They could get their raw materials more cheaply in the local markets; they were spared the cost of sea transportation; and finally, the wages of Indian workers were much lower than those in England.

With the villages and hamlets in ruin due to exorbitant revenue demands of the British Raj and the constant onslaught of foreign industries, toilers began to go to the cities for work. In the villages, even if they couldn't fill their stomachs, they at least had had the support of ancestral land and traditional cultural surroundings. Those who migrated to Mumbai lived as workers in tin-roofed chawls. Slums and filthy settlements made their appearance after independence. However, the situation of the workers who had somehow to drag out their lives in the cities was in all ways difficult. Ten to twelve-year old children used to work fourteen hours for a few annas; there was no leave; no medical care. Most became sick at a very early age or even died. It was in such situations that the first working class movement arose. That working class movement had a place of honour in the mainstream of the national movement. Both movements depicted Indian mill owners, industrialists and merchants as bloodthirsty demons who exploited the working class.

In sum, the industrialist class was small in numbers and capacity, separated from the bahun samaj by caste and traditions and alienated from the freedom movement. The new leaders of India could not even entertain the idea of entrusting the future of the newly independent country to such a lowly, profit-mongering community of banias.

The State dominates the civil law

Not only the Congress party and its leaders, but most leaders in the country were conquered by this view. The Hindu code bill piloted by Dr. Ambedkar is an eloquent illustration. Once Pandit Nehru succeeded in subverting the Gandhian schema, there was little difference between his world view and that of Dr. Ambedkar [as regards economic policy.] Both were comprehensively anglicised. Nehru at least dressed in Indian style while in India, while Dr. Ambedkar comported himself in full western suit at all times and places. For Nehru the political power at the centre could be the only instrument of economic progress, industrialisation, and developing science and technology. He could never imagine that ordinary farmers, toilers and industrialists of the country, left to themselves, could ensure progress for themselves and for the country as a whole.

Dr. Ambedkar had a similar conception about social reforms. Hindu/Indian society worships no particular god or goddess, has no prophets and does not confer conclusive authority on any sage. Diverse social structures and customs have prevailed over thousands of years in diverse regions and castes. From the modern, particularly the anglicized view, many of these systems appear not only

unjust but also even immoral. But they have the sanction of popular will and were subject to gradual reforms as and when the need arose. Social reforms were generally pioneered by sages who had earned undisputed recognition for their conformity with the religions and the moral **larratle**. Gandhiji himself is an example of reformers of this type. He often said, "I do not hold the literal text of any scripture as final authority; anything that is unjust and hurtful to the conscience will have to be resisted." His position on the abolition of untouchability brought about a major transformation. Reform in social structure at the behest of iconoclasts and rebels is foreign to Indian tradition.

One could see all possible shades of customs and traditions from matriarchy to immolation of widows. All disputes relating to marriage, divorce, property, adoption etc. were settled fairly effortlessly through the intervention of the senior citizens. Both Nehru and Ambedkar considered this diversity as an indication of backwardness and ignorance. Nehru secretly nursed the ambition to be a latter-day Ashoka, while Dr. Ambedkar imagined himself a modern Manu or Buddha. That those in authority should lay down laws and that the ordinary people should follow them is unknown to Indian tradition. Respected sages put down on paper the customs and practices they observed around them but did not issue any edicts. The English could never comprehend this bewildering diversity starting from much before the revolt of 1857. The British engaged reputed Hindu pandits to make compilations of the various customs and authorities. The English version of the compilations gained greater prestige and authority in the courts of law and government offices than the original shastras themselves. The idea that there should be a common civil law for the entire country was based on the notion that the political government should be all-dominant. On this point not only Nehru, the socialist, and Ambedkar, the social reformer, but also the orthodox Hindu concurred. The Hindu traditionalists thought that the common civil code was an excellent pretext for forcing the Muslims to abandon the Shariat and accept the national code.

The Hindu Code Bill was the first step towards a common civil code. To impose uniformity in a situation of diversity a draft bill was prepared. Drawing now from this scripture, now from another, a politically viable middle path was projected as the model. The provisions carried discernible influences of the customs, practices and moralisms of upper caste anglicised society and also of the morals of the English. In south India and in many tribes in north India, custom gave women freedom and rights which were far more liberal. More practices were nullified in order to bring about uniformity. The Indian Constitution had accepted equality of women in property rights; but, the orthodox Hindu members of the Lok Sabha defeated all proposals in that direction. Insistence on uniformity in the Hindu civil law resulted in suppression of some very liberal and logical customs.

A member of parliament had actually proposed that a model, logical and just civil code should be introduced and all citizens – Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Parsi – should have the option to adopt it or to continue to adhere to their traditional civil law. Dr. Ambedkar rejected this on the grounds that it would create a state of anarchy where it would be impossible to tell which law applied to whom.

The Constitution and the villages

Not only the high caste politicians in power, but even dalit leaders like Ambedkar favoured the idea that there should be a strong central government. It should have comprehensive powers with minimum restraints. It should draw up economic plans and decide social norms, and the citizens should submit themselves uncomplainingly to its dictates. On the one hand we had Nehru's urban high caste socialist indifference towards agriculture and all that was rural. On the other was the urban preference for cities and disdain for villages of the dalit movement led by Dr. Ambedkar. Agriculture and artisanship were caught in this vicious pair of scissors.

The neglect of agriculture and villages are present in the Constitution itself. Part IV of the Constitution lays down directive principles of state policy for the governance of the country. Candidly speaking, it is a long list of reckless promises. Citizens are conferred the right to adequate means of livelihood; ownership and control of the material resources of the community are to be so distributed as best to serve the common good; equal work will get equal pay; the state will secure the right to work, to education and to public assistance so that no one should be forced to economic necessity to enter employment unsuited to their sex, age, or strength; a living wage for all is promised; there will be participation of workers in management, and so on and soon.

This splendid invective is pointless because it is not enforceable in a court of law. If the freedom movement influenced by Gandhian thought had had any influence on the constituent assembly, there would have been specific directive principles on agriculture, panchayat raj and village industries. In fact, there is only one directive principle regarding agriculture, Article 48 which says, "The state shall endeavor to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines, and shall in particular take steps for preserving the breeds and prohibiting the slaughter, of cows and calves and other milk draught cattle."

The members of the constituent assembly were apparently innocent of the fact that all economic development is rooted in the advancement of agriculture and were preoccupied with the upper caste concern for banning cow slaughter. Nehru was indifferent to agriculture, villages and panchayats, while Ambedkar described the traditional village as a "cesspool." The structure of the Constitution was not erected on the foundation of the countryside where the vast majority of the Indian population lived. Its base was the states joined in a federation of India. The panchayat raj was treated lightly and left to the discretion of the states. Briefly, the constitution of the union has no place for the village panchayats. The animosity of the post independence rulers against the autonomy of the villages is clear from Articles 40 and 48 of the Constitution.

More recently, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi amended the Constitution to introduce some sort of panchayat raj. The idea was not to devolve genuine power to the villages. Quite the contrary. The central government tried to bypass the states to impose its influence directly on the villages. From the beginning until now, all rulers have been indifferent to the needs of the rural population.

Domestic enterprise ignored

After the British left it was widely expected that their exploitative system would end. Agriculture, crafts, trade had some how survived a century and a half of unfair competition with England. It did not even occur to the urban elite leadership that the coming of freedom would give Indian producers a fresh lease of life, that this trade and industry could rejuvenate on its own, like vegetation after the first monsoon showers, and all-round development would rapidly follow. The white imperialists had boasted arrogantly that theirs was a mission of mercy, of uplifting the savage and primitive people -- a white man's burden. The new inheritors of power in India had a similar notion. They felt that they had the historical responsibility for the uplift of this huge downtrodden society, and that without them the majority of subjects in the country were incompetent to achieve their own development.

The leadership that came out of the freedom movement rapidly settled its accounts with the upper caste bureaucrats who had achieved prosperity under the British regime after the 1857 revolt. As long as the British were there, these collaborators used to vilify the leadership of the independence movement, saying, "Only the British can rule; how will your loin-cloth and spinning-wheel brigade run the country?" Once Mountbatten announced the date of the departure, those who could never

imagine that the British would actually leave India one day, were shaken to their very roots. They clearly would have liked to control all the strings of economic development of the newly independent India. If the economic sector went to the low-caste people in the private sector, the upper caste bureaucrats would have lost all their importance. Traders and producers would have become superior, spelling the destruction of the entire caste system. Pandit Nehru could easily establish a system of upper caste hegemony under the banner of socialism, because Nehru's plans eminently suited to the resurgence of the Brahmin community. The system put premium on skills of drafting and noting gave eminence to **speechifiers** and prestige to bureaucracy. Bureaucrats could, through files-shuffling, rein in the captains of industry and commerce. This is the secret of the eminence popularity by Nehruvian socialism.

'Peshwai' resurrected

Joniba Phule's prognostic came true. The British left before an Indian Nation in the sense of 'unified people' could emerge. A new form of 'Peshwai' reappeared. In the new Peshwai, it was not the Hindu scriptures that were chanted; 'the Vedas and the Puranas' were replaced by the works of Marx and Engels. It was a sort of 'Brahminic Socialism' that emerged.

This Brahminic socialism was convenient to the powerful classes of the traditional chaturvarna system. Its clinching feature was that gave the upper-caste bureaucracy control over the economy, but without responsibility for production and efficiency. The Russian system of socialism gave both power and responsibility to the state. All property was national wealth. All citizens were simply paid employees. From the planting of rice to the mining of coal to the building of railway carriages, not only were all decisions made by the state, their implementation was also the state's responsibility. The leaders and activists of the Russian Communist Party came from the working class, or at least had an intimate connection with working class life. It was not impossible for them to take charge of the actual work of agricultural and manufacturing.

In India, by contrast, both bureaucratic officials and political leaders were of the elite. They had no capacity for details of industry nor even the desire to be engrossed in such work. They wanted only to keep in their hands all the power of economic planning at the national level, to decide how large national production and national saving should be, how much consumer demand should be and how to meet it, which factories should be opened up and where. In short, they wanted the socialism of controlling industry without accepting the responsibility of industrialists.

Specter of Socialism in India

During the freedom movement, at least up until 1940, neither socialists nor Communists had widespread prestige. Slogans such as nationalising all industries including agriculture, leveling all inequalities in society or uprooting religion simply prejudiced people against socialism. There was not even a general consensus that the country should strive for economic abundance after independence and that it should become as wealthy as England or America. Everyone spoke of the principles of limited needs and simple living. Under the hegemony of Gandhism, poverty was glorified and disdain for wealth and luxury was encouraged. Farmers were supposed to toil all day and enjoy the fruits of their toil only in singing bhajans to God along with their wives and children, while the owners of wealth were supposed to use their wealth in the spirit of trusteeship and sacrifice. Amassing wealth and abundance of material goods in themselves were inconsistent with Gandhi's principles.

But the people never wholeheartedly accepted these principles. "It's all right for sadhus and saints - they are above mundane things; they can live on air; but asceticism and brahmacharya principles to

high for ordinary people." This was the rationalisation in everyone's mind. No one who got hold of a little money was such an ascetic world-renouncer as to let go of it. It became a well-established practice to fill one's own stomach, look out for to the welfare of one's own people, and tell all the world of the splendours of renunciation, self-denial and simplicity.

Thus there was not much opposition to the idea of taking the country on the road to development. The name of the War Department was changed to the Defense Ministry after independence, so again were words like "removing poverty and illiteracy" rather than "achieving prosperity" were used it took no time at all for Indians' previously tottering nonattachment to be broken. Development became an accepted goal, and people who were constantly hearing the exaggerated propaganda that countries like Russia were making such huge progress after destroying capitalism gradually began to accept the assumption that "socialism means all-around development."

The prestige of science also helped the triumph of socialism. With the war just finished, and rumours of dangers in many areas to the security of the country, it was natural for people to agree with the need to develop science and technology in order to stand up in the world. And, if science and technology were to be harnessed to economic development, then the state would have to take the central decision- making responsibility, and a system in which the state does so is called socialism

Nation Seduced by Socialism

The elite had one more expectation of the new state of independent India. While they craved to gather all power in their hands, they had no desire to exercise power through force or with the fascist methods of a Hitler or a Stalin; rather they had not the capacity. There was a consensus that the newly dawning Indian nation would be a republic, and would function as a parliamentary democracy

Democracy means unrestricted suffrage, and with voting rights for all a programme or at least a slogan acceptable to the majority of people is needed. How to lead the bahunjan samaj away from Gandhism towards socialism? How to get them to accept a policy of brahmanic socialism in which power was centralised in the hands of a high caste elite? On what basis would they support the idea of a socialist pattern of society?

What happened was astonishing. Most people accepted brahminic socialism. They came to regard nationalisation and state control as good for the common people in the country. Even today, even after the historical and universal defeat of socialism, its slogans fascinate most of the bahunjan samaj. Why did the majority of lower castes accept new system of caste domination thinly veneered as socialism? How is it that elections continue to be won on slogans of socialism and removing poverty?

We have already seen that the majority of people did not support very enthusiastically the program of simply removing the British. It was when Mahatma Gandhi used the Congress platform to make the freedom movement into a people's movement that the prominent leaders of the bahunjan samaj joined the national mainstream of Congress. The minority who did not join Congress went into the dalit movement. The socialists became leftists, or radical humanists **Royists**. Not only did these spokesmen of the bahunjan samaj support the socialist programme that consolidated the domination of the high castes, but they supported it with extreme enthusiasm. How did this happen?

It is not very difficult to unravel this enigma. The meaning of socialism was something known only to a very few. The Indian freedom movement was anti-imperialist; the readers of newspapers and the circles around them only knew that after the second world war the might of socialist Russia was vigorously standing up to oppose imperialism. This was sufficient reason to assume that socialism

must be a great thing. The organized propaganda that a heaven for workers was rapidly coming up in the socialist system, and the sympathy felt towards the cosmological monistic world view of Marx and Engels by those who had just escaped from the clutches of Sankara's advaita, were also important factors. Still, it is surprising that such a questionable ideology as Marxism should so easily have enchanted the mind of the entire human race in the last 150 years of its history.

However, the philosophical or scientific basis of socialism was not of very great importance. People put hope in "socialism" as some kind of system through which their poverty would be removed and their livelihood assured. Even if they didn't get anything themselves, there was a distorted satisfaction in the belief that after the socialist revolution all the aristocratic landlords and moneylenders would be humbled if not slaughtered. And so slogans of "workers of the world, unite" and "we are all one!" gained popularity. Never before in history have such large masses willingly and even enthusiastically accepted to be subjugated by their traditional tormentors.

After the crumbling of socialism, these citizens once again enthusiastically ran after those parties which promised to give them a kilo of rice for two rupees or a zhunka-bhakri for one rupee. Earlier the slogan was socialism; now it was Shivshahi, Ram mandir and Nehru dynasty. The important point was not in principles or reason. Thousands of years of slavery had extinguished not only social but also individual capacities. In the same spirit in which people had shouted "long live socialism," they were ready to hail the victory of any paternalistic government.

In order to turn a dependent people towards socialism, it was important to take control of their spokesmen. This was easily done. If only an indication was given that some crumbs of the left-over cake of power would be thrown in their direction, these leaders were ready to sell their loyalty. These were the heirs of the "nobles" who had opposed Shivaji himself and entered the durbars of Vijapur and Ahmednagar. What loyalty, what principles did they have? The savoury story of how Yashwantrao Chavan won over for Congress the fiery spokesmen of the bahun samaj who had gone into the left parties is notorious. And just as Yashwantrao bluffed them, so the spokesmen who had come forward with the flag of socialism bluffed Chavan and his caste fellows and made them their own.

Indian caste traditions encouraged the spirit of collectivism and supported a disdain for industrialists as money-loving banias. The economic programme of the urban political leadership gained the support of the bureaucracy that had been created by the British. The leaders of the common people were bought cheaply in the market. The masses sat with mendicancy to sing praises to anyone who promised to provide them their evening meal. This is the simple story of the triumph of brahmanic socialism over the Gandhian principles that had dominated the freedom movement.

Gandhism and socialism are mutually opposing ideologies. Gandhiji believed in God. He called himself a sanatani Hindu. He had faith in varnashrama dharma. He firmly believed that people should try in a humanitarian way and at a personal level to remove social inequalities, that a change of mind was of the greatest importance and that such change would not come by laws of the state. There was no common ground between Gandhism and the classical anti-religion socialism, that was based on materialism and the historical necessity of the rule of the proletariat. Before accepting socialism all of these issues should have been publicly discussed. But such a basic discussion never took place. In the Awadi session of Congress with the resolution on the "Socialist Pattern of Society," Pandit Nehru, socialist camel, put its nose inside the tent of the country. At the time of the Emergency, Indira Gandhi amended the Constitution to call the Indian republic a socialist one. The preamble to the Constitution that had been enacted and adopted by Indian citizens in 1950 was changed with retrospective effect. Electoral laws were amended so that only political parties

formally adhering to the tenets of socialism can be registered under law. But all this dramatic sloganeering lacked conviction study. No one considered it necessary to have an open and public debate.

Chapter 5: Independence snuffs liberalism.

From the beginning of the 18th century Europe and in particular England, witnessed the rise of a new liberal thought. Locke, Adam Smith, Mill, Spencer and other philosopher-thinkers, put forward a new world-view on human societies: Man evolved from tribal societies, human being as an individual is gradually evolving. The freedom of the individual is of central importance, the purpose of the society is to effort the individual protection of life, liberty and property. The state has only such powers as are specifically given it by citizens. The liberals offered a challenge to both the monarchy and church. If at all there exists something like the final truth in this universe, no one is likely to perceive it at any point of time. Ordinary human beings perceiving their natural instincts, committing mistakes and mending them carry forward the pursuit of knowledge of the universe; any intervention by a dictator, by a government is against nature and hence harmful. Government is no doubt necessary but its power must be clearly defined by law, all individuals should be equal before law. Individual is not for the society, the society is for the convenience of the individual.

Towards the end of the 19th century the nationalists and the socialists defeated the liberals who were articulating these views. A remarkable thing is that the European nations which saw, how so ever briefly, a liberal interlude did not fall to dictatorship of any type.

With the arrival of British in India the winds of liberalism started arriving on India's shores. Mill and Spencer influenced most social reformers contemporary of Agarkar. What is the character of this society? How do the customs arise? Which scripture ordains them? What right does the society possess to make the lives of innumerable young widows an unending misery? By what right does the society impose on a whole caste revolting work like carrying human excreta and to treat them as untouchables to boot? Forbids them all education and even entry in the temples? By what right are young widows pushed into burning fires along with the dead bodies of their husbands?

Social reformers in the first generation put in lime light the woes and pleasures of individuals drawing the connotations that society exists for the happiness of the individuals and not the other way round. Unfortunately this tender sapling of liberalism had difficulty in finding roots in the arid and rocky terrain of India. Most leaders of the community stood up to beat back the tide of liberalism. They raised hue and cry that the social reformers were irreligious and anti-religions. Even a progressive like Lok Manya Tilak opposed the Bill on age of consent fixing the minimum age for girls at marriage at twelve. His argument was the issue is not age of consent the issue is, do you accept the intervention of an alien government. Scriptures, religions, social institutions and their prestige was held to be far more important than the life and happiness of mere individuals. Some tried to plagiarise the institutions of the conquerors both the British and Muslims by introducing community prayers and worship. Arya samaj, Prarthana samaj and a number of similar institutions that came up, made no attempts to touch issues of social inequality and emphasised community action. Vivekanand and such others emphasised religion and nation; and Mahatma Gandhi tried to bring together politics and spiritualism.

What was the net out come of these various streams of thoughts? Lok Manya Tilak wrote about Spencer in 1896, "Our scripture contain a far more developed presentation of agnosticism than Mr. Spencer has been able to manage." Therefore, preaching us on the basis of Spencer is like carrying coal to new castle.

Any one who referred to any book of foreign origin was attacked as being a traitor and lackey of the British. And any orthodox fundamentalist who spoke against the English, qualified to be called a patriot for that reason alone. Agarkar, Jyotiba Phule, Ranade, Gokhale were all condemned as agents of British, unworthy of any attention. Liberalism upholding the individual right lost. Collectivism

upholding community triumphed. The political platform of India's freedom movement opposed the social reforms rejected the concerns of an individual has against the cult of personality, collectivism and cult of sacrosanct scriptures. Mahatma Gandhi called himself an anarchist, many of his quotations on the importance of individual liberty are well known. All the same the over all effect of Gandhian cult was to down grade the common individual and uphold collectivism, scriptures and traditional heroes.

In ancient times the Vedanta school of Indian philosophy had revolted massively against the collectivism in social practices and worship sanctified by the Vedas. It postulated identity between the individual consciousness and the cosmic presence and repudiated the need or the possibility of any intermediary between the two. This revolt was crushed by the Vedic Brahmins. Upanishads, the scriptures of Vedanta were assimilated to Vedas themselves. Thus supplanting their very existence. After the fall of Vedant philosophy it were the British who brought to India a world-view that put the individual at the epicentre of the universe. It was beaten back by the Vedic leaders who succeeded in mobilising common citizens against the champions of the common man. Jyotiba phule remained confined to three talukas of Pune district. Agarkar was crushed by the burden of his task and died at an early age. Ambedkar was disdained by the society and hence turned to Marxism, Buddhism and collectivism.

In the post-independence era the domination of the political institutions and the upper classes intensified a system that was euphemistically titled socialism. In practice, the economic system that developed after independence had no theoretical basis, measures were taken according to need of the situations and the demands of times in the light of influence of individuals, groups and organisations. But the situation was such that, with a few minor exceptions all significant groupings were in favour of consenting power in the government and bureaucracy. None believed that the economic instincts of the individuals and a profit instinct of individuals and institutions in the private sectors could be mobilised to develop a rapidly developing economy. Those who thought so dare not speak not for fear of being mocked at and ridicule. No sooner did any one dare to suggest a more significant role by the private sector then he was attacked by the spokesman of capitalist's agent of American imperialism, a profiteer etc. A few economists raised question on the concept and moralities of planning. They found themselves isolated. Forces favouring concentration of power in the government and bureaucracy were so strong that many protesters were sidelined and excluded from all appointments on governmental committees, educational, research institutions etc. Those who fell in line were quickly and sumptuously rewarded by conferment of diverse facilities, posts and honours. Many an economist worked hard to pile up statistics and data on this problem and that to prepare learned memoranda proposing enlargement of the state activity. They were certain to be promptly rewarded by endowment, grants, posts and honours. **In the early dawn of India's independence, liberalism was totally eclipsed. Everyone around was a collectivist.** No wonder India fell victim to the epidemic of socialism. Even after the fall of socialism we all continue to be followers of collectivism and give scan to regard to the common man his instincts, pleasures and pains. If this domination of collectivism prevails it will take the nation here after a Fascist nazi type of dictatorship after having ruined 50 years of independence. Unknowingly we are walking into a nazi quagmire the same way we fell into the socialist morals.

Chapter 6: THE ELITIST'S DEMOCRACY

During the British regime, the people of India were divided in the political question into several streams of thought. The three principal streams were: 1) high caste Hindus 2) Hindu backward, and 3) Muslims. The Caste Hindu could themselves sub-divided into the urban or the rural. Each of these sub-groups contained those who followed the traditional hereditary vocations as also those who followed modern trade, commerce or industry.

Similarly, the backward classes had difference of opinions depending upon whether they were urban or rural based. They were also sub-divided into several castes and sub-castes. Often the sub-castes had little contact with each other. Muslims also were sub-divided into urban, and rural as also according to the professions they followed, modern or traditional. Further, there were some who were nationalists and others, who were fundamentalist, who considered Islam transferred all national frontiers

There was a small but a significant group of socialists and communists, who at least in theory, disregarded all the barriers of caste and creed. Before the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa, the urban upper caste Hindu leaders had a conservative stream as also radical school of thought. It was under Gandhi's leadership that Congress became a national movement, unifying all urban upper caste communities. After the death of Lokmanya Tilak, radicals faded away by the Faizpore Congress. The upper caste Hindus, who provided the leadership in the rural areas, had also joined the Congress. This created an impression that all the Hindus without distinction are staunch Nationalists, devoted to the idea of driving the British out of the country. The idea persists even today. The British had made clear their intention to transfer gradually and increasingly the political responsibilities to the native representatives of the people. Since the days of Montague, Chelmsford Reforms, the government sources often stated that the British were prepared to quit India once it became clear as to who would succeed them. And what would be the system of political governance after them. The two questions had no easy solutions. There is reason to believe that the British deliberately obstructed any effort at a general consensus on the subject. They were certainly interested that the consensus is delayed as much as possible. It would not be surprising if some British officers and statesmen tried to alienate the backward classes as also the Muslims from the nationalist movements.

But this was not true of all the Britishers. A majority of the Britishers felt a certain closeness and affinity for the Muslims as also for the backward classes. Islam's close to Christianity as both venerate the old Testament. Both the religions have multinational following. The Indian leaders of the Muslim Community generally affluent western educated and lived in a modern style of life. The British rulers found it easier to communicate with them. The poor illiterate and backward Muslims, who constituted a large majority had little link with their westernised spokesmen. Whosoever, the fear of Hindu domination was a power sentiment, which forced the entire Muslim community to tow the line of the urban elite leaders. This tendency became notably progressive with time. The Muslims who had lead the 1857 revolt against the British rule in more States shifted their positions till the days of Lokmanya Tilak, the Hindu and the Muslim leaders had arrived at a covenant that the two communities will settle their differences amongst themselves by amicable means and fight the British rules unitedly.

Khilafat to Pakistan.

This situation started changing rapidly with the appearance of Mahatma Gandhi on the scene. The Muslims had a suspicion that Gandhi's ecumenism was strongly biased in favour of orthodox Hindu world view. The confluence of Ram And Rahim could hardly be acceptable to the fierce monotheism.

Gandhi's life style and his prayer meetings, never really won over the Muslims' admiration. Gandhiji openly flaunted his orthodox Hindu convictions. This was music to Hindu ears however in other communities it raised both some suspicion and inquisitive. To win over the Muslim support Gandhiji launched a movement against the abolition of the Khilafat by the British after the fall of Constantinople. He failed to salvage the Khilafat and also in bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity. On the contrary, the Khilafat movement made the Muslims strongly conscious of their separate identity. It was this; identity which fostered and with passage of time helped the creation of Pakistan. Once the Muslims developed a sense of separate identity, their leaders, with the active encouragement and abatement from the English rulers and officials, raised a major bogey. Hindu constitute a large majority in the country; Muslims are a small minority. Even if the Muslims are backed by the Hindu backward classes, this alliance- would be ineffective in front of a massive Hindu majority. In all constituencies the caste Hindu leaders will feign that they were the only true nationalists sincerely wishing to obtain political independence and get elected on that populist agenda. They apprehended that, as a consequence, the Hindu delegates would be in majority quite out of proportion with their share in the population. The Muslims have their own life-style and a distinct religious faith. Their civil systems are different. They feared that their distinct identity and the economic interests will be trampled and that Muslims will be reduced to second class citizenship. The Muslims leaders, abetted by official support, succeeded in fomenting these apprehensions. Muslim leaders started demanding that their community must have a separate representation in the legislatures and the representatives of the community should be elected by Muslims alone, since the Hindu majority could force on the Muslim community a leadership of individuals sold out to the Hindu cause. They also demanded that the legislative system should be such that it would be impossible for the Hindu majority to impose any change effecting the Muslim community without its concern. Mahatma Gandhi himself did not seriously oppose this proposal of a separate electorate. He had made his reservations when this proposal was discussed in the Round Table Conference. Later on, when the question of separate electorate for the Backward classes came up, Gandhiji opposed; it by risking life in an indefinite fast. The opposition to a separate electorate for Muslims was never that strong. It is likely that he feared any opposition to the proposal would harden Jinnah's position. The separate electorate for the Muslims paved the way for the partition of India and creation of an independent State of Pakistan. The cessation from India had an effect on the post-independent India for a limited period. only. The Muslim delegate in the Constituent Assembly of India did not raise a demand even for reserved constituencies, the idea of the separate electorate would have appeared suicidal for them. Briefly, Muslims who decided not to migrate to Pakistan but to continue living in India agreed voluntarily to join the national main-stream. Of recent, some voices have been raised to secure for the Muslims some reservations in Government jobs. With that exception Muslims have had no distinct place of their own in the Indian polity since the creation of Pakistan.

REPRESENTATION OF THE BACKWARD CLASSES

The situation of the backward classes was very different from that of the Muslims. Muslims had been the victorious rulers for centuries. The caste Hindus had a grave antipathy combined with respect, Caste Hindus had nothing but contempt and disdain for the backward classes. The religion and tradition denied the backward classes all human rights. The caste, nevertheless, expected that the backward classes should stand by Hinduism and take pride in this religion. Most people in the backward classes saw no alternative millennia of caste slavery had rubbed out all wastage of aspirations to human rights. It hardly occurred to them that they could live in a state of dignity on equal terms with their caste superiors. There were social reformers who tried to eradicate untouchability but they were motivated more by compassion than by considerations of human

rights. Most Hindu leaders maintained that theirs was a flexible, accommodative and developing society; it absorbed new ideas and lifestyle; it would in due course of time shed inhuman practices, like untouchability and soon everything would be all right in the best of the world. They insisted, therefore, that all reforms should take place within framework of Hindu scriptures and traditions. They were disturbed at the fact that the British invited representative of the Backward classes as a separate delegation to the Round Table Conference. The British were strongly alienated from the caste Hindu and community that worshipped cows and burnt alive its widows, could hardly earn their respect. They were convinced that the caste Hindus left to themselves would never be fair and just to the depressed classes. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's position and activities during the epoch had cast fierce controversy of late. He has been called a traitor to the freedom movement and to the nation. In fact, there was hardly anything new in his outlook. It was consistent with the thoughts of Jotiba Phule, who maintained that the backward classes are illiterate and have been sequestered from the core of the society. The advent of the British are for the first time getting an opportunity to educate themselves. Political reforms and unification of the society should precede the launching of a freedom movement demanding that the British lead the country. If social reforms do not precede political reforms, the newly Independent India would be very much like the feudal casteist fiefdoms of the pre-British days. And the backward classes will have lost the opportunity of getting education and they would become subjugated to the domination of the cast superiors."

The talk of unified nationalism suited the convenience of the upper caste Hindus. Their attempt was to push under the carpet the injustices of the system in a din of nationalist, jingoistic talk, Political, independence for them was of paramount importance, everything else was secondary. Patriotism they considered was the monopoly of upper caste, and the leaders of the backward classes were agenda of alien imperial rule. Traitors selling out their nation to please the imperial rulers. Even today, with minor differences, the proponents of Hinduism hold the same position which clearly shows how poor the understand of Hindu society was on the problem of the depressed classes.

REPRESENTATION OF BACKWARD CLASSES

The British in their plans for quitting wished to provide for a distinct voice for the depressed classes. Along with the Muslims, they provided for a separate electorate for the backward classes. Mahatma Gandhi took that as an orthodox Hindu. It was his religious duty to resist the division of the Hindu society. He went on an indefinite fast in the Yeravada jail. The dalit movement of the epoch was essentially a product of Dr Ambedkar's genius His importance was recognised by the British. However among the people of the backward classes there was a class ignorant about the issues involved and Dr Ambedkar's position thereon. They had a lukewarm support for Dr Ambedkar. On the other hand since Gandhi began his fast, the whole nation was in contradiction. Dr Ambedkar could not mobilise people to counter the sympathy work in Gandhi's favour. Helpless he gave up his insistence on a separate electorate and accepted to be contented with a system of reserved constituency with the backward classes. Gandhi broke his fast with a glassful of orange juice. In the Yeravada Pact Dr Ambedkar had put in a very significant proviso. He stipulated that there should be a primary election in which the backward class voters could alone vote. For short-listing the candidates who would in the panel of candidates in the reserved constituency. This proviso was never implemented. The question of communal representation seems to be after Yeravada or stumbling block in the transactions with the British.

The Second World War changed the whole scene abruptly. The British decided unilaterally to quit India without any pre-conditions relating to communal concord. Muslims who had already obtained a separate electorate persisted Pakistan under the threat of direct action. The Constituent Assembly of Independent India retained the system of reserved constituencies for the backward classes. for a

period of 20 years. The system persist even 50 years after that and it seems unlikely to be terminated in the near future.

While reviewing all the developments relating to communal representation, one encounters a very remarkable phenomenon. It appears that every one concerning Gandhi, Jinnah, Dr Ambedkar as also the authors of the Constitution appears to have overlooked all formats of elections, except the one followed in Great Britain. Elections are held in England according to geographical constituencies. The candidate who wins the highest number of votes individually is declared elected. This method was copied in all its details in India. Other countries of the world follow electoral system that are quite different. Some of them are better suited to the needs of a country of continental proportions and having diversities of creed, cast, language etc. It is surprising that none of the stalwarts, erudite men, particularly in legal matter, failed to examine the possibility of giving a trial to the alternative system of elections.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

In some countries, voters cast their votes not for a candidate but for a party. The number of seats won by a party depends upon the proportion of the votes scored by that party. If the party gets 20 per cent of the total votes, it gets about 20 per cent of the seats in the legislation. Each party publishes a list of its candidates in a descending order of preference. The candidates in the list equal to the number won by the party. Starting from the top are considered as elected. This system is called the System of Proportional Representation makes it difficult for any candidate to win elections on the support of a local community, cast or religion. It makes it difficult to win votes by promises of diverting funds for the benefit of the constituency, or jobs, projects etc. No one has a vested interest in following corrupt practices to pamper a constituency in order to win votes. The system also permits citizen with a common view point on a given subject to be represented in the legislature even though they may be widely dispersed over the territory of the whole country.

SYSTEM OF ABSOLUTE MAJORITY

Certain countries that have geographical constituencies but do not follow the English system of "First Past The Post" that is of doctrine as winner, the candidates who win more votes than any of his rivals. In France, to win in a constituency a candidate must obtain at least half the number of votes actually cast. If no candidate obtains absolute majority in the first round of polls a second round of polls is held in the interval between the two rounds. The candidates are allowed to form groups and alliances about the trend in the round. Some other countries limit the second round of polls only to the two candidates winning the highest number of votes in the first round. The same involves additional expenditure no doubt, but permits alliance to be formed in an informal manner in the countries where coalition governments have become a fact of life, a standing pattern

All those system rule out possibilities of various dubious means used in Indian electoral policies, such as presenting dummy candidate to split the votes of the rival candidates, nominate candidates on the basis of his caste etc. Today, coalition governments have become a normal feature of the Indian politics. The coalition alliance are formed most of the time after the election results are known by the methods more common in the cattle market. Leaders of alliance form before the policy, encounter series of difficulties in settling rival claims of alliance parties for allotment of constituencies. Parties stake their claims on the basis of elections held long back that have no relevance with the existing situation. The French system appears to be ideally suited for a coalition government so that coalition parties come together so that information on the strength in recent polls

CONVENIENCE OF UPPER CASTE

The caste Hindu leaders found that the British system suited their convenience. That possibly explains why other electoral systems were not examined. With a few exceptions, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas constitute a predominant proportion of electorate. In the British system there is a statistical bias. A party enjoying support of 30 - 40 per cent in the large number of constituencies, can win 50 or even 60 percent of seats in the legislature. There is enough evidence to indicate that the Caste Hindu curiously adopted the British system "First Past Post" with the calculation that they stood **westernists** politician prudence. A curious phenomena is why the leaders of the Brahmin community accept this system without protest. Jurists like Dr Ambedkar must have been fully aware of the relative merits of different electoral systems. Why did he not speak in favour of an alternative system Proportionate representation or absolute majority? When Gandhiji fasted at Yeravada, the whole politics was limited to two alternatives : Separate electorate or reserved constituencies. Minoo Masani advocated in the Constituent Assembly for proportional representation. No one appears to have been convinced that possibility after Masani. It is likely that if the system of proportionate representation was adopted before the departure of the British, the extreme solution of creating Pakistan would not have been considered as the only solution for apprehension of the Muslim community by the leaders like Jinnah. If only somebody had overcome the habitual pattern of copying the British system, may be, the partition and its horrible aftermath could have been avoided.

Independence came while the country was fractured by the caste system. The system of proportionate representation would have helped overcome separatists tendency in different regions and provided a more satisfactory method of empowerment of the backward classes. Jotiba Phule's predictions came true. Independence brought rule of black Britishers of upper caste native. English system of election ensured that this minority group commanded absolute majority in the legislature. This permitted switch over to socialism in 1950s and it is permitting today switch over to the Swadeshi brand of communal forces.

Capital formation for industrialisation required extortion of surplus from agriculture. In the Indian context, this got translated to a system of transfer of surplus from farmer to industrialist, or even worse, from low caste to the upper caste. In rare cases, where the farmers were able to retain surplus on land, they appear to be broken under healthy process of industrialisation. Villages in Punjab and Kolhapur Districts of Maharashtra are the eloquent testimony to this phenomenon.

Land reforms in the countryside were sought to be justified by the principle of equity. If equity was the guiding force reforms would have been attempted for equal distribution of wealth in urban area as well.. Economic and political mechanisation resulted in neo-colonial situation, where the countryside was plagued for the benefit of industrial sector and year by year the peasants started moving to the cities in search of livelihood.

Chapter 7: A SECOND PARTITION

The problem of raising capital

The development of Industry pre-supposes development in a large number of diverse fields. In the countries that are today considered as industrially developed, agricultural, transportation and Commercial revolutions preceded the commencement of the industrial revolution. A series of discoveries and innovations accompanied by the advent of technology propelled the wheel of economic development. The unequal trade with the colonial possessions and direct brutal expropriation resulted in extraordinary profits, thus providing the initial capital.

In the India of 1947, industrialism had not even made its early beginning. Cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras had made some little progress in Trade and Commerce because of their location at major ports. A number of English companies procured raw materials from all over the country, brought it to the port cities and exported them abroad. The colonial government had erected the infrastructure of the Railway network, post office and telegraphs for their benefit. Some enterprising men from the traditional trading communities had entered this commerce. Further in cases where value addition could procure higher profits, these men had taken the lead to start primary processing industries. The Civil War in the United States gave a book boost to the demand for Indian cotton. As a result, the export of cotton increased and a large number of ginning, spinning and weaving mills had sprung up. At another extreme, Tatas had a large iron and steel mill at Jamshedpur. With a few exceptions of this type the country was dependent on imports from abroad for most of its requirements, as literally, "a needle to a locomotive."

In a situation like this, how to bring about an all round and integrated development of Transport, Commerce and Industries. This was a major question faced by the new rulers. Economics of Mahatma Gandhi ordained a fairly clear recipe: boycott use of imported goods, promote self-sufficient and autonomous village units, encourage the artisans, handicrafts and village industries. The blooming of the village economics would gradually produce the infrastructure communications, transport and commercial network. This kind of an industrial revolution would be supported by the participation of the masses in India. Agriculture in the countryside, being the main source of wealth, it will put in the hands of villagers the primitive capital required for the traditional rudimentary technology in the early days. Experience and contact with the world will encourage in creation and advancement of technology that would be supported by the surplus of tertiary sector. This line of "natural growth" would protect the nascent industries from competition of the industrial production based on higher technology abroad. There is no reason to believe in the Gandhian vision. Entry into international competitive markets would come only after the Industry had developed the necessary strength and capacity.

Gandhian Economics would have been helpful for the village artisans and the labouring mass. The most dominant group in the ruling party consisting of the urban western educated, which was very anxious to strengthen the relationships with the western countries. Talk of village autonomy and handicrafts etc. appeared to them as Gandhi's idiosyncrasies. Gandhi's way according to this dominant group would take long in achieving economic progress. The industrial revolution may not come in several countries. India would consequently lag behind the more advanced countries of the west, for centuries to come. Gandhi, according to them, was re-inventing the wheel. A slow and long winding path to economic development was unnecessary. They favoured instead the import of modern industries and technology from abroad in order to put India on par with the advanced countries. This would be facilitated by encouraging mining and heavy industries, like Iron, Steel and Cement, which were to be promoted in a big way. So, they thought they would start moving the

wheels of economic and industrial development in India. In due time, they would accelerate and would bring the economy to the points of "take off" and smooth flight. Thus alone could India hope to rank with industrialized countries of the world.

The line of thought of the predominant group took the economic planning in the Soviet Union as a model. The USSR was largely believed to have arisen from a primitive state to become a leader state within a short span of 30 years in spite of the devastation of the Second World War. The Soviet Union was not a democratic State but its economic progress was considered to be nothing short of a miracle. In 1918, at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia was as backward as India in 1947. Its territory was equally vast; it had reached the top of the world through a planned economic encouraging heavy industry. Socialist planning was held by this group as the key to economic development as well as to eradication of social injustice and social inequality. They were convinced that the socialism represents the highest ideal for good of the humanity as a whole.

The planning process of the Soviet Union could not have been copied in all its detail in India. The urban lobby in the Congress party did not have the stomach for such a gigantic enterprise. They could hardly welcome the nationalization of all the private property or accept to become property-less labourers like the lower caste communities.

They certainly were strongly in favour of rapid industrial development that gave priority to the infrastructure and the heavy industries, but would not have liked a wholesale nationalisation of all the property which is a tenet of the socialist society. There is clearly a duality in this position. Socialism through democratic means was the slogan given by this group. This appears to combine the best of both the worlds and a moral and ethical way to economic prosperity.

The combination, in fact, was sheer opportunism on the part of the elite community. They abhorred the idea of losing property. They equally disliked the idea that industrialisation should put the artisans and the trading cast at the top of the social hierarchy lacking, as it did then industrial skills as also the socialist morals, the only way it could have industrialisation without affecting its social hegemony was socialism with a thin veneer of democratic institutions. What is remarkable is that the depressed class joined hands with the elite in pursuing this pseudo-socialistic way of economic development that suited the upper caste communities. The leaders of the Dalit movement had an antipathy for the rural village institutions. They likened it to a cesspool, where the Dalit could hope neither for justice nor for respect. They exhorted the Dalit to educate themselves and migrate to the cities to get absorbed in the industrial economy. The State-dominated the industrialised societies was nearer their hearts than the Gandhian model of a village-centered economy. The Dalit movement got oriented towards "jobs". That is where it joined hands with Brahminical socialism. That Pandit Nehru had succeeded in usurping the leadership of the ruling party as also the government suited eminently the interests of the elitist group,. Nehru, during his stay in England had come in contact with several Leftist thinkers, like Harold Lasky. He was attracted towards socialism, not as economic doctrine but as a model social system. During a short visit to Russia he was convinced himself the virtues of socialist planning. Seventeen years before Independence, he had become the Chairman of the Planning Commission appointed by the Congress party. In all the sincerity and enthusiasm of a young girl playing with her doll's house, Nehru had seen in the work of this Commission the vision of a future socialists in India.

DOCTRINE OF SURPLUS VALUE

The Marxist Doctrine propounds that the surplus value comes out of the exploitation of the labour and the working classes. How do primitive societies develop primary capital before the

commencement of Industrialisation? The post-Revolution Russia witnessed an acrimonious debate on this subject. The debate was concluded by Stalin by sending tanks against the recalcitrant kulaks to exterminate them. This operation made it clear that the capital for industrialisation comes out of the physiocratic multiplication in Agriculture. The Soviet Russia had applied this lesson in a bloody manner to buccaneering the Kulaks and collectivising agriculture. That could not be replicated in India. The rural leadership had its own strength. They would have sternly opposed any socialistic plunder of agriculture to promote industrialisation. In India there has been no trace of a debate on the origin of capital for primary industrialisation. The issue was never settled formally on paper, little by little things developed in a manner to suit the designs of the dominant group.

INDUSTRY FOR DEFENSE

Independence came with the Partition. Refugees arrived in millions. Communal riots flared up all over the country. Armed conflicts erupted with Pakistan. Police action was required in Hyderabad and Junagadh. Communist organised revolts in a number of places. There was a general consensus that the Indian armed forces had to be strong and well equipped

The Indian army has always been a professional outfit. Their professionalism was so ferocious that they rejected outright the idea of re-integrating the soldiers from Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army back into the Indian Army. Whatever the validity of the Gandhian system of village industries and handicrafts, it was irrelevant in the field of defence. This was the general opinion to preserve India's independence. The Army had to be equipped with up-to-date arms and ammunitions, guns, fighter planes and all. The Jawan cannot be sent to the front equipped with anything but the best guns. It would tantamount to treachery. The nation cannot remain dependent forever on super powers. India must develop its own capacity for defence production. There was not one dissenting note to this line of thought. Even the strongest Gandhian did not put forward an alternative defence strategy based on popular participation of masses rather than one based on a limited professional outfit equipped with modern ornaments.

Indian Army developed on these lines was easily beaten back in 1962 by waves of Chinese soldiers who carried nothing but a fistful of oats was their rations. Later on, America's well equipped army was humiliated in Laos, Guerrillas in Vietnam. Even the possibility of reorganising Indian armed forces other than on the British line was not even examined by the rulers of the Independent India.

The strange fact heightens a vested interest of the urban westernised community. They abhorred the very idea of an all out war that hurt all the elements of the society. They could hardly stomach the idea of the Indian cities facing London-like blitzes.

Such bombing would have destroyed industries and flatten the houses of all the people without distinction. They talked bravely of defending the nation. But they wanted all hostilities to remain limited to the border areas. That could happen only if the army possessed modern equipment. The army should take care of the enemy at the frontier and not let the civil population be touched. They looked at the border wars as if they were cricket matches and enquired about the figures of the dead and

wounded as if they were asking for runs scored by either sides. The excuse of the defence requirements finally flattened the Gandhian economic arguments. It was ridiculed as impractical idealistic ranting and abundant.

Dissemination of rural leadership

The very first few years after Independence witnessed yet another major upheaval. However, it happened so smoothly and subtly that its importance was lost on most people at the time. The riots after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in 1948 pushed out the Brahmin community out of the villages in Maharashtra and came to the cities. In many States in the south mass agitation against the past tyranny and continued domination of Brahmins were gaining strength. In those States also the Brahmins abandoned villages and the countryside and settled in the cities or even migrated to other States. The urban intellectuals and the leftist politicians had during the early vociferously post-independent propagated the slogan of "Land to The Tiller". Factories to the toilers was not insisted upon equally vociferously. There were hardly any attempt to correct the unequal distribution in urban properties. As regards the rural land, however, one legislation followed another in quick succession at the outset came the Tenancy Legislation which were followed by legislation for the separation of the Zamindari. Then there were a serious of land ceiling Acts. The class of the money lenders was also snuffed out from the villages. All this had the consequence of driving out of the village classes, who had traditionally held the leadership of the village communities. This proved to be no **hesitament** of the old tyrants. Quite contrarily a whole community that was socially and economically better off escaped the clutches of the rural life and became free to assimilate themselves in the urban communities, and eventually the build up their leadership. It is very doubtful, how far the tenants, farmers and landless labourers actually benefited from these measures. That question is not relevant either. The autonomous institutions of the villages was broken down by these laws and the people who provided leadership and articulation for the villages became refugees and left the villages. There is no doubt that any upheaval of this magnitude is painful for the society as a whole. But the uprooting the Brahmins, landlords and the money lenders was to have too strange consequences.

There is little doubt that the landlords and the money-lenders plundered the farmers. But is equally true that they carried the burden of several responsibilities pertaining to the village. In times of difficulties, particularly during famines and droughts, they practically maintained the village. Leaving aside the moot point whether these classes got more from the village or gave more to the village, it is certain that whatever the quantum of their plunger, it still remained within the village. The legislation against the landlords and the money-lenders was motivated and promoted by urban interests. Their main concern was not the welfare of the landless and the poor. They were unhappy that they were not getting any share of the loot and that the entire surplus benefited the villagers, the habitants of the villages. Zamindari is no more. The village money lender has been replaced by cooperative societies. There is whole network of banking institutions in the countryside. The exploitation of peasantry, about which such a bogie as raised, continues unabated. In fact, it appears to be harder and more.. The burden of debts in farmers is becoming increasingly crushing. Migration of the villagers to the city is growing. No matter what the real intention of the authors of anti-zamindari and anti-money lenders acts, it is clear that the village poor denied the benefit of them. All this legislation does not appear to have severely hurt the Brahmins, landlords or the moneylenders than the Brahmins who left villages in the aftermath of 1948 riots, appears to have been benefited from the calamity. Agriculture is like the continent of Circe of the Greek mythology. Anybody that in contact with it, goes through immigration and final destination. These communities were caught up in the quagmire of the village life and were at a loss to know-how to escape therefrom. The communal riots and reform legislation provided them a sudden escape. Any vocation or job in the urban sector is more lucrative than the agriculture of the most fertile land. These new refugees suddenly realised that economically they were much better off than in the past. They possibly had lost in prestigious status in the clustered village life. They found that they could in fact become the political leaders even in the new set up, combining contrast with the countryside with sophisticated

articulation to natural cities strength. The circumstances of their uprooting were such that most of them came to the cities, full of bitterness and venom for the village life.

Tenancy legislation and anti-zamindari laws proved to be a bonanza for the losses against whom they were targeted. In the State of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh there used to be a large number of big landlords. Implementation of new laws deprived the land holdings which were a losing proposition in any case. The rates of compensation were fixed at nominal or minimal levels. All the same, the amount that came into the hands was substantial for the epoch. If the land of all these people had come into the market for sale, simultaneously the prices would have sunk so low that they would have got nothing like the money paid by the government. The affected people came to the cities with this money and soon got into the upwardly mobile trade commerce and industries in the urban townships. Some got into the politics. Many of them did very well. Many of the politicians who talked enthusiastically about land reform it would be found that it came originally from this class of new refugee landlords.

INDIA VERSUS BHARAT

Economic policy of the British had resulted in a continuous flow of village people from villages to towns in search of livelihood. Further, social inequity of villages had pushed out a large number of people from the depressed class to the cities. Those who had social and economic were, left villages and that created a vacuum. No one was left to defend economic interest of agriculture and countryside. The urban educated had deep rooted interest in the socialistic pattern of society. New class of rural refugees elite and depressed classes joined their ranks to creation of a socialistic society, rather than one passed on enterprises and risk booming. In a sense, nation got partitioned second time. This was not a territorial partition but a notional one. Urban western educated, who drew their sustenance for a modern economy and industry can be called "India" and they obtained inheritance from the British of colonial exploitation, while, those in the countryside, leaderless, largely illiterate, eking out their livelihood on agriculture, became "Bharat" and continued suffering under the new colonial exploitation and even after the independence. White Britishers were replaced by the less fair ones, but this division cleared the way for exploitation of agriculture with Stalin-like ruthlessness without the need to use Stalinist tanks.

In the pre-Independence years, election in the erstwhile undivided Province of the then Punjab, were won by the Unionist Party, which consisted of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh farmers and it defeated the Congress that led the city traders. It is remarkable that while Sir Chotu Ram leader of the Union Party was alive, the Muslim League was unable to open a single branch in the Punjab Province, The Union Party had proposed "land alienation Bill". making it impossible for the Muslim leaders to seize land of the defaulting farmers. The Bill was opposed by the Congress Party under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai, who argued that seizure of land was the fundamental to the vocation of money lending and this right was denied. Money lending was disastrous consequence for the farmers. This post-independence days, there was no Sir Chotu Ram nor Lala Lajpat Rai. Villagers became leaderless. More elite sub-caste amongst farming community became spokesmen for Agriculture.

However, the commitment of this new class of leaders to the rural cause was at best superficial. They could be easily induced by offer of political carrots to compromise on even the vital interest of the countryside. These leaders joined en-masse the socialist brigade persuaded that socialism was way to destroying the Brahminical domination, the new rural leadership thus became subjugated to "India" and turned traitors to their own country fellows.

ERA OF STARVATION

Independence came 50 years back. The British rule of 150 years had squeezed dry both the agriculture and artisans, Villages had been all reduced to start poverty. The country suffered at the same time from extreme scarcity of food.

During the period of Second World War, the armies of the allied nations were provisioned from India with **revitaillements**. The Government in consequence was left with little stocks of food. Resulting famine was disastrous, particularly in Bengal. Hundreds and thousands of people perished. It was a comprehensive system of rationing that ensured some sort of supply of food-grains, sugar, kerosene etc. During the war period, very inferior quality grains lime milo and corn were being issued through ration shops. Two years before the Partition were marked by nation-wide conflagration in States like Bihar, Punjab and Bengal. Communal riots did not remain confined to cities but spilled over into the countryside. As a result, production of food-grain declined. Refugees moved in groups all over the country looking for shelter. Special arrangements had to be made to provide rations for such ambulatory community. Briefly, even before the Partition, the position of availability of food-grains was extremely difficult. The Partition and mass scale migration of refugees made the situation even worse. The territory ceded to West Pakistan included the West Punjab, which had

become, thanks to the massive programme of irrigation, dams and canals carried out under the British rule, reservoir of food-grains for the country. By comparison, East Punjab which had come to India, which corresponds to the Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh of today, had made little progress in the food production. On the eastern side, there were similar complications. Jute was the main produce of Bengal. In fact, most of the jute production in the worked came from there. Practically all the jute producing districts went to East Pakistan, while the jute mills concentrated in Calcutta, came to India. Soon after Independence began armed conflict in Kashmir, which put a further strain the supply of food. Till 951, India experienced severe shortage of food and prices that rose continuously, making lives of even relatively well to do families very precarious.

SUSPENDING RATIONING

Agriculture which had had precarious situation due to continuous waves of invasions and wars, 1949-1950 were the two years of good monsoons. Suddenly food seemed to be acutely scarce. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the then Minister for Civil Supply, decided to close the rationing system and created upon market for grains and pulses. Prices of food-grains in retail market began to fall. This decline in prices did not reflect adversely on the prices obtained by the farmers. Had this situation continued, there was probably no need to talk of what went wrong with the Independence. However, abundance of supplies, free market and declining prices are not to the taste of the people who prospered by stock piling and black marketing. A large number of employees of the Civil Supply Department were understandably unhappy at the prospect of losing their jobs. All these forces combined to encourage hoarding and other means of pressurizing the market. Soon, food-grain prices stated rising and finally, sky rocketing. The Government ought to have prepared itself to this kind of situation by building up some stocks. Why was such a primary precaution not taken? Was there some sort of wicket plan behind this, or did it happen exclusively through administrative inertia, inefficiency and lack of foresight, it is difficult to say positively, one way or another.

There was repetition of this 28 years later. In 1978-79 during the regime of Janata Party, Choudary Charan Singh attempted to de-license sugar and abolish levy system. Prices of sugar collapsed. There was panic among sugar factory owners. Had the government acted by entering into the market to support it and building some emergency stock, the situation could have been easily remedied. In

that case, probably the next season would have been normal and the system of levy would have disappeared. The Government gave a knee jerk reaction. In open market, there could be spells of hardships and confusion. Hoarders and black marketeers do try to profit from absence of regulations. Experience world over shows that this kind of aberration is brought under discipline by market forces and through pressure of consumers. The Government certainly lacked this kind of faith in the capacity of markets to regulate themselves. The Janata Party Government had its own socialist bias. Understandably therefore no sooner than the sugar lobby started protesting. The government surrendered and reinstated levy system. Employees working for the system of civil supply of sugar were also largely instrumental about the government's capital. Second attempt at liberalisation of agricultural marketing too failed in this manner.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi made an attempt exactly in opposite direction. She announced nationalisation of the entire system of food-grain market. There was no chance that such an absurd experiment would succeed. It failed soon and nationalisation had to be scrapped within a few months.

Bureaucrats' Thirst for Control over Economic System

However, they are not prepared to take the entire responsibility for running the economy. They much prefer that the farmers, workers, traders and industrialists should run the economy. leaving crucial point of control in the hands of Bureaucrats, thus giving them ample opportunity for obtaining supplementary income. Understandably, therefore, policy of opening up pursued by Kidwai and Charan Singh and also Indira Gandhi's nationalisation, both failed abominably. Normal commerce in food-grain remained the responsibility of the private sector, whether the government and its army of officials controlled the public distribution system and vast machinery of Food Corporation of India that controlled procurement, storage, transport and also distribution. Decisive control of food-grains through were firmly in the hands of the bureaucracy.

TYRANNY OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES' ACT

Kidwai's attempt at liberalisation failed. The system of rationing was firmly re-established. Then followed a period of stagnation in food production. Population continued to grow. Socialists drove hordes of people from the countryside to the urban areas in search of livelihood. The population continued to grow incessantly. It got increasingly concentrated in the urban centres. The distribution in these centres virtually collapsed. There arose a psychosis of scarcity and the country got caught up in a vicious cycle of want. Sometimes the monsoons were scanty, sometimes they poured in abundance, sometimes they were floods, sometime storms. The reasons varying but the supply of food every year consistently was short of demand.

A question needs to be asked: If the country really lacked food-grains to meet the reasonable consumption requirements of the population. For a family of typical size, counting the young as also the old can avoid starvation if it gets one quintal of food-grains per head per year. In 1965-66 the whole country was under the shadow of famine. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Prime Minister, exhorted the people to go without food one day in a week. The 1965 war with Pakistan the economic policies received a re-orientation under the slogan, Jai Jawan Jai Kisan. Soon thereafter, the Green Revolution appeared on the scene. An Agricultural Prices Commission was created to recommend reasonable prices for the agricultural produce. In the history of post-independence India the year 1965-66 marks a milestone in food production. That year came to 80 lakh tonnes which gives an average of two quintals per head, instead of one. Even taking into account food grains that used as raw material in the industry, there was clearly no scarcity to justify the bulla-ballow. The black marketeers and the bureaucrats had combined in mutual interest to promote food scare. This

psychosis continued till 1970. Today, it is said that the country has become self-sufficient in food. The fact is that the per capita availability of food grains as diminished while that of proteins has gone up. That may be the reason why the requirement of per capita of food-grains has diminished. In any case, it is difficult to maintain that the country lacked food at last till the day of Lal Bahadur Shastri. However, the Food Corporation of India and the vast hierarchy of bureaucracy of the bureaucrats continue to have a vested interest in keeping alive the food scare.

The manner in which the development of Agriculture, Industry as also other sectors of the economy were handled, can be fully understood only on the background of this history of psychosis of scarcity.

CASTE DIFFERENTIATION.

The post-independent India witnessed a clear-cut division of its people. Farmers and artisans on the one hand and those in the modern sector of trade and industry, on the other. This dichotomy sprung from the age-old system of caste distinction.

Since the time immemorial, the Indian society was bifurcated by the city wall. Those inside the wall pursued respectable trade and crafts fit for the upper caste, while those outside the wall; did menial and unpleasant jobs and generally had no civic rights. The coming of the British enlarged this dualism into wider regions but made the division even stronger. Those outside the wall had little say in the freedom movement, which was largely dominated by those inside the wall. After Independence the political power passed into the hands of those inside the wall who stepped into the shoes of departed colonial masters and became "India" while those outside the walls became "Bharat" and continued to toil and be exploited once again with the difference that now they were being tyrannized by no alliance but by the people of their own colour, nationality and religion. But now suddenly the air was filled with a new idiom. "Gandhism" was replaced by socialism, Agriculture by Industry. A primitive society suddenly awoke from its slumber of backwardness and fractured existence into a dawn of modern industrialization.

As mentioned earlier, Industrialization pre-supposes a surplus of production after meeting the needs of current consumption. It is that surplus which goes into developing, instrument outline as also infrastructure, like roads and communication.

PLUNDER OF AGRICULTURE

The industrially advanced countries of the west had resolved this problem of capital formation in a crude and uncouth manner. The landlords in the countryside simply drowned a way the tenants working on their land a went over to more sophisticated agriculture, shop keeping and dairy etc. The poor peasants driven out in a wake of this "enclosure movement" reached the cities in a state of penury. They had no shelter and no means of livelihood. They were left with no alternative but to take recourse to crime. Employment was difficult to get. Those lucky ones who got jobs required to work 12 - 14 hours per day with wages that hardly sufficed to keep the body and soul together. Thus did the new emerging industry obtain its raw material labor in the early stages. Later on, when the trade with the neighboring countries grew and the colonial empire offered possibility of plunder like trade. The Industry received the surplus required for the capital formation.

Marx had postulated his entire doctrine on the idea that in an advanced stage of development, the work force deprived of also property will rise in a revolution to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat under the Red Flag. At that stage, the problem of the primitive capital formation would have been resolved and the major source of capital formation would be stark exploitation of the

workers. It is the agony of the toiling masses that would erupt into a socialist revolution. Marx's economic analysis is very vague on the process of primitive capital formation in a socialist country because a primitive socialist state was considered to be a contraction in terms. In fact, however, the socialist revolution happened quite contrary to Marx's prediction, neither in Germany or in England which were two; more advanced capitalist systems of the epoch. The revolution came in a under-developed country with a primitive economy, like Russia. The planners of the Bolshevik State soon realised that the surplus required for the building of the socialist industry has to be exorted from the "kulaks" There was a debate whether this transfer could take place in an environment of enmity or whether use of the armed might was inevitable. The main propense of both the sides of the debate, Praebrozensky and Bukharin were executed. by Stalin who further used armed tanks to impose forced collectivisation of the Russian Agriculture Thus, exactly like in the capitalist countries, the mobilisation of surplus from the agriculture to the industry turned out to be a lobby affair.

The problem posed itself in an entirely different context in countries like India that were imperial colonies before gaining independence. It became clear that the issue is not e economic one but more cosmic or physiocratic in character. The land and the nature are stores of accumulation of energy which are released at the application of labour and produce a multiplication, several-fold of the original seed. For a country like India, land and agriculture are l clearly the only possible sources of surplus. It was inevitable that the conflict "country versus town" or Agriculture versus Industry" should present itself in India in the same way, as it did in the capitalist and the socialist states. Here too industrialisation was intended to benefit a section of the society which made the conflict, particularly fues if the industrialisation was meant to be in the interest of all sections, classes and castes. The conflict could have been greatly attenuated. But in human societies, shift from the agricultural economy to the industrial one does not appear to have come about smoothly without friction. In India, the conflict became particularly serious because, apart from the economic contradiction between the Agriculture and the Industry. The age-old caste contradi tions also came into play. Even though the post-independence rulers flaunted the flat of socialism, it was beyond their capacity to establish a Bolshevik type of dictatorship and Stalin did, thanks suppress the peasant discontent.

Not that such efforts were not made, Stalin opened a campaign in India. The campaign was opened against the landlords and moneylenders. A campaign vilification was mounted which ignored all the benign aspects of those institutions. Nehru made all the preparations for cooperativiasation.of agriculture. But it failed. The industry could get its surplus required for the capital formation only in one way: i.e. to encourage growth of agricultural production and to take away all surplus from the villages into the cities. The industry had to be n provided raw materials, labour and capital, not on the strength of armed might but through subversions and manipulation of market force.. Through all the 50 years since Independence, this was the method adopted and deployed for the exploitation of the farmers and the agriculture. A whole draconian system was built up with Essential Commodities Act as its prime instrument. Restrictions on exports, dumping from abroad, restrictions on transport, storage, processing and compulsory procurement on artificially depressed prices have been the instruments of the anti-farmer armory. Their brutal application was justified as being in the interests of public distribution in a low caste economy. However, efficient the system of plunder was ultimately the quantum of the surplus that could be extracted depended on the level of aggregate production. The government centered its efforts on campaigns like Grow More Food. The immediate famine conditions were met by ship-loads of food grains arriving from the United States. India paid only for the transport cost and nothing towards the food-grains. The policy of "Ship to mouth" feeding of the nation continued for long many years. Even an eminent socialist economist like Ashok Mehta is on record as having said that, "If the food could be obtained so cheap from

abroad, Indian agriculture could stand some benign neglect for years to come."The ship loads brought from abroad depressed prices in the domestic market. Agriculture became non-remunerative and the farmers lost the hope of recouping any effort and investment in the land. India's dependence on USA for food grains worsened day by day. The rationing shops had food-grains to give if only the American ships arrived in the Indian ports on schedule.

FATTENING THE CALVES FOR SLAUGHTER

The agricultural production can be augmented by three means:

Reinforcement of infrastructure,

Advancement of technology and

Provision of economic incentives.

Villages in general are poor; in all infrastructural facilities. Lack of access roads, drinking water, power, marketing, credit are all scanty and poor. The land tenure was mediaeval, the farmers illiterate; land tied down by traditional rituals. The productivity of Indian agriculture was consequently very low. The cultivation practices were age-old, seeds, manure and pest control very primitive, keeping a part of the land fallow was only known method of maintaining fertility.

It was equally necessary that farmers should have adequate economic incentive to put in labour and investment. The system of markets since hundreds of years had been such that the farmers be forced to rush his produce to the markets as soon as the harvesting was done and accept whatever he got in exchange. Consequently, for generations together farmers had lost the enthusiasm for soil conservation, irrigation and improvement of implements and technology.

Promoting formation of industrial capital at the expense of agriculture require that the agricultural production should increase but that the benefit of the increased productivity should not reach the producer. This explains why successive governance of independent India attempted to improve social economic and agricultural infrastructure and tried to improve the technology. This was a case of calf being fattened so that it should yield maximum meat on the day of the slaughter.

HISTORY OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY

In the epoch of Pandit Nehru the emphasis was on building up the infrastructure, improving irrigation, system of land tenure, building of model farms, establishing cooperative credit network, extension of network of A P M C (Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee) land projects of this type, were implemented. Soon it became clear that the cooperation has failed. Without going into the causes thereof, the government tried to push them to success through liberal state funding. The cooperative institutions got departmentalised. They offered an allure of economic gain that easily won over the new ruler leadership. which developed an added enthusiasm for the socialistic pattern of society.

Lal Bahadur Shastri's tenure of a bare 18 months, saw a radical transformation The Agricultural Prices Commission was created and radical steps were taken to imbibe the Green Revolution Technology. Thus, it was that during the period of 1965 to 1970 the farmers obtained some of their crops prices that heartened them.

Indira Gandhi puts serious limitations on the politics initiated by Lal Bahadur Shastri. The Agricultural Prices Commission was muzzled by successive appointments as its Chairmen. Leftist economists which established anti-farmer credentials The support prices recommended by the Commission

were used not to provide a floor to the prices in the market but rather the maximum limit beyond which no private trader need offer for purchasing the agricultural produce. The Green Revolution remained confined to the Northern States. The productivity even There soon reached a plateau. The Green Revolution did not move neither to the east nor to the west. The methodology of fixing the prices continued to be arbitrary and restrictive. till the advent of the Janata Dal government under the Prime Minister V P Singh. With that small exception, agricultural commodities were subjected to massive negative subsidies. Exports continued to be generally banned uneconomic imports were contrived to depress domestic prices. Compulsory procurement, restrictions on transport, storage, credit;and an artificially inflated exchange rate of the rupee, were all used to keep agricultural prices depressed and the terms of the trade continued to version against the agricultural section. The substance of the agricultural situation during the last 50 years can be summarised in two statistics.

At the independence, population;dependent on agriculture was around 74 per cent, while the contribution of the agriculture to the gross domestic products was 65 per cent Today, Agriculture contributes less than 25 per cent of the G D P while the population dependent on Agriculture remains at around 70 percent. 50 years back if the per capita income of an agriculturist was Rs. 10 then that of a non-agriculturist was Rs. 14. Today, the ratio has worsened so much that a non-agriculturist's per capita income is over Rs. 104.

All the consequences of the economic policies in the last 50 years are fully reflected in these figures. The government decided to give priority to cities and industry, rather than to villages and agriculture and made all possible endeavour to transfer the agricultural surplus from the farmer to the industrialist. The imperial rulers exploited the colonies,. to help solve the problem of capital formation of the metropolitan industries. The black British rulers after Independence followed the same policies. They created a new neo-colonial pattern, where one part exploited the other. It is these social, economic and political policies that are responsible for the decline and fall of Independent India.

Chapter 8: 'CULTURED' INDUSTRY

The influence of the Stalinist socialists model as also the convenience of the elite to denominate in the industrial field where they had little knowledge and experience had a large influence on post-independence planning. Accelerated industrialisation and rapid advancement of science and technology became a centrally important objective. The idea was to put India amongst the ranks of the most advanced countries of the world.

To build up the capital for the new industry a WHO system was devised for exploitation of the surplus in agriculture and armoury of instruments was developed that included export restrictions, governmental dumping from abroad, restrictbear the risk involved in any industrialisation n domestic trade, storage, movement, compulsory procurement and levies as also an artificially inflated rate of exchange for the Rupee. The system and the armoury of instruments are very much in use till today. The industrialisation in addition to capital, requires technology, machinery and invention. Even more important is the availability of entrepreneurs who have the courage to venture in uncharted fields and bear the risks involved in any industrial enterprise. Enterprise was in short supply in order to make up for this scarcity a comprehensive policy was chalked out. The masses of the backward communities were charged with Artisan, handicrafts, village industries for generations together. They had developed their own, however, ramshackle and primitive technology, which was handed over and developed from generations to generations. They had their small equipment and instruments. Their ware had a guarantee demand in the surrounding villages themselves. Carpenters, coppersmiths, conters, weavers ... all had assured markets. Their spare production could be disposed off in the market towns and at fairs. All these village industries had been ruined by policies of the British to promote the import of manufactured goods from Great Britain. Shiploads of cheap and superior manufactured wares flooded the Indian markets and the output of the local artisans could not held their own against this unequal competition with the exception of textiles, copper, brass-ware and art-ware. Most artisans had been reduced to working for supplying instruments and outils required for the farm operations in the surrounding areas. During the British Raj, a few cotton genes, textile mills and the steel factory at Jamshedpur came up as the only units of modern industry Some of the innovative princely states had encouraged industrialists like Kirloskars and Ogales to build their small factories During the period of the Second World War, these small industries received a sudden Philip The hostilities had restricted movements of ships. The imports had been strictly curtailed. To meet emergent situation it became necessary for he British rulers to encourage industries of this type, When the Independence came this was all that stood as industry on the territory of the new Republic.

JAPANESE INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

There was no alternative but to import technology from the western countries. Two methods were open for this. The first may be called the Japanese method. Japanese Government had sent thousands of young ones to western countries to make an in-depth study and have comprehensive experience of the industry there. When these young men returned to the motherland, the Japanese Emperor and the Government keen on promoting indigenou industry follow a set of policies. The Japanese consider the western people as uncultured and primitive nations that dominated the world, nevertheless, because of their advancement in science and technology. Japanese, on the other hand represented a rich culture and a superior race. It was their backwardness in science and technology that humiliated the Japanese. If only they could correct this deficiency they could dominate the west even in the modern age. It was in this fervour and spirit that the Japanese government and the people set out to industrialise themselves. Japan has very limited land and a large population. It was dependent on the rest of the world for not only minerals like petroleum and

iron but also for its day to day requirements of food. The farmers had to be encouraged to produce more. Thus the Government did by introducing policies that were the exact opposites of the Nehruvian policies. A policy was adopted to ensure that the farmers got remunerative prices. All import of food-grains were banned. Farmers were assured of support prices that were several times higher than those in the international markets. The Japanese peasantry suddenly found that they had come into some money. They used it to start cottage industries with the help of the young men who had returned with deep knowledge and wide experience of western industries. Japanese cottage industries copied unashamedly the designs of the western products. In India refugees from Sindh from Pakistan have built up an industry of this type in the Ulhas Nagar region near Bombay. The quality of the product was not very high but they were priced at ridiculously cheap levels. For some time the term, "Japanese goods" came to be synonym with low quality and cheap prices.

The Japanese Emperor tried yet another experiment. Japan had a large number of celebrated families reputed for their bravery in wars and other eminent accomplishments. The loyalty of these families to the Emperor was beyond question. Each member of these families would have gladly died to fulfil even the slightest wishes of the Emperor, whom they respected as the descendent of the Sun God. The Emperor ordained them to start new industries and opened up the imperial treasury for their use. The princely ruler of Aundh, a small State in Maharashtra, gave comparatively less support but succeeded in having two large industries in the little territory he had. The encouragement of the Japanese Emperor was much larger. Japan also had a tradition of discipline and obedience. Non-complained about the Emperor's partiality to the great dynasties, the new industrial families helped the cottage industries in the countryside to increase production. The quality of the goods improved little by little. Today, Japan stands, in spite of its limited natural resources, as an industrial super-power, unparalleled in fields like Informatics, Automobiles, Optics etc.

23.2.2000

It would have been inconceivable to implement the Japan-like policy of industrialisation in India. India lacked a central, political, institution that commanded abounding respect from all the people. The society was fractured due to the caste system. Those who followed productive vocations enjoyed neither prestige nor authority. It was the priestly class which had the commanding heights in all matters. The warrior caste had been subjugated by incessant and glottal aggressions for over thirteen centuries. They had developed a life-style of meekly submitting before the invading talents or joining their ranks and using the power thus acquired for tyrannising the poor masses. In this kind of a situation which community could have taken the lead to assure in a new era of science and technology? This task was beyond the scope of those who lived by village industries and small crafts. The younger generation of the upper caste educated community had little interest in technology or industry. The British Raj had introduced new systems of land tenure, drawn up revenue maps and made changes in the ownership pattern. This created an abundance of legal suits in civil courts all over the century. The idea that an aggrieved citizen could go before a court of law and ask for justice was itself very novel in a phrasal society. Everybody who was unhappy at the changes tried to engage a lawyer to appear before the court. In most of the cases, as Jyotiba Phule has described it, one lawyer spoke in a language that his client did not understand. The lawyer of the adversary spoke in a language that neither party understood. The judgement was again delivered in a language and manner that neither party could understand. All the same, starting from Tehasil court to the High Courts in Presidency towns, legal practice became a highly lucrative business. Everybody wanted to be a lawyer. The brilliant students from the educated classes who could go abroad for education, used the opportunity not for developing technological expertise, but for advanced

studies in law. Becoming a Bar-At-Law was considered as the highest accomplishment to work for and to dream of. A few of them did appear for the examination for the Indian Civil Service with the objective of getting a prestigious position of power in the administration. Very few succeeded. Most of the leaders of the Indian National Congress were those who barely managed to get a Bar-At-Law which could be obtained by giving a dinner for 12 Guineas to the Members of the Temple Inn.

In rare exceptional cases some studied Medicine, most broad studying anything that could lead to a vocation where one had to soil one's hands. Engineering, Industry, Management and other connected fields were mostly ignored.

WHITE COLOURED INDUSTRY

There was no way India could obtain the frontier technology, that was advancing very rapidly in the west. If the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed has to go to the mountain. In a country with large population like India, where whatever small industry that existed was being managed by the iron smiths, copper smiths, cobblers, carpenters, others belonging to inferior caste, had to come in contact with the technology. The Government could have imposed restrictions on the imports of manufactured articles from abroad, and given and encouraged instead foreign investments. If the common craftsmen had got directly in touch with the western industry, they would have easily assimilated and disseminated technology. The caste which had had no opportunity for any kind of education till the arrival of the British had schools opened for them by the British. Jyotiba Phule said, "Lack of education means less of intelligence. Without intelligence there can be no morality and with morals gone everything is lost. By education, Phule certainly did not mean learning of the three R-s. If the younger generation of the productive caste lose this opportunity of getting acquainted with the western Science and technology and if they continue to use old indigenous methods for their crafts and industries the opportunity may be lost forever

If the British left and India gains political independence, it would make little rate difficult even in the newly independent India. The dominance will be enjoyed by the unproductive castes, said Phule. Briefly, Independence will mean restoration of the Peshwai, i.e. ruled by the elitist caste. This was the comprehensive meaning of the Phule's gospel. Unfortunately, the school of thought that Phule represented, which considered that said reforms should have priority over the political programme and independence lost. The freedom movement with its jingoistic slogans required abhorrence not only of the British administration but also of the industrial culture of the British succeeded. In spite of the contact with the world then most advanced industrial power India at independence was as backward, relatively speaking, at the end of the Raj as at the beginning of it.

The new Rulers of India were western educated and proud of their familiarity with the English language. They had fixed ideas of their own about the manner of industrialising India. With the help from western countries, they opened institutions of higher education for Engineering, Industry, Management etc. Most of the students admitted to these institutions were from upper caste urban communities. A few decades back when law was in vogue (initiative?), they would have studied law, now that new dawn of industry was coming. They wanted technical education But with the mind set at the lawyer, they would not of liked to soil their hands in vocations traditionally considered to be fit only for the lowly castes. The Government hopes that this class of young engineers given appropriate encouragement could be very useful in the jobs in new industries; The new industries will mostly be in the public sector, which factories to open? Where to open them? And what should be their production capacity? What technology to use and where from to obtain it? All these decisions were to be taken in Delhi Govt was to enter into collaborations agreements with foreign governments and industrialists for establishing factories.

As it happened, this policy suited eminently the interests of the foreign governments as also the industrialists. During the period before the Second World War English sent to its colonies textile goods and similar other wares required for consumption. India was considered to be a very paying consumer market. The times had changed since then. During the period of the war the industrial capacity in England had expanded enormously to meet the needs of the fighting forces. In order to win the war, a new industry that could manufacture machines for the consumers industries had come out. At the end of the war, a serious problem for the governments of European nations was about the disposal of the machines manufactured by the machine building industry. Disposal of textiles and other consumer items was relatively unimportant. They needed vast markets for machinery. Then policies of newly liberalised colonial powers of putting up indigenous industries by installing western machinery and using western technology suited them to the last letter. The new industries were national only in location. In all other respects they were replicas of their counterparts in the old metropolitan countries.

Industrialisation began with all the fanfare but did not reach the technology to the broad masses in the country. The vast majority of lower caste people did not get even a touch of it. Those who had generation long tradition of crafts and industry remained deprived of the advantages of the technology which came up to the sites of the new industries but did not percolate further down.

The Government did give some encouragement to small scale industries. But the technology for those industries was determined not by the industrialists with the information about alternatives, but trickle down through the leaky pipeline of the governmental machinery.

HEAVY INDUSTRIES OF THE RUSSIAN MODEL

Priorities in Industry were substantially influenced by the Soviet model. The government accorded highest priority to mining, heavy industries, generation of power, steel, cement etc. The idea was that once the basic materials become available infrastructure was laid down. Opening of industries would become fairly simple. This strategy on the Soviet model was authored by Dr Mahalanobis of the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta. It was also supported by a large number of European and Scandinavian economists, who were invited to give advice. The barrage of Bhakra-Nangal was completed in quick time. Steel plants were erected at Bhilai, Durgapur etc. A number of new industrial townships sprang up. The alumni of the new engineering institutions masqueraded as engineers dressed in impeccable whites. The nation at its roots remained unaltered.

SHODDY GOODS AT EXPENSIVE PRICES

Those who became engineers, managers, industrialists came from a community which had, for generations together, never soiled their hands by working on agriculture or by using any of the implements of crafts or industry. These are the people who had become pleaders; if law would have continued to be a paying vocation. They had little notion of entrepreneurship. They used a technology that was approved by the government, used the machinery that could be obtained with governmental licences and permits, obtained finance from nationalised banks and counted on governmental subsidies and credit. This kind of hollow entrepreneurship could only produce at very high cost, for which there could be no takers. The village artisans had somehow managed to survive in face of the competition from advanced alien industrialists. This new class of industrialists was not capable of even that. They cried for governmental help and the government obliged by imposing restrictions on imports from abroad under the name of promoting national autonomy and protecting infant industry. Typical import duties were as high as 150 to 200 per cent. Consequently the producers abroad lost interest in Indian markets and the Indian consumers became helpless.

victims of the pseudo-industrialists in India who suffered from paucity of goods, long waiting lists, exorbitant prices and shoddy quality. In a typical case, the Indian consumer was required to pay three times the price than the international price and buy poor quality goods. Those who obtained "fiat" or an Ambassador car at high prices, waiting in the queue for 10 to 15 years, considered themselves lucky to have got a car at all.

Industrial goods became expensive; the cost of production of all the things which used industrial produce went up. In the rest of the world a tractor costed 40 - 50,000 Rupees. The Indian farmer had to purchase the same at four times the price in Indian market. The overall consequence was that the Indian goods lost the international market.

BURDEN OF GOVERNMENTAL MACHINERY

Running of the machinery was economic planning became an expensive affair. Moneys had to be raised for investment as also for meeting the administrative expenditure. The Governmental taxation mounted all the time. The Nadir was reached when Morarji Desai was the Finance Minister. In his budget the rate of income-tax was the highest bracket touched 95 per cent. The taxation made it even more difficult for the Indian producer to compete in the foreign markets. Economy became, in its truest sense, a licence, permit, quota, control inspector system. The industrialists were required to pay taxes that were used, in the main part to pay for an establishment which considered it its first obligation to obstruct all enterprise and productivity. Even the honest tax payers could not escape harassment. The taxation officers continued persecution, nevertheless. The experience taught quite a number of industrialists to become wiser. Rather than pay taxes to the government, they found it much simpler to come to an understanding with the taxation officer so that the officers gained, the industrialists were saved the tax burden and the government got only the blame. Thus developed a whole parallel economy. The quantum of black money expanded by leaps and bounds to a point where the parallel economy was as large as the official one. As a matter of fact the productivity and efficiency in the parallel economy were much better. In spite of all, if the Indian socialist economy was saved from the kind of collapse experience by the Soviet economy, their credit must go to the parallel economy. The industrialists in the official sector were not bothered about either improving the quality of their goods or about reducing the cost of production. They had a captive market where they could dictate terms to the helpless Indian consumer. The rates of profit went on increasing. In some sectors, it reached the dizzying levels of 200 - 300 per cent.

THE NEW LABOUR MOVEMENT

All this had a serious consequence on the labour movement. The Indian worker was never celebrated for his quality, assiduity or discipline. In the early days of industrialisation, the wage rates were very low. Workers had few perks and facilities. Any employee could be dismissed and there would be a hundred waiting in queue to replace him. Wages were not considered a serious burden by the employers. Poor work, poor wages was the dictum. The labour faced extreme hardships. The labour movement developed little by little but was still too weak to dictate its terms. The epoch of State owned industries changed all this. Shri N M Joshi, Ambekar and other leaders of their ilk worked hard and selflessly to build up an infant trade unionism. They were quickly replaced by the trade unions of the left, which made it a ritual to take industrial action for purely political reasons. This epoch of leaders like S A Dange, did not last long. A new generation of labour leaders, like R J Mehta, Datta Samant, came forward. Industrialists earned huge profits. But account for only a part of it. This was noticed by these new leaders. Unions, they calculated, could ask for any hike in salaries, even 1500 to 2000 rupees at a go and if they could sustain a strike for some period the

industrialists will find it cheaper to accept their demands rather than keep the production closed. The licence - permit Raj benefited a class of industrialists, who piled up profits by plundering the consumers. They organised labour benefited from the situation by forcing their employers to hike their wages and perks all the time. The wage rates in India even today are low by international standards. However, the indiscipline inefficiency and laziness are so rampant that Indian labour at its cheap wages comes out to be expensive. Countries in eastern and south Asia that possess the hard working, efficient and cheap labour, found a way to become successful suppliers of accessories to the industrially advanced countries. India could hardly follow this path.

FACADE COLLAPSES

Inefficiency and indiscipline crept into the public sector industries and one by one, they became losing propositions. Their losses were made up through the Central Budgetary allocations. Industries in the private sector too, started declining. The technology they used was second-hand and outdated even at the time it was obtained. Now it became obsolete. They passed on the squeeze to the small scale industrialists they had contracted with for the supply of spare parts and accessories. The small scale industries started closing down and false Facade of Nehruvian industrialisation started crumbling. Systematic exploitation of agriculture had made this sector weak. The industry controlled by the incompetent bourgeois had an uneasy existence but this class managed to hold on to its influence on both the Economy and Polity. Indian Industry became the highest subsidised industry in the world. Very significantly, at the same time Indian agriculture was getting crushed under the highest level of negative subsidy. The Indian economy faced a crunch where the first independence experiment needed to be reviewed.

As if the nation had followed the ideas of Jyotiba Phule and started on a programme of education and enlightenment of the masses and of gradual up-gradation of skills of the people who, for generations had run the Indian crafts and industries, the captancy of the Indian industry would have been in the hands of the people who were not afraid of soiling their hands. Indian industry would have prospered. The Governmental investment in industry is the highest in Bihar. That continues to be industrially the most backward state. At the other end of the spectrum the farmers in Punjab, Haryana and Maharashtra had the benefit of remunerative prices for a brief period of five years from 1965 to 1970. The extra money was used by the farmers to start small industries. This began a whole cycle of affluence for the trade, commerce as also for the industry. The Kolhapur District in Maharashtra and several village in Punjab provide an eloquent testimony of the truth of Phule's vision. If the Industrial policy in the post-independence era were not self-contradictory and self-defeating, there is no reason to doubt that the country would have been ahead of any other Asian country in the field of industrial development.

During the socialist epoch, a number of governmental factories opened up at diverse places. They served useful purpose as tourists' spots and sites to visit for important dignitaries on the visit to India. The Indian leaders were content to brag that they had industrial capacity that would match with that of any other country. The industrial development was a false facade which was certain to collapse. The collapse came sooner rather than later.

Chapter 9: RAILWAYS

In the 50 years after Independence, all the reins of Economic planning were concentrated in the hands of the Central Government. Excessive protection to the Industry, imposition of the entire burden of the capital formation on the Agriculture, and the commanding heights location of the Public Sector these three fundamental tenets of planning of course had serious consequences for both the Agriculture and the Industry. It would be important to examine adverse consequences of the Governmental intervention in other fields linked with Industry and Agriculture. Let us start with the Transport Sector.

India is a nation of continental proportions. Till the arrival of the Muslim invaders, local artisans had little skills and had not mastered the engineering of constructing arches or domes. The rivers would be classed in the fair seasons by passages at the level of the river bed. The movement of the troops had to be planned in the light of forecast of monsoon and floods. Sadashiv Bhau Peshwa failed in transporting his forces across the Jamuna River before the advent of the monsoons with the disastrous defeat at Panipat, as a consequence. The Company Government commenced construction of bridges on major rivers. Governing a country of continental proportions and extension of the trade network pre-supposes safe and rapid means of transport. In their own interest, the Company Government went ahead with a very ambitious programme of the development of transport. During the same period Lord Bentinck had established law and order suppressing the Pendharies and the Thugs. The Post Office was established so that letters could reach even to inaccessible villages. Very shortly after the first steam engine pulled the train on English railway tracks, the train started running between Bombay and Thane. Railways were the dial secure and dependable mode of transport, which the British Rulers and the Traders required for establishing their dominance.

Network of railways

The British Rule saw the development of the world's largest network in India. When the Independence came, the link of railway tracks admeasured 25,000 miles. The English left this network behind them. It is remarkable that this network was hardly extended at all in the post-independence period. The creation of Pakistan and separation of the rest-while East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) cut-off the railway link to Assam. A very narrow strip of land connected the North East Region to the main land. The Government was required to lay the railway track through this narrow strip as a matter of ;urgent military necessity. With this solitary exception, the railway network remained as it was at the dawn of Independence. This gave rise to some obviously ludicrous oddities. Cities like Bombay and Pune in Maharashtra are connected by rail to the major cities in the country. Often, the track is circuitous. The journey from Pune to Delhi in the north starts by the train moving firstly in the direction of the South towards Daund before turning towards Manmad in the north. The entire western strip remain untouched by railway services till recently. The intention appear to be that the road transport should replace railways as the basic mode of transport. It is true that laying of the railway track involves large initial expenditure. It also pre-supposes some long term planning but most of this expenditure is on local factors, like land, labour and primary instruments. Little foreign exchange is required. If the government of independent India had sustained the tempo of spreading the railway tracks maintained by the British it would have helped greatly in resolving the difficult problems of rural unemployment and over-burdening of the agricultural land. The experience during the period of extension of railways shows that the areas and agglomerations touched by the railway track starts on a developmental spurt. Cities like Dhule, Osmanabad and Latur in Maharashtra are eloquent examples of how cities can built if untouched by railways. Jalgaon and Bhusaval were small villages before the railway line gave its golden touch

A bare touch of the rail track, and the Commerce started flourishing. Dhule, which was at a distance from rail line started building. Aurangabd, Parbhani, Nanded had the good fortune to find themselves on Manmad-Kacheguda line. Hence, they prospered by comparison. Beed, Latur Osmnabad trailed behind. Government of India had done nothing but maintained the tempo of the rail construction of the last date. The tempo of development of the last 50 years would have been higher even if it had given up all other forms of plan investment. The choice between Road Transport on one hand and the Railway on the other which have been made and in the light of yet another factor. No doubt, part of the money spent in even days of railway extension would have gone abroad. Otherwise, most of it would have been used for remunerating domestic factor of production,. Levelling of land, construction of dams, digging of tunnels, laying of wells most of these items of work are predominantly labour intensive. On the contrary, automobile technology is capital intensive. A large part of investment benefits economics of the other countries father than that of the country of origin. A large portion of aggregation population that stays on agriculture, simply because there is no alternative. This under employment, or concealed employment would have mopped up labour intensive projects, like Railway construction, were happening over the length and breadth of India's territory. Not that Road Transport has no place in the modern infrastructure, which serves the same purpose of complementing the railway network. If the Government had concentrated on the efforts on railway construction supplemented by a proper feeder of road network, India would certainly not have been remained at the bottom of international community as it is today. The intensity of economic development of the most developed countries of today, like England, USA, Germany etc. provide voluminous evidence about the role Railways led transport revolution can play. In all these countries, Railway led transport revolutionised and this in turn facilitated the advent of both, the Agricultural and Industrial Revolution. Construction of railways appears to have put some money, albeit, small in the hands of large masses, which proved to be the subject of real capital formation for the Trade, Commerce and Industry.

The entire townships and the regions scattered from the railway lines declined. Those that felt the touchstone of the railway tracks experienced this golden epoch. It is understandable that in the flush of independence, somebody committed blunder and decided against the Railways. There are ample reasons to believe that mistake. Substantial vested interests wished to promote expenditure on Cement as also on automobile vehicles. The suspicion is further strengthened by what is happening now. The Railway Ministry appears to concentrated its energy on two items: one: providing SHATABDI or RAJDHANI like services on the lines joining metropolitan cities in major cities. For example, A/C coaches, catering services, and to some extent, speeding up the time schedule. Most of Engineering work undertaken by the Railway Ministry relates to broadening of Gauges or electrifying tracks. Upgrading of tracks has certain justification, no doubt. It facilitates through journey over long distance without having to change trains. But upgradation of existing services clearly indicates that bosses in the Railway Ministry are more interested in the comforts of urban population that have already benefited by the magi touch of railways over the last century. Millions of people that stay in areas that are ill-served by Railways is not a matter of much concern for them. Majority of villages are connected by Roads and are cut-off from the world every time the monsoon starts causing untold miseries. Clearly, that is not high on the agenda of the Rulers. For them, higher priority is to meet the expectations of the urbanised elite, who wish to have the comforts and perquisites they have seen during their journey abroad.

Gauge broadening

The theory that the railway lines in the country as a whole should have common gauges is advocated by many Traders, Industrialists etc. Army pitches in very strongly for uniformity of gauges to

facilitate fast movement of troops. Uniformity of gauges certainly is an advantage as regards manufacture of Engines, Coaches and signalling equipment. The railways lines of the pre-Independence era have not been of the broad gauge. It would appear that advantage of uniformity of gauges is a recent discovery. ;It must be said in the defence of the Railway Planners that it was..... prepared by..... limits of budgetary allocation, longest rail tracks possible, keeping aside advantages of uniformity of gauges. On the other, the present campaign for logically to convert into Broad gauge appears to be not entirely bona fide. An illustration will clarify this point.

The Marathwada region of Maharashtra was convulsed by the mass agitation to broadening of railway gauges in the region. It became a matter of regional pride and prestige. Most of the participants came from the region served by Manmad Kacheguda railway line. Though the agitators have taken the name of the whole of Marathwada region, in fact, they were agitating for only a part that was already served by the metre gauge line. The districts of Beed, Osmanabad and Latur, which suffered a setback by comparison, had little voice in the matter. Rather than give Aurangabad Nanded advantage, converting MG line serving it into BIG line, it would have been more advantages to leave MG line un-altered and construct a fresh BIG line to connect Beed, Osmanabad Latur onwards to Hyderabad. This would have. brought the net additional benefit to the Marathwada Region ;as a whole. More advanced Aurangabad Naded would not have suffered any disadvantage while all the new region would have come under the railway network. It is surprising that it was the voice of the people from the already urbanised area that prevail. he old rails became scrap metal and new BIG rail rails were laid.

In a way the reasons for preferring broadening of gauges to laying of new rail tracks is understandable. Laying through tracks pre-supposes advanced planning and foresight. This certainly was not the strong point in the post-independence era. Ad-hocism clearly tilted in favour of urban, affluent section can only go to favour upgradation of existing tracks than laying new ones.

PREDOMINANCE OF ROAD TRANSPORT

In the 50 years of Independence, Roads became the principal means of transport. Vehicles running on petroleum or Diesel held centre stage. Shri S K Patil recounts in his autobiography a very entertaining but critical episode. Cement was imported on large scale during the first and the Second Five Year Plan period. Domestic production too was encouraged. It was supposed to be used for construction of irrigation and power generating dams which Nehru described as the Temples of Modern India. The country had ample stocks of cement while Iron and Steel components failed to keep space. Piles of bags of cement were stored all over the country. If stocks remained un-utilised, cement would become useless within a few months. Cement had to be found some use other than construction of dams. Alternatively, utilisation of cement needed to be such as would require little or no use of iron and steel components. Some genius in Delhi had a streak of brilliance. Road construction requires very little steel. Construction of cement road should be undertaken on massive scale. In the last decade, we have seen all over the country spectacle of cracked cement roads being dug up and replaced by tar roads. Most or these cement roads were constructed during the epoch of S K Patil' s anecdote. Construction of roads rather than railways serves eminently the convenience of post-independence rulers. and their crony capitalist industrialists. Roads do not need detailed long term planning If you put up a factory at Bhilai all that is necessary by way of transport infrastructure is to build an auxiliary road connecting Bhilai to the nearest highway. or transport junction. If Bhilai had to be put on the rail map, it would be necessary to foresee ;development of railway network for over 40 to 50 years. Soon came the spectacle of truck transport taking goods across the length and breadth of the country, from Punjab to Kerala and from Saurashtra to Assam. Road transport is less expensive. Its energy requirements from domestic production and generation. Trucks, cars, two

wheelers that abound of recent, use small engines that are energy expensive and comparatively speaking less efficient. A truck starting from Punjab in the direction of the South is required to halt every 80 to 100 kms for payment of octroi duty. Truck drivers ;stops every time. Energy consumption of transport of this type is comparatively higher. Vast number of energy expensive vehicles are running over the roads, which are full of pits and potholes over long distances present the country with catastrophic crisis.

In USA, Railways formed at one stage the very backbone of the economy. That continent size nation was traversed from one end to the other by trains carrying goods and passengers with utmost safety and punctuality and with comfort.. It is a fact that in USA railway system are gradually replaced by even a superior road network. Situation in the erstwhile USSR is very similar.

For the many English educated upper class elite in India, whatever happened in the western countries, particularly USA, can go on. The Planners blindly copied America and Sovietic pattern of epoch and neglected development of what was the world's longest Railway network at the time of Independence. It would appear that the people failed to realise a very significant difference between the situation in India and that in the USA or USSR. Both these later countries are rich in petroleum resources USA imports petrol ;in sizeable quantity from the Middle East. They import petroleum because it is cheaper to do so than that taken out of less promising domestic wells. They wish to conserve their own resources for the day when the international price of petroleum will over-rich the cost of petroleum extracted from domestic wells.

The position in India is very different. India has abundant coal reserves. Coal is of poor quality but good enough for railways, if not for smelting. Our petroleum resources, on the contrary, are very poor. Presently, India need to import petroleum worth billion Dollars to keep its rattling fleet of vehicles running. This is posing a serious drain on our foreign exchange resources. We have been singularly lucky to make some finding of petroleum reserves from time to time. The erstwhile colonial rulers generously hand over Sterling Balance to "Government of India" thus reimbursing expenditure incurred by the British Raj in India towards the Second World War. USA wrote off a huge amount towards payment of PL.480 shipments of wheat. Non -resident Indians have been sending funds on large scale back home. Scarcity of foreign exchange has remained nevertheless remained the sword dangling on the head of the economy throughout the period after the Independence. Rupee has been perilously declining because India has a very little to sell to the world, while it needs so many things that the rest of the world produces. Deficit in balance of trade is primarily due to the fact that India is required to purchase large quantity of petroleum products in pursuit of its ill-conceived decision in neglecting railway network and promote road transport to the detriment of the mass transport system.

At this distance, it is really difficult to manage what kind of considerations must have weighed with the rulers and who deliberately decided to de-rail the train that was put on the track with assiduous efforts by the colonial rulers. That, this transport policy contributed gradually to decline and fall of India is incontrovertible.

Chapter 10: DEFENCE FORCES REMAIN COLONIAL

Inheritance of the White British

Mahatma Gandhi once said a curious thing, which has become a celebrated quotation. During an interview, an American journalist asked, "It is said that there are some major differences of opinion between you and your disciple, Jawaharlal Nehru. What precisely is the character of these differences?" Gandhiji replied, "I shall be very precise. I am looking forward to a day when the system of the British (Angreziat) will go; it does not matter if the British remain in India. On the contrary, Jawaharlal is keen that the British leave, no matter if their systems persist." The quotation aptly summarises a very stark reality. 50 years after independence, with the advantage of hindsight, one could suggest only a small modification: In Jawahar's view the British may leave but their systems must continue unchanged. From the day the Indian National Congress was established, the affluent urban people who had some smattering of English education had maintained one objective and one ambition. Having tested, in Maculae's words, "the milk of the tigress of English language", they craved to replace the British.

Their position could be summarised as follows. "The British Rule established law and order, installed Police, Post Office, started telegraph and made steam engines pull the trains. This period of peace and stability had come to India after long centuries of turmoil. Nothing should be done that would harm the working of the British system. We should try little by little to take over the reigns of this rule in our hands."

The plan was well drawn. The first step was entry into the Indian Civil Service, then would come popular representation in institutions of local self-government, followed by legislative councils and lastly in Governor General's Council. All concerned, however, did not have the patience to wait for so long. Some of them wanted a rapid, if not an immediate transfer of power. Their agenda was to make the British quit and to climb on to the seats of power vacated by them. Like the pigs in George Orwell's 'Animal Farm' starting to walk on two legs, the radical stream of the freedom movement wished to perpetuate the British system, but under their own control. Speculating the mental process of historical personalities is a very hazardous exercise. It is difficult to be sure of the mental processes of persons even on the current scene; it is impossible to know for sure what went on in the minds of the Indian leaders 150 years back. Our judgement, therefore, will have to be based on the actual outcome of their actions.

The type of industrialisation that was tried after independence, the policy regarding Agriculture, Transport and other sectors, as we have seen, give no reason to believe that the Indian leaders were motivated by the desire to make India as a whole a happy and prosperous country. It is understandable if self-interest prevails in socio-economic matters. Nation's security cannot be put at risk for reasons of self-interest. That the people who talk, day in and day out, of patriotism and nationalism should have allowed their self-interest to influence even the field of defence is difficult to understand or to forgive. The country remains militarily weak even today and vulnerable and India suffers from a sense of insecurity even about a country like Pakistan which is barely one-ninth of its size and has settled down to the idea that its north-eastern borders are indefensible against any invasion from China.

The professional traditions of the British Army

The defence forces and the 'Jawan' are subjects of national pride all over. The convention is that no one should, by word or deed, adversely affect the morale, confidence and determination of the

soldiers in the army. It is considered a vile act to say anything derogatory against the soldier who, in defence of the motherland, risks his life and willingly accepts martyrdom.

The period of 50 years since Independence is not an epoch replete in glory in many fields. However, the nation's territorial integrity has been preserved by the jawans fighting on the borders and it has been made self-sufficient in food by kisans toiling in the fields. Both, jawans and kisans have to be backed by massive supporting systems and infrastructure. It is the responsibility of the political leadership to maintain those systems well oiled and efficient. Failure in this matter tantamounts to stabbing the soldiers in the back and betraying the farmers. It is hypocritical to pay homage, on the one hand, for their sacrifices and help, on the other hand, through act of commission or omission, cut off their supplies or weaken their position. It is an act of treachery. It is important, in the light of these observations, to examine how the rulers of Independent India provided for the defence of the country.

The British Army, Navy as also the Air Force have been fully professional outfits. Young men join the defence forces regarding it as a way of life and a career. They join the defence forces when young, undergo rigorous training and take care, even in normal times, of the security concerns. In the event of out-break of hostilities, the task is too large for the standing army. At times like this, all young men in a certain age group are required to join the armed forces. They are given a short intensive course of training and dispatched to the front. In times of war, every household and every family has at least one person fighting on the front and risking his life every moment. Invasion by an enemy becomes, consequently, a matter of serious concern for each and every citizen.

British Army in India

At a point of time, the East India Company decided to secure the political power in the Indian continent and started making preparations to that end. The native armies of the Nawabs, Kings, Princes and Knights were outfits that lack discipline, training, mobility as also firepower. Even to continence such ramshackle forces the Company could not depend exclusively on divisions shipped from the Great Britain. The company raised divisions of native soldiers. The recruits consisted mainly of young men from backward communities which had demonstrated their loyalty to the British. These communities had a legitimate sense of grievance and a lot of bitterness against the society that had denied them even minimal human rights. Thus alienated, they had joined, in earlier epochs, the service of the Muslim conquerors also. The armies of these Muslim emperors had in their commands an array of upper caste dignitaries. Consequently, the forces were never fully unified. The Muslim army moved like a disorganised mob. When the British raised the army platoons the soldiers were taught rigorous discipline and given the latest armaments. The British forces so organised loyally fought and decimated the Muslim power as also the forces of the upper caste kings and princes. A large part of the credit for the establishment of the British Rule in India goes to the British Army manned largely by people of the backward communities. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar repeatedly emphasises this fact in his correspondence with the viceroy. Even after the establishment of the British Rule, the army remained a strictly professional outfit keeping its severe distance from the people at large.

This was understandable. The British knew very well what would be the consequences if the army was open to all native people. Savarkar had openly asked his followers to join the army, take the guns and change the direction of the guns the time come. The British Rulers were not entirely blind to this possibility. Every recruit to the army had his credentials, loyalty and pedigree minutely checked and tested. Young men, only from families that had a long tradition of army service were recruited. Thus the Company forces, as also the British forces, after revolt of 1857, maintained their

strict professional character. They had no links with people outside cantonment areas. In fact, there was a sense of alienation and even, estrangement. The Indian platoons of the British army played a major role during the first as also during the Second World War. This was acknowledged, if with some condescension, by the British Rulers while the people at large denigrated them as hired agents of a foreign power.

The situation of the police department was, more or less, parallel. The Colonial government raised a Police Force that kept its distance from the people and ensured a tyrannical rule without any concern for people's sentiments. Normally, in a district there would be a single white-skinned officer; all others were natives who had a unquestionable loyalty towards the British.

The Soft Leadership

The freedom movement had its brief but brilliant episodes e.g. Revolt of 1857, acts of bravery of the heroes like Vasudeo Balavant Phadke, Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad who had armed clashes with the British Rule. The main stream of the freedom movement, nevertheless, consisted of the non-violent civil disobedience programmes, constructive activities and, most importantly, speechifying. This mode of agitation required the leaders to go to jails every time an agitation was announced and whenever the police so required; and, when released from prison, attend felicitary receptions by an adoring public, give increasingly jingoistic slogans full of bravado. This was all the training the leadership received for facing a situation of armed conflict. During the Second World War, the Japanese forces started advancing rapidly in South Asia; bombs fell on Calcutta. Gandhi, in 1942, had little option but to give a slogan of "Do or die." The slogan represented lack of preparedness and abdication of responsibilities in an extremely grave situation. There was no planning, either of action or of abstention. That the Independence came in 1947 was due more to the compulsions of the British Rule, the pressure of the international opinion and new doubts raised about the loyalty of the armed forces after the Indian National Army and the Naval mutiny in Bombay than to the strength of the 1942 agitation.

Indian National Army Condemned

In the early wake of India's independence the leadership was faced with a very tricky question regarding the structure of the army.

Subhashchandra Bose escaped the British jail and reached Germany via Afghanistan. He established a government of Independent India (Azad Hind) in Berlin and then proceeded to Japan. The Japanese had triumphed over the British army on the Burmese front and taken as prisoners of war thousands of Indian ranks.

"A slave nation has no foreign policy. Enemy's enemy is our friend. If the Japanese try to rule India after driving out the British we can start the next phase of freedom movement against them. Our priority is to throwing out the deep-rooted British Rule in India." Subhashbabu's exhortations moved thousands of Indian soldiers to join the Indian National Army founded by him. The Indian National Army (INA) had few arms, small transport fleet and hardly any system of supplies. It marched, nevertheless, towards the Indian border and came very close to entering India. The Japanese surrendered after the nuclear bombs devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Indian National Army had, naturally, to surrender. Subhashbabu reportedly died in a plane-accident and his soldiers were brought to India as prisoners of war. Bose had asked them to plant the tri-colour on the Red Fort in Delhi; now they were to face the trial in the precincts of the same historic monument.

The government of India was faced with the problem - which is the real Indian army?

“The Indian National Army may have lost on the borders with Burma but the flag that they carried is flying over Delhi. This, in effect, means that the Indian National Army has been victorious. By this logic, the Indian National Army should have been recognised as the official army of the newly independent nation. The old British army which enforced the British imperial rule in India should be disbanded. The possibility of merging it after an appropriate scrutiny in the Indian National Army could be examined.” This was the nature of the proposal that came before the provisional government.

The British Rulers and the army officers took a very rigid position on the question. “The soldiers of the Indian National Army had joined enemy forces by breaking the oath of loyalty. There can be no question of their heading the army; they cannot even be readmitted in the army. Such re-admission would tantamount to honouring the traitors which would demoralise other soldiers and spread general dissatisfaction in the army and provoke a general revolt.” That was their line of proposal.

“The soldiers of the Indian National Army must face trial on charge of abandoning forces, they must be given appropriate punishments. Eventually, the Governor General, in his magnanimity, may suspend the sentence. These traitors have no rights to expect a more generous treatment.” Thus ran the proposal.

The Bogie of International Politics

The leaders of independent India acquiesced in the argument of the Army brass. Indian National Army was disbanded. The British army in India became the official army of the independent India. This decision has to be looked at from various angles.

All the leaders of the Congress Party did not universally like Subhashchandra Bose; many were jealous of his charismatic standing amongst Indian people. Mahatma Gandhi himself had used subterfuges to make Bose resign from the Presidentship of the Congress. Bose held Gandhi, nevertheless, in high respect and venerated him as the ‘Father of the Nation’.

The anti-Bose group lead by Nehru questioned the very merit of the INA. “The Fascist dictatorship was a crime against humanity; the alliance of the democratic nations against the Fascist axis was morally superior. It behoved a country of India’s Culture and History to give support to the allied nations. There can be no question of India siding with the Axis powers against the British. There would be little point in India gaining independence if the rest of the world is trounced by Nazi and Fascist dictators.”

This argument had quite some influence. The independence was preceded by communal riots all over the country. The partition brought in even more horrendous communal conflicts. Lakhs of people became destitute refugees. Nobody appeared to be capable of re-establishing peace and order. If the army is disbanded at such a juncture, it was feared, India will be overtaken by anarchy. It was, therefore, considered necessary to retain the British army as it stood. The first Independence Day saw curious sites. The tricolour of Independent India was hoisted at many places by civil servants who had whipped and tortured freedom fighters. When the army was saluting in Independence Day parades, the soldiers of the erstwhile Indian National Army were standing in crowds with tears in their eyes. The decision to adopt the British army was not taken too willingly. The British had imposed a condition that the government of independent India will do nothing to affect the position of the Indian Civil Service, army and British Legislation. The British structure remained in place, the British left India. That is about all. Jawaharlal triumphed the Mahatma was humiliated.

The Anglo-phobia of the Army

Gandhi's assassination suddenly brought the whole nation to its senses. The communal conflicts subsided little by little. A sort of peace was established. It should have been possible at the stage to take a second look at the constitution of the Indian armed forces. No such exercise appears to have been attempted. Army was sent to Telangana to quench the farmers' uprising. It was used again against Naxalites, in Punjab, in Kashmir etc. Whenever a civil discontent erupted army was dispatched to deal with the situation. This has continued ever since. The British army adopted by India was used exactly as the British Rulers had done.

May be adoption of the British army had its own justification. May be acceptance of the British model of armed forces by independent India had its own reason. One would expect, however, that, at least in situations of grave emergency attempt would be made to mobilise the youth of the country in the service of national defence. Why was it not done? Indian army, even after independence, remained a society apart. They had little contact with the citizenry in the day-to-day activities. The Indian army needs to be felicitated for one thing. They could have easily taken over the civil government on many occasions. This would have not been a novelty. Coups d'état were being staged all over the third world. Not that some of the Generals would not have liked the idea. Occasionally, there is a debate on the relative position of the Civil Administration on one hand and the armed forces on the other. Each time the conclusion was that the civil government is paramount. The Defence forces have accepted this situation.

What would be the ideal constitution of the Indian army? This is a continental country with large population, very little capital and poor technology. The logical conclusion would be that the defence forces should emphasise use of manpower. The soldiers of the Chinese People's Army who carried sacks of barley flour for their sustenance drove back the Indian professional army on the northeast frontier in 1962. Mere babies of the Vietnamese Army countenanced the carpet-bombing by the American Air force. And the Vietnamese forces living like rodents in underground tunnels forced an abject surrender on the American Army equipped to the teeth with the most modern gadgetry.

It is futile to maintain that equipment makes the army. In a real prolonged armed conflict India can be defended only through defence plans based on effective use of manpower.

At independence, India was dependent for all arms and ammunitions, with minor exception of guns, cartridges and shells, on imports from abroad. Since then, there has been a significant improvement in defence production. Compared with many a country of the third world India is more self-sufficient in military hardware. We have tanks copied from one country, trucks from a second one, guns from yet another one and bombers and fighter planes from still another country. This kind of configuration is of questionable utility in a conflict with any major power. We cannot fight them with equipment which are poor copies of their own material. This is not idle scare mongering. China is a hostile neighbour. It is pointless to debate which side was guilty of aggression in 1962. In 1998, the defence minister of the BJP government stated that China is the main threat to India. If there is another breakout of hostilities with China or if China rushes to Pakistan's assistance in any of the routine conflicts we persistently have with that country how long will our stocks of arms, ammunitions and other equipment last?

Strategy of 21-day Defence.

Even leaving aside the case of conflicts with a super-power, let's examine the situation of conflict with Pakistan. Pakistan has smaller territory, lesser population and a weaker economy. Our defence strategy vis-à-vis Pakistan, at least till Kargil, appears to have been on the following lines. In case of

break-out of hostilities deploy planes, rockets and guns to protect cities near the border, like Delhi and Amritsar; keep the exchanges on the border going for three to four weeks in a manner that would make the stocks last as long as possible and hope that some third power or the United Nations will step in to bring about a cease-fire and cessation of hostilities. In the meanwhile, the citizens would display about the war the same kind of interest as they have for football or cricket match, finding out from news bulletins, every now and then, the scores. With the cease-fire both sides can claim that they have scored a victory and give out for the consumption of their public colourful pictures of how the enemy would have been totally annihilated if only the third party had not forced a cease-fire. Both the countries start afresh amassing arms and equipment for the next conflict. Like young urchins exhausting their stock of firecrackers, the top brass and the political leadership of both the adversary countries become free to purchase or produce fresh equipment and earn fresh commissions.

This certainly cannot be healthy for India's defence system. After Independence, at least after some sort of normalcy was restored, if a system of one year's draft for all the young men was introduced by now, at least 15 million young men would have been ready trained in the use of minor weapons in defence of the Mother-land. In that case, even China could not have easily taken condescending positions towards India and Pakistan would certainly be less offensive. The army in China is the peoples' army and not a professional outfit. That essentially is the secret of its prowess. The important question that one asks oneself is why was the Indian army not made peoples' army. There exist multi-fold vested interests in having a professional army. Professional soldiers are not very happy about admitting the civil population amongst them. Far more importantly, no government sceptical of its legitimacy likes to put arms in the hands of common people. Switzerland in Europe is tiny country reputed for neutrality and policies in favour of peace. In a country of this kind, every Swiss man, till the age of 65 years, is supposed to be prepared to present himself at the front within 24 hours of the call. He keeps even his automatic weapons at home. It is said that the favourite pastime of a Swiss housewife is to keep these arms well oiled and well polished. This is possible in Switzerland but not in Stalin's Russia nor in India ruled by the Black Britishers. The psychological compulsion to keep a full-fledged professional army clearly signified that the government is unwilling to trust it's own citizens. If the government's perception is that it may be forced to send army to suppress civil unrest every now and then and that the economic system it presides over can be maintained only with the support of the armed forces it is unlikely to shift from the professional army to a people's army. An army estranged from the citizens, a police department that lacks sympathy for the people, all these indicate that the enforcement machinery has no roots among the people. This does not happen in all the countries, that it has happened in India, is a clear indication that it has not become independent in the real; sense of the term. The white Britishers have left and have been replaced by the Black Britishers. The "Beating the Retreat" to the tune of Scottish bagpipe music in New Delhi is as close as it can be to the pigs' walking on two legs in George Orwell's 'Animal Farm'.

In the 50th year of India's independence, the BJP Government made a quantum leap in the matter of India's defence. Five nuclear devices were exploded at Pokharan to demonstrate to the world India's nuclear capability. The Prime Minister maintained that this was a matter vital to India's defence and the decisions in this respect can be taken only in the light of national interest. Pakistan responded by detonating six nuclear devices. It's Prime Minister made a stalemate which echoed word for word the statement of his Indian counterpart.

Does the possession of nuclear bombs make a country's defence system any stronger? The BJP Defence Minister pronounced that China was India's principal adversary and that the main threat to

India came from the Chinese, rather than Pakistan border. We have fought three wars with Pakistan. The issue of Kashmir is simmering for 50 years. In fact, Kargil happened within a few days of the Defence Minister's pronouncement. It may be said that right since the partition, there has been an undeclared and continuous war between these two countries. China is far ahead of India in the matter of nuclear capacity. India would have difficulty to match China's might even in a conventional war. A nuclear conflict with China is inconceivable. Briefly, the possession of nuclear weapons does not appear to help India against one of the two principal belligerent countries.

The whole Indian nation suffers from a peculiar complex as regards Pakistan. In fact, Pakistan is no match for India. It is a small country. Its population is much less, economy much poorer. Its military capacity would not come to even 30 per cent of that of India. It is true that it possesses jet fighters and rockets that have a slight edge over those with the Indian army. It would be foolish to imagine that Pakistan can ever overcome India militarily. The successive leaders of Pakistan have been very conscious of this fact. They have been taking political stances calculated to put India on the defensive.

Now that both, India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons, what difference does that make to the relative strength of their defence forces? It would appear that Pakistan has been the net gainer, at least in the short term. India has tarnished its image as a peace-loving democratic nation. It was this stature enjoyed by India in the international community that kept even Islamic countries from going beyond certain limits in supporting Pakistan even on issues like Kashmir. A thousand year traditions of Gautam Buddha to Mahatma Gandhi lay in ruins within two days of the five detonations at Pokharan.

Gone are the days when the state of advancement of a country was judged by its nuclear arsenal. Many a student of Physics in the U.S. and Europe possess all the technical know-how required for exploding an experimental nuclear device. If India wished to demonstrate its advancement in Science and Technology, it could have done it in a hundred and one ways that would not have tarnished its image as country of Gautam Buddha.

Most of the Islamic countries would like to have at least one atom bomb howsoever small. Most of them are itching to use it against Israel, whose army has thrashed the Arabs on several occasions. They are hoping that Pakistan's know-how will become available to them. It is certainly not to the liking of the western powers that the nations ruled by despots should possess nuclear bombs. Even the rich Arab countries of the Middle East who have the nuclear ability do not dare use it for fear of American reprisals. Gadafi and Saddam are not the only rouge despots in the world. The world knew that India had the nuclear ability and the world knew that Pakistan was similarly placed. India's explosion has proved nothing new. It has certainly strengthened the bonds between the Islamic nations which cannot be to the benefit of India. The western countries have for long watched with amused interest the frequent conflicts in the Indian sub-continent. The Pokharan has changed the scenario. The sub-continental context has suddenly become a potential threat for the globe as a whole. The western countries would try by all possible means to stop Pakistan from helping an Islamic nuclear bomb. If Pakistan complains of the need to have arms-parity with India, the U.S. will be prepared to supply it with abundant non-nuclear armament and equipment. Thus Pakistan's position in a conventional war will actually have improved because of Pokharan. Pakistan would have been better advised not to respond to Pokharan. It would have been more advantageous for that country to go on holding out a threat of nuclear explosions but never really carrying them out. That would have certainly changed Pakistan's image of a rogue nation and helped it acquire generous quantities of conventional armaments. Luckily for India, Pakistan succumbed to jingoistic posturing and had its own N-tests.

As in India so in Pakistan, jingoistic stances are more popular. And the Pakistani Prime Minister thought that if India had the bomb he has to show that Pakistan could do it too. By responding to Pokharan, Pakistan has axed the very branch on which it was perched. It cannot hope any more to get supplies of conventional armament to close the gap with India. Pakistan has thus literally slaughtered the hen that lay golden eggs.

It should be clear that in case of an actual breakout of war nuclear devices become irrelevant. There is no scenario where either Prime Minister would feel justified in using the ultimate weapon. If the extremists in Kashmir slaughter a thousand Hindus, will the Indian Prime Minister press the nuclear button? Will he do that if hoards of Pakistani invaders cross the Line of Control? Will he decide to use the nuclear bomb if the Pakistani forces helped by the local populace reach Shrinagar? Will he do that if Pakistani Air Force starts bombarding Amritsar, Ludhiana or even Ambala? Atom bomb is thoroughly useless not only as a deterrent, but also as an instrument of last resort. In a war between India and Pakistan there can be no winner. It is inconceivable that one of them will be able to trounce the other militarily and effectively occupy and hold the enemy's territory.

If the BJP Government were sincerely concerned about India's defence they would have undertaken a total reorganisation of the armed forces rather than going for sophisticated equipment, planes, missiles and nuclear devices. The India-Pakistan war-match cannot last beyond 2-3 weeks, since both of them will have exhausted all their arms and equipment by then. At that stage, the country which can adopt tactics like human waves with the help of large number of young men wielding small modern weapons that will have an advantage in holding out indefinitely. To provide the Indian jawans with a state-of-the-art automatic machine-gun in place of the present obsolete rifles would be far more effective than any number of nuclear devices. But, that kind of a measure has none of the political glamour that "Pokharan" has. During war, the jawans risk their lives while the civilians shout nationalistic slogans. It would be interesting to see if they would continue with the same jingoistic slogan-mongering hysteria if their own children were liable to be called to the front any moment.

In the post-Kargil and post-Pokharan era another opportunity has arisen to rethink on the structures and the constitution of the Indian Armed Forces. The moment is ripe for making the army open to people by introduction of compulsory military service so that young men pick up, during the training of about two years a fairly high level of industrial and combat skills. This long-pending reform will give India's defence a big boost and also provide a rich source of skilled manpower for the Indian economy. It will also ensure a sense of discipline, patriotism and idealism that could help India recover from its present slide of apathy and avarice.

COST OF THE NUCLEAR LUXURY

The Ministers of Finance, Commerce and other Ministries are going round the world soliciting foreign investments in India. Despite all tall talk, everyone knows that one really bad monsoon and the Indian economy will be in jeopardy. The year of the Pokharan, over thousand and five hundred farmers committed suicide by consuming poison. A Pokharan might do a lot of good for some time to the national ego. But, in the long run, that may prove to be expensive. If India faces a famine situation in times to come, it would have great difficulty in obtaining food-grains for the starvings. The switch over from a super-power pretension to the role of a mendicant is extremely painful and ridiculous. The world does not take kindly to it. A poor man subsisting by the leftovers of the affluent in the neighbourhood can ill-afford to suddenly turn into a Mafia Don for howsoever brief an interval. This kind of comedy can go on only for a certain time but not for too long. India can have no grievance if all the threatened sanctions are actually implemented. Iraq's Saddam picked up the

gauntlet, it must be said to his credit that he sustained and survived some of the fiercest punching by the American forces. It would be difficult to claim that India could take the beating that Iraq did. Of course, Iraq is not India and the Iraqi scenario is unlikely to be repeated here. The question is, did those who gave green signal to Pokharan, plan for such a contingency? It is equally doubtful if the authors of Pokharan had taken into consideration the consequences on the process of Globalisation under WTO.

Pokharan appears to have been a political bonanza for the ruling party. Not even the leaders of the opposition party have raised any significant protests. Everyone appears to be unanimous in praising the genius and the ability of India's scientists. Was Pokharan good or bad? The answer appears to have been provided by the market. The share market collapsed and the Rupee fell by 70 paise per US dollar.

Atal Behari Vajpayee is a highly respected leader and a popular Prime Minister. There could be no better judge of the possible response of the Indian people to a call to come to the defence of their Motherland. People have responded with great enthusiasm, every time there was a threat to the nation. Pokharan has given Indians a big ego trip. It is to be hoped that this will outlast possible economic sanctions, trade boycotts, shortages of petroleum, fertilisers and chemicals. If the Indian economy is weak and India is unable to import Diesel, there will hardly be any point in putting even a Hydrogen bomb in the arsenal of the Indian army.

Chapter 11: Flag of Liberation was looted before it unfurled

The United Kingdom paid a heavy price for the victory in IIInd World War. Many of its cities and townships were devastated, thousands of young men killed and the economy lay in ruins. The post-war Great Britain lacked both – the will and the stamina for the massive military operation that would have been necessary for keeping its colonial possessions. The Japanese conquest of Asia had altered the Asian situation. The heroic fight by the Indian National Army (INA), the Naval Mutiny in Bombay and the emergence of leftist extremists groups all over the country had created a situation where continuation of the imperial rule was inconceivable. Britannia had ruled India for over a hundred years with the help of a native army, an indigenous police and locally recruited civil servants. It was no more possible to count on the loyalty of those institutions. In the general elections held in the Great Britain the party of Churchill, the militant leader who won the IIInd World War for the allies, was defeated. The Labour Party came to power which soon decided to put an end to the Colonial Empire of the Great Britain.

The partition of India was announced; Those who had proclaimed that the country could be partitioned only over their dead bodies acquiesced in the partition with remarkable agility. What explains this change of heart and the sudden rush to gain power? (If the transfer of power is delayed any further an uprising of the suppressed masses, feared the established leadership, would sweep the country, the leaders of this new revolt may have little respect for Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence. This apprehension of the leadership that had grown under the Gandhi's movement, had its own logic.)

Gandhi had mobilised unarmed illiterate and poor masses to confront the might of the British Empire by innovating the technique of Satyagraha and by spiritualising politics. His movement had an unprecedented response; millions came out for the struggle for freedom. The Congress leadership feared that the mighty forces released by the Mahatma would no more respect Gandhian discipline and that it would result in massive violence and bloodshed. Revolutions of this type would have demanded iron leadership and skills that were lacking in the then national leadership. If the advent of Independence is delayed the older generation of leaders will be replaced by a new leadership of a different metal coming out of Indian masses that would not shirk to shed blood to gain Independence. The heat of such a revolt would have burnt down the parochial feelings of caste and creed. The whole issue of Pakistan would have become irrelevant and the partition would have been avoided. But, that would hardly have suited the leaders of the Nehru-coterie. The idea that Independence was eminent albeit at the cost of partition and they would finally be able to have power after long years of speechifying and jail--going quite seductive. They had realised very clearly that this was their last chance of acceding to power. It was clear to them that India that had passed through the furnace of armed revolution would pay respectful homage to the Mahatma but would be far from kind to his second-line followers. Faced with this situation Gandhi passed the buck on to Nehru; his eminent disciples accepted Independence with partition. The Mountbaton Plan appeared to satisfy very largely the aspiration of the Freedom Movement under the flag of the Congress party. Their uppermost aspirations was that the British should leave without upsetting the hierarchical structure of the Indian society marked by the backwardness of the masses, domination of the upper castes and expropriation of the fruit of the labour of the helpless masses. Briefly, it was the ambition of the Indian elite to climb on to the throne of political power irrespective of what happened to the down-trodden. The leadership understandably felt that it had achieved its prime objective of acceding to power. It's a pity that their mandate would not run in the provinces that would go to Pakistan. But, it was not overly concerned.

The Congress accepted the Mountbatton's proposal not so much with the objective of bringing an end to the British rule as for the purpose of ensuring continued age-old domination of the elite castes. To sum up, in the idiom of Jotiba Fule, "Independence came before the emergence of Indian Nation as of unified people."

The elite were happy that the old days of glory for them would come throughout the country minus the provinces going to Pakistan. The Indian elite were prepared to accept Pakistan rather than losing the commanding heights they had occupied for, at least two, millennia.

The Reincarnation of the Caste Domination

That in the post-independence India the masses in the agrarian society were subjected to horrendous exploitation and that the urban industry was pampered beyond measure was, clearly, not an esoteric event or a sudden accident. This duality was the very basis of the Indian freedom movement.

Thus it was that the British left; but the British army continued. The British administration remained the same; the police system remained unaltered. Not that there were no changes. The British had spread the most expansive railway network on the Indian Sub-continent; the Indian successors to British Rule applied breaks on that policy. The British had promoted India's international trade, at independence it represented 4% of the world trade; the new Indian rulers started slashing down these links with the world ostensibly in the interest of self-sufficiency. Rulers in independent India, exactly like their Bolshevik counterparts, isolated the territory for their exclusive enjoyment. The Russians created an 'iron curtain', the Indians created a 'bamboo curtain' which was as effective as the iron one under the Indian conditions. Iron curtain effectively stopped all give and take of ideas as also goods and technology. That kind of strict ideological discipline was beyond the capacity of the Indian leadership. An open entry to goods and technology would have benefited the masses at large. Indians needed the machinery and the technology required for the industries of the urban elite. However, the contact with the world had to be selective. The bamboo curtain had lots of slits and holes, all suited to the convenience of urban cities and their industry. Indian rulers erected another barrier within the country, thus partitioning independent India a second time. This was not a territorial partition but it effectively created two entities – one which obtained the inheritance from the British of colonial domination and the other which continued to be under the harrow of colonial exploitation even after the departure of the British. In George Orwell's "Animal Farm" the animals revolt against the "two legged master" and drive him out; but, shortly thereafter the pigs who take over the management, start behaving like the human master and go to the extent of learning to walk on two feet. The allegory fits the Indian condition even better than to those in the Soviet Union. The Indian 'pigs' started walking on two feet soon after independence. A polity and an economic system was meticulously designed to deny the Indian masses all contact with the outside markets, thought and science and technology.

The Language Imbroglia

During the period of the freedom movement all the leaders were agreed that Hindi should become the national language of independent India. In the first flush of enthusiasm at the dawn of independence people speaking different languages were favourably disposed to making Hindi the national language. They were determined to promote their regional languages but accepted the need of one common language for communication throughout the territory of the newly independent nation. This enthusiasm eroded pretty fast. The leadership lost the spirit and the ideals of the freedom movement. The states in the South started opposing Hindi. Israel which was created

at about same time as independent India decided to accept a dead language like Hebrew as their national language in a spirit of national pride and soon the language of the Israel's ancestors became an effective modern language for administration, communication and education. The harrowing experience of the post-partition period was such that if the ancient Sanskrit had been made the national language there would have hardly been any opposition. But, the government of new India had its own pervert outlook. It decided to have two national languages instead of one. Hindi had to be one of them. In order to obtain a national consensus it would have been understandable if one of the languages of South India were made, side by side with Hindi, the second national language. But, in the Constitution it was English, the language of the colonial masters, got enshrined as the second national language. Fifty years after independence, the dominance of English is increasing; the usage of Hindi is diminishing; English has become, for all practical purposes, the one and only national language.

It is not difficult to imagine to which class and community this language-policy suited best. The communities which had made for themselves comfortable niches in the colonial bureaucracy that continued to dominate even after the British left were, of course, delighted. It suited the urban elite who had got themselves English educated thought it only logical that English should continue. With the exception of these urban communities that formed barely 4 to 5% of the total population, the rest of the population found themselves cut off from the global currents. The rural Indians have never been comfortable with the English language. Even the educated villagers are scared when required to use English. Asian countries like Japan and China and countries of the developed world like France and Germany appear to be doing pretty well without English. There are only a select few that have relations with the external world learn English. This does not appear to have hampered their advancement or prosperity.

The mother-tongue remains medium of thought throughout life. Languages acquired in later life are used only selectively in specific fields. India, nevertheless, accepted English as a national language mainly because the Indians have never had the ambition to be original thinkers. They wished that the alien literature, arts, culture, thought and science and technology should enter India in convenient doses and, that too, through their intermediary so that the lower castes remain dependent for these inputs on the communities "Superior" to them. Nehru would have never accepted that the administration should be in the people's language. Many senior Indian thinkers, like Nani Palkhiwala, even today seriously believe that the formation of linguistic states was a grave error. They maintained that the linguistic states were primarily responsible for the dismal performance of India after independence. Socialistic State meant a hyperbolic proliferation of paper work. The educational institutions could barely keep pace with the demand for officials and leaders being able to transact business in acceptable Hindi/English. The list of subject in the state list were of minor importance and those in the top echelons of India were unlikely to be hurt if the state governments carried out the administration in regional languages. In fact, formation of linguistic states made it possible to raise whole new battalions of rural leaders who would support the cause of "India". The fact that even forty years after the reorganisation of states, English continues to dominate fields of Science and Technology and business is an eloquent testimony of this fact.

Anglism

The one single decision concerning the national language opened up vast avenues for the urban upper caste communities where they could operate unchecked. The army, the police, the administration continued the format set by the British. Jana Gana Mana, which was written originally to salute the British Emperor became the national anthem. 'Vande Mataram' that was associated

with the most brilliant and historic chapters in the freedom movement was not acceptable to the new rulers.

On the Independence Day, on the Republic Day the flag--hoisting and 'beating the retreat' were fashioned more strictly according to the "Raj" pattern than in the U.K. itself. Slogans were raised of eradication of poverty and priority to health and education. In practice, educational institutes were developed to suit the convenience of the progeny of the black British. The educational institutions are divided into three types.

A few hand-picked Universities and IITs maintain international standards for the children of the urban elite. The alumnes of these institutions generally migrate to richer countries or occupy elevated positions of power.

The "run-of-the-mill" schools and colleges available to the middle classes provide education of deplorable standards. Such institutions are generally handed over to the cronies of the rulers to make enormous money by. The educational attainments and proficiency of the product was irrelevant, since those who hold a printed degree paper got jobs in the socialist bureaucracy where efficiency and culture were of little importance.

The third and the last level of educational institutions consists of schools run by the Panchayat Raj institutions – the celebrated primary schools that lack even the black-boards. The rural masses continue to remain far removed from even the primary literacy.

More than 50% of the people are illiterate; most hamlets are unconnected by road; drinking water is luxury. Teachers and Doctors are seen only in "mandi" towns. The services of a mid-wife are not available even in extreme emergency. The village cobbler cures leather by the same century-old process; baskets are woven exactly in the same manner since generations. The iron-smith fixes the metal rings on the wooden wheels of bullock-carts and sharpen axes and sickles by his age-old methods. At the other end, more fortunate Indians receive education in the top-most institutions and migrate to richer countries to serve the affluent people there by using skills paid for by the poor in India. If an Indian tourist becomes unwell in U.S.A. or U.K. it is more than likely that he will be treated by a doctor educated in India. High level responsibility in industries, research institutions are entrusted to Non-Resident Indians. This is the fruit of fifty years of independence.

History repeats itself often; it so happens that the same character perform the same plays on the world stage with minor differences of costumes and make-up. Since thousands of years, India is witnessing the caste conflict in its various forms one after another. The caste character of the Indian society remained unaffected by the revolution lead by Gautama the Buddha. The feudal invasions barely touched its outer crust. After the advent of the British political independence received top priority setting aside all agenda for the uplift of the depressed and the down-trodden. After independence, slogans of socialism were raised to hypnotize masses into submission to the systems that tyrannised them. With the fall of socialism when some prospects of an era of dignified living for the toiling community appeared the upper caste elite have started talking of "Swadeshi" to defeat openness. The independence of India proved futile and the teeming masses continued to be fooled by ever new stratagems and tactics. The most unfortunate part of the story is that even the persons affected by the course of event fail to understand the diabolic plot in spite of witnessing it repeatedly act by act, centuries after centuries.