

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Political Science
Paper Name	02: Indian Politics: II
Module Name/Title	<u>Legacies of the Indian Nationalist Movement</u>
Pre-requisites	
Objectives	Paper tries to relate democracy to culture and mentalities of nations and hence find a way to solve the problems that plague the current world and make it a better place for us and also for the democracy to survive and prosper.
Keywords	Democratic Transition, Democracy,

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Legacies of the Indian Nationalist Movement.

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Introduction: A nationalist movement is a significant political movement involving people from almost all the various sections of a society, with the purpose of achieving certain collectively cherished vital national goals in a country. Such movements are often to be seen in the histories of various countries at times when these are faced with some pivotal socio-economic or political issues involving the very basic characters of their societies or sometimes even their socio-political existence itself. During such tough times a process of national consciousness begins, generally with a lead provided by some enlightened or motivated elites, and over a period of time the common people, sharing the idea and the goals, begin to be drawn behind these elites and ultimately the nationalist movement sets in and begins to grow. With the passage of time as it evolves and gathers momentum and then depending upon its nature, goals, commitment and leadership; it may culminate into some minimum threshold level visible achievements, significantly altering the nature or even form of existing order or occasionally setting in of a new order as well which then steadily precipitates the various ideas and goals of the nationalist movement into the public policy of that country.

The stimulus to the beginning and the evolution of the Indian nationalist movement is mainly to be traced in the long series of varied social, political and economic factors which began to unfold in the aftermath of East India Company's victory in the battle of Plassey (1757) leading to the steady establishment of their political and economic dominance over the whole of India. The new economic, administrative and revenue systems introduced by the East India Company rulers were broadly exploitative. The general disruptive and debilitating impact of these systemic changes affected not only the lower strata (subalterns) of the society comprising of peasants, workers, artisans and tradesmen but also the upper classes, elites or the traditionally dominating segments of the Indian Society which included landlords and local rulers. Side by side the indifferent, discriminative and disdainful treatment of the Indians by the East India Company establishment and the abrupt disruption of their traditional religious and cultural beliefs also bred streams of discontent. Thus this long drawn process produced "discontent, resentment and resistance at every stage" and in almost every section of the Indian society. This piling up discontent ultimately precipitated in to a series of scattered

civil protests, agrarian uprisings, tribal uprisings and local rebellions in various parts of India. This collective discontent then ultimately snowballed in to the historic events of 1857, popularly known as the 'first war of independence' in our country. It was a loosely coordinated rebellion, scattered in various parts of India, attempted by the affected Indian rulers and several other sections of society to get rid of the British rule. Thus 1857 definitely is a watershed year in the evolution and consolidation of the nationalist consciousness which ultimately resulted in the taking off of the nationalist movement of India in the last quarter of the 19th century. After the consolidation of the British rule in 1858, a series of new organizations and movements of different people in various parts of India came up, choosing revolutionary, constitutionalist and reformative strategies to find respective political and social spaces in the colonial order of the day.

The founding of the Congress Party in 1885 became a turning point in the evolution of the nationalist movement in India. Beginning as a small organisation of educated and urban Indians, the Indian National Congress ultimately evolved as a massive umbrella organisation of all sections of the Indian people. Its very first agenda in 1886 was the demand for adequate representation of the Indians in the senior Government services and the legislative bodies created by the Indian Councils Act of 1861. But by 1930 it was asking for "Purna Swaraj" i.e. complete Independence, which then came in 1947. The Indian nationalist movement of course had various streams in it which include Ghadar movement, local revolutionaries, passive resistance and of course the Gandhian Satyagraha and last but not the least the military nationalism of Subhash Chandra Bose. But Mahatma Gandhi led Congress party emerged more like the mainstream movement of the nationalist struggle of India. Thus the nationalist movement of India though dominated by the Gandhian Congress, was in-fact a multifaceted and "an extremely wide movement with a common aim in which diverse political and ideological currents could co-exist and work." It was a popular movement led by powerful mass leaders who focused on not only on the political liberation from the colonial rule but also upon various other socio-political and economic aspects of our national life. Thus our nationalist movement duly addressed to the various social cultural, regional, ethnic and economic & agrarian issues being faced by the various sections of our society and left therein a rich legacy which continues to leave a significant impact on our national outlook even to this day.

Legacies of the Indian Nationalist movement can broadly be understood as political, economic and social legacies.

Political Legacies: The political legacies of the Indian National movement are wide ranging and are reflected not only in our constitution and government policies but are also in our political culture and the working of the Indian Polity. The same can be studied as under:

Democratic Polity: “If free India could start and persist with a democratic polity, it was because the national movement had already established the civil libertarian and democratic tradition among the Indian people.” Indian Freedom movement may have started as a small select group political activity of the educated influential urban Indians but soon it evolved into an all encompassing, mass movement, especially after Mahatma Gandhi emerged on the political scenario around 1918-19. Mahatma Gandhi was a firm believer in a broad based people’s movement aimed at the achievement of self rule on the basis of an ethical struggle carried on the principles like Satyagraha and non-violence against the British colonial government as well as carrying out much needed social reforms in the Indian society. The idea was to have a democratic national movement rooted in a plural society capable of honoring civic and egalitarian values and able to sustain constructive Indian nationalism. The organisation and working of the Congress party itself was largely democratically structured wherein, despite the decisive role of towering leadership, sufficient mechanisms for obtaining opinions of various delegates and people existed. The pre independence Congress party was not a typical political party in the narrow sense of the term. Rather it was an umbrella organisation which accommodated and carried along with it people and small groups having varying ideologies and approaches but having a common target. The democratic political system of the independent India therefore owes its origin to this grand legacy of the national movement wherein the national leadership, though elitist in nature was well supported by the masses as it was always conscious about the need to carry the masses along with it and also to respect diverse opinions and dissent. ‘The early nationalist leaders believed wholeheartedly in democracy and parliamentarianism. They wanted the British out but were prepared to adopt their institutions.’ Thus the parliamentary system, universal adult franchise, fundamental rights including freedom of expression, independent media and other civil liberties as well as minority rights as given in the constitution of India and available to her citizens even after 63 years of its promulgation are a direct reflection of the political values passed on by the leadership of the national movement. The strong commitment to democracy on the part of the nationalist movement leaders becomes all the more visible in the Fundamental rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy where in futuristic guidelines to further nurture and strengthen the social base of democracy in India were elaborately mentioned as a part of the constitution. A study of the various constitutional developments, including amendments, will clearly as to how much the steady implementation of the various provisions of the directive principals over all these decades have helped in creating the conditions for the creation of an equitable, liberal and a civic society in India and thus strengthened the process of democratization in India.

Indian Federalism is though largely structured on the lines of the government of India act 1935 but its spirit and working largely conforms to the collective legacies of

the nationalist movement. The apex national leadership visualized an independent India as a strong and a unified state, so as not only to redeem its unique place in the comity of nations. At the same time the regional aspirations and development agendas were to be accommodated. The entire Nehruvian legacy is an epitome of such a futuristic vision of an independent India. This came naturally to the responsible leadership of a people in a geographically large country having several multiple diversities. Indian federal structure no doubt created a hegemonic center but this hegemon is to be a benevolent hegemon which, while preserving the unity and integrity of the country, has to suitably facilitate the process of nation building through planned economic development while ensuring appropriate local spaces for diverse linguistic, cultural and other regional diversities which constitute India.

The process of democratization though is far from over and is continuously evolving. The emergence and strengthening of the civil society movement in the recent years is one very significant portent in this regard. Though much of Gandhian concerns and political values have been relegated to history but Gandhian modes of political protest and mobilization can still be routinely observed in the Indian political culture. Other important developments are the decentralizing of planning and relative empowerment of the Panchayati Raj institutions (73rd amendment to the Indian constitution). All the various legislations in the recent years like the Right to Information, Right to Service and Right to education etc. which aim to empower the citizenry are also very significant steps in this process of democratization of the polity in India. All these measures when fully realized will in a way be the near actualization of the Gandhian idea of a capable citizen who will be an effective and enlightened unit of a democratic India.

Secular State: Secularism has been the significant feature of India's freedom struggle right from the beginning. Even prior to the movement, the 'first war of independence' in 1857 also exhibited strong secular overtones when people in several parts of India stood above all communal affiliations and waged a collective Indian war against the British rule. This trend continued later on. No doubt communal approaches, issues and problems continued to pop up during these times but as is evident, these were not much able to dilute the secular spirit of the national movement. The last few years of run up to the independence of India were particularly trying and testing time and the violent communalism fanned by Jinnah's Muslim League was an ever strong provocation and challenge to the mainstream secularism. However despite the fact that India got partitioned on communal lines, the Congress dominated national movement never wavered in its commitment to secularism.

A resolution passed in the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1931 clearly stated that in Independent India every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practice his/her religion, that all citizens

would be equal before law and that the state shall observe neutrality in regard to all religion. There was no change in this approach ever afterwards. Indeed secularism also was to be one of the bases of Indian nationalism whereby the loyalty of the individual citizens was expected to be with the state clearly over and above their community.

India had been a multy religious society since ages and has a history of shared values and co-existence. No doubt there have been intermittent spots of communal tensions and violence and related issues but nonetheless the characteristic of accommodative co-existence has been all the more dominating. The principal leadership of the nationalist movement was personally all the more committed to the values of secularism. Mahatma Gandhi though himself a deeply religious person, held the view, 'Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics'. Jawahar Lal Nehru viewed communalism as an Indian brand of fascism and was opposed to it with a strong conviction. So were all other leaders of the Congress as well as leaders of the revolutionary streams which continued side by side with the mainstream non violent nationalist movement. Under such an impact the independent India adopted secularism as the guiding philosophy of the state (Preamble). Therefore the values of secularism are reflected not only in the constitution of India; in its fundamental rights and directive principals of the state policy but are evenly reflected in much of the routine working of our political system at all levels and segments.

Indian secularism needs to be understood in the broader connotations of the term 'secular'. Whereas Indian secularism does subscribe to the core idea of the concept of secularism as it is understood in the West that state and religion will be separate and apart, it goes beyond that in the sense that state will treat all religions equally. Religion has been and continues to be a very significant part of the individual and social life in India. So it can't simply be wished away. Therefore the constitution of India recognizes religious minorities, their exclusive cultural and educational rights and the need to assure the maintenance of these rights through impartial state support. All this was made part of the most significant part of the Indian constitution namely the Fundamental Rights. Furthermore, the futuristic emphasis upon the secularization of Indian society very well gets reflected in the Directive Principal's of State Policy especially the articles 38 and 44.

In the India of the 21st century though religion still is one of the most dominant elements of socio-political life, rather an issue or sometimes a problematic issue, however despite this, secularism as state policy is not only intact but gets duly reemphasized time and again. Also within the Indian society despite occasional communal rumblings and provocations, the culture of religious tolerance and accommodative co-existence firmly continues.

Foreign Policy: The nationalist movement also very importantly influenced the formation of the world view of an independent India. A prolonged struggle against

imperialism, colonialism and economic exploitation was definitely to reflect in the foreign policy of independent India. Indian leadership keenly watched the developments in Europe, especially the rise of fascism and Nazism and the unfolding of events leading to the Second World War and its course. India's policy of non-alignment is deeply embedded in those experiences. The leadership was also clear about the fact that India shall have to take the leadership role in rallying the maximum number of poor countries in order to struggle for a world order which is more conducive to the problems and requirements of the exploited poor and developing countries of the new world. The beginning was of course made with the Asian Relations Conference of 1946 held in New Delhi. Thus a foreign policy was followed which dealt with the stronger countries of the world on the basis of a conjoined approach of national interest and world peace. There has been a special place for the developing countries based on the concept of shared development and cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes. International forums like the UN always had a special place in India's foreign policy as India looks forward to a world order based on International Law, equality and co-existence.

The post cold war foreign policy of India had to be re-oriented and its economic dimension became all the more significant. Despite tremendous neo-liberal pressures and the momentum of globalization from the affluent West, India has significantly emphasized upon regional strategies of shared economic development with her neighboring countries. Developments like '**Look East Policy**' **Gujral Doctrine**, **BIMSTEC**, **IOR-ARC** (*Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation*). All this reminds of especially Nehruvian rhetoric about India's special concern for the Afro-Asian countries. These developments re-emphasize the spirit of Asian Relations conference (1946 New Delhi), Bandung Conference (1955) and Algiers summit of NAM (1973). The recent declaration at the end of the fifth BRICS summit at Durban declaring the intent to set up a 'BRICS development bank' and a 'USD 100 billion Contingency Reserve Arrangement' reminds our traditional stance based upon anti imperialism, neo-colonialism and challenging the hegemony of Breton Woods economic order institutions like the World Bank and the IMF.

Economic Legacies: Indian nationalist movement, as it encountered the British colonialism, had a strong economic component as well. It had to be because at the core of British colonialism was the economic exploitation of the Indian economy in order to make it subservient to the British economic interests. It was broadly felt 'that India's social and economic progress had been retarded by centuries of British rule and that the country had been kept agrarian, and its industrial potential has remained arrested'. Infact The major cause of a plethora of tribal and peasant uprisings during the mid nineteenth century and later on was indeed the economic exploitation and squeezing of the natives at the hands of the British or the local feudal lords who were the intermediaries between the Company and the native peasants, artisans and other such people. Dada Bhai Naoroji's

economic critique of colonialism, “Drain Theory” as given in his book “Poverty and un British rule in India” very appropriately sums up the Indian concern about their all round economic exploitation at the hands of the British. Apart from Nauroji, Mahadeo Govind Ranade and R C Dutt may be taken to be the pioneers of Indian economic thinking in the British India. Mahatma Gandhi’s political thinking was also dominated with his concern about the acute poverty in India, especially in rural India. Much of the economic thinking in colonial India was of course of economico-political in character. Indian nationalism was thus Economic Nationalism as well. The nationalist leaders were sized of the fact that political and economic independence were interrelated and that political freedom will be meaningless without economic freedom. In the Karachi session of Indian national Congress in 1931, a resolution drafted by Jawahar Lal Nehru and moved by Mahatma Gandhi became the guiding document of the economic thinking of independent India. It said that ‘in independent India the state shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways and shipping and other means of transport. And in 1938 Subhas Chandra Bose who became the Congress president, set up a National Planning Committee with Jawaharlal Nehru as chairman and Professor K.T. Shah as secretary. The purpose of this committee was to prepare a blue print strategy for the economic and infrastructure development in India. The ‘Bombay Plan’ of 1940 which was prepared by a group of Industrialists led by GD Birla suggested the classification of industries into basic and consumption goods industries and also admitted the necessity of reducing inequalities of wealth. Among the measures suggested toward this purpose were the reform of the system of land tenure and provision of the fullest scope for small and cottage industries as well as state control of the economy accompanied by state ownership of public utilities and basic industries. Economic control, however, was more important than ownership or management by the state, argued the Bombay Plan.

The impact of such economic thinking by the elites of India’s nationalist movement is quite visible upon independent India’s economic policies. The five year plan system became the mainstay of India’s economic restructuring and revival. Agriculture being the mainstay of the Indian economy, agrarian reforms was always high on the agenda of the Indian nationalists who strongly emphasized upon the need for restructuring agrarian relations and the ending of all intermediary rent receivers like Zamindars or landlords. Similarly revival of the indigenous industry and economic self reliance was always high on Nehru’s development agenda for an Independent India. Jawahar Lal Nehru was convinced that the economic self sufficiency of independent India cannot be achieved without modern industrialization and infrastructure building. Therefore apart from the heavy industry, the medium, small and handicrafts were also addressed to as these would be the major sources of domestic consumer production as well as employment. Thus inter-linkage between industry and agriculture was considered

to be important for countering the rural poverty. State played the most important role in this regard.

Impact of Gandhian economic thinking which begins with his famous treatise HIND SWARAJ , can still be observed albeit on the margins of contemporary Indian economy. The role of co-operative movement and the support to handicrafts through Khadi Gram Udyog Boards is noteworthy and has definitely contributed to the betterment of our rural economy in various parts of the country.

SOCIALISM: The 1917 Soviet Revolution created a special interest among the leadership of Indian nationalist movement. Jawahar Lal Nehru particularly developed a special interest in socialism to the extent that during his presidential address to the 1928 annual session of the Indian National Congress, he remarked that ‘the only solution of the world’s problems and of India’s problems lies in socialism’. The entire Gandhian approach runs a close parallel to socialism and is rather called as “Gandhian Socialism”.

The aim of Indian nationalism was thus not limited to the attainment of freedom but, as Gandhiji envisaged, had to lead to the creation of a qualitatively different society, devoid of caste and religious antagonism. A major concern of the national movement therefore was social inclusiveness. To a deputation of students in 1934, Gandhiji said: “The two things — the social reordering and the fight for political swaraj — must go hand in hand. There can be no question of precedence or division into watertight compartments here.” Nationalism was thus conceived as a combination of political freedom and social emancipation. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, architect of the Indian Constitution, was more forthcoming in this regard. He observed in 1949: “We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy... What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principle of life ... On the 26th of January 1950; we are going to enter into a life of contradiction. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life, we will have inequality.”

Though Independent India has not adopted any particular brand of ‘socialism’ as the policy of the state but none the less socialist ideas along with the British liberalism have definitely influenced the making of our constitution , nation building process and the economic planning in a very significant way. The nationalist leadership was keen to have a system based on liberal values but at the same time the desire to usher in rapid social and economic change was even stronger. In a way this was the imperative necessity as a new nation was to take shape amidst a lot of turmoil; and the same must happen based upon legal political and social equality, equitable distribution of wealth, special attention towards the downtrodden and backward sections of the society, secularism and an all inclusive approach in general. Such a concern is visible in the various provisions of fundamental rights and the directive principals of state

policy as also in the special measures such as reservation of places in representative institutions, government agencies and public institutions for the people belonging to different disadvantaged classes and groups in India; primarily the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes and other backward classes. Besides this there is a detailed agenda for the welfare of various other sections of society like the women and children etc.

Summary: (*Power Point Presentation module*)

----A nationalist movement is a significant political movement involving people from almost all the various sections of a society, with the purpose of achieving certain collectively cherished vital national goals in a country.

---- The stimulus to the beginning and the evolution of the Indian nationalist movement can be traced to the long series of varied social, political and economic factors which began to unfold in the aftermath of East India Company's victory in the battle of Plassey (1757) leading to the steady establishment of their political and economic dominance over the whole of India. This long drawn process produced "discontent, resentment and resistance at every stage" and in almost every section of the Indian society.

---- Historic events of 1857, popularly known as the 'first war of independence' became a watershed event in the evolution and consolidation of the nationalist consciousness which ultimately resulted in the taking off of the nationalist movement of India in the last quarter of the 19th century.

---- The nationalist movement in India had various streams in it including the Ghadar movement, local revolutionaries, passive resistance and of course the Gandhian Satyagraha and last but not the least the military nationalism of Subhash Chandra Bose. But Mahatma Gandhi lead Congress party emerged more like the mainstream movement of the nationalist struggle of India.

---- It was a popular movement lead by powerful mass leaders who focused on not only on the political liberation from the colonial rule but also addressed to the various social cultural, regional, ethnic and economic & agrarian issues being faced by the various sections of our society and left therein a rich legacy which continues to leave a significant impact on our national outlook even to this day.

---- Indian Freedom movement evolved into an all encompassing, mass movement, especially after Mahatma Gandhi emerged on the political scenario around 1918-19. It was an ethical struggle based on principles like Satyagraha and non-violence. It was thus a democratic national movement rooted in a plural society capable of honoring civic and

egalitarian values and able to sustain constructive Indian nationalism leading to India's independence. **It thus laid the basis of a future democratic India.**

---- **The parliamentary system, universal adult franchise, fundamental rights** including freedom of expression, independent media and other civil liberties as well as minority rights as given in the constitution of India and available to her citizens even after 63 years of its promulgation are a direct reflection of the political values passed on by the leadership of the national movement.

----India had been a multy religious society since ages and has a history of shared values and co-existence. No doubt there have been intermittent spots of communal tensions and violence and related issues but nonetheless the **characteristics of accommodative co-existence or secularism have been all the more dominating.**

---- **A prolonged struggle against imperialism, colonialism and economic exploitation amply reflects in the Indian foreign policy.** There has been a special place for the developing countries based on the concept of shared development and cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes. International forums like the UN always had a special place in India's foreign policy as India looks forward to a world order based on International Law, equality and co-existence.

---- **Indian nationalism was economic nationalism as well.** The nationalist leaders were sized of the fact that political and economic independence were interrelated and that political freedom will be meaningless without economic freedom.

---- **“We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well (Dr. B. R. Ambedkar).** The aim of Indian nationalism was to lead to the creation of a qualitatively different society, devoid of caste, religious and all other typologies of antagonism. A major concern of the national movement therefore was social inclusiveness.

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