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CLASS XII
THEMES IN INDIAN HISTORY
PART III
NCERT GIST

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Unit - I

COLONIALISM AND THE COUNTRYSIDE EXPLORING OFFICIAL ARCHIVES

Bengal and the Zamindars

- As you know, colonial rule was first established in Bengal.
- It is here that the earliest attempts were made to reorder rural society and establish a new regime of land rights and a new revenue system. An auction in Burdwan
- In 1797 there was an auction in Burdwan (present-day Bardhaman). It was a big public event. A number of mahals (estates) held by the Raja of Burdwan were being sold
- The Permanent Settlement had come into operation in 1793. The East India Company had fixed the revenue that each zamindar had to pay. The estates of those who failed to pay were to be auctioned to recover the revenue
- In introducing the Permanent Settlement, British officials hoped to resolve the problems they had been facing since the conquest of Bengal.
- By the 1770s, the rural economy in Bengal was in crisis, with recurrent famines and agricultural output.
- Officials felt that agriculture, trade and the revenue resources of the state could all be developed by encouraging investment in agriculture.
- This could be done by securing rights of property and permanently fixing the rates of revenue demand. If the revenue demand of the state was permanently fixed
- The problem, however, lay in identifying individuals who could both improve agriculture and contract to pay the fixed revenue to the state
- They were now classified as zamindars, and they had to pay the revenue demand that was fixed in perpetuity. In terms of this definition, the zamindar was not a landowner in the village, but a revenue Collector of the state.

Why zamindars defaulted on payments

- Company officials felt that a fixed revenue demand would give zamindars a sense of security and, assured of returns on their investment, encourage them to improve their estates
- In the early decades after the Permanent Settlement, however, zamindars regularly failed to pay the revenue demand and unpaid balances accumulated.

Reason for The Failure

- **First:** the initial demands were very high. This was because it was felt that if the demand was fixed for all time to come, the Company would never be able to claim a share of increased income from land when prices rose.
- **Second:** this high demand was imposed in the 1790s, a time when the prices of agricultural produce were depressed, making it difficult for the zamindars to pay their dues to the zamindar

- **Third:** the revenue was invariable, regardless of the harvest, and had to be paid punctually. In fact, according to the Sunset Law, if payment did not come in by sunset of the specified date, the zamindari was liable to be auctioned.
- **Fourth:** The Permanent Settlement initially limited the power of the zamindar to collect rent from the riot and manage his zamindari
- The zamindars' troops were disbanded, customs duties abolished, and their "cutcherries" (courts) brought under the supervision of a Collector appointed by the Company. Zamindars lost their power to organise local justice and the local police.
- At the time of rent collection, an officer of the zamindar, usually the amlah, came around to the village
- Rich riots and village headmen – jotedars and mandals – were only too happy to see the zamindar in trouble

The Rise of The Jotedars

- In Francis Buchanan's survey of the Dinajpur district in North Bengal we have a vivid description of this class of rich peasants known as jotedars
- Within the villages, the power of jotedars was more effective than that of zamindars. Unlike zamindars who often lived in urban areas, jotedars were located in the villages and exercised direct control over a considerable section of poor villagers.
- When the estates of the zamindars were auctioned for failure to make revenue payment, jotedars were often amongst the purchasers
- In some places they were called haoladars, elsewhere they were known as gantidars or mandals. Their rise inevitably weakened zamindari authority.

The Zamindar Resist

- The authority of the zamindars in rural areas, however, did not collapse. Faced with an exorbitantly high revenue demand and possible auction of their estates, they devised ways of surviving the pressures. New contexts produced new strategies.
- The Raja of Burdwan, for instance, first transferred some of his zamindari to his mother, since the Company had decreed that the property of women would not be taken over
- Then, as a second move, his agents manipulated the auctions. The revenue demand of the Company was deliberately withheld, and unpaid balances were allowed to accumulate.
- Once again, the purchase money was not paid, and once again there was an auction. This process was repeated endlessly, exhausting the state, and the other bidders at the auction. At last the estate was sold at a low price back to the zamindar.
- The zamindar never paid the full revenue demand; the Company rarely recovered the unpaid balances that had piled up. When people from outside the zamindari bought an estate at an auction, they could not always take possession. At times their agents would be attacked by lathials of the former zamindar.
- The zamindars therefore were not easily displaced
- The Great Depression of the 1930s that they finally collapsed and the jotedars consolidated their power in the countryside.

The Fifth Report

- Many of the changes we are discussing were documented in detail in a report that was submitted to the British Parliament in 1813.

- This report reproduced petitions of zamindars and riots, reports of collectors from different districts, statistical tables on revenue returns, and notes on the revenue and judicial administration of Bengal and Madras (present-day Tamil Nadu) written by official
- There were many groups in Britain who were opposed to the monopoly that the East India Company had over trade with India and China. These groups wanted a revocation of the Royal Charter that gave the Company this monopoly's
- The Fifth Report was one such report produced by a Select Committee. It became the basis of intense parliamentary debates on the nature of the East India Company's rule in India
- The Fifth Report exaggerated the collapse of traditional zamindari power, as also overestimated the scale on which zamindars were losing their land. As we have seen, even when zamindaris were auctioned, zamindars were not always displaced, given the ingenious methods they used to retain their zamindaris.

In the Hills of Rajmahal

- Paharias they lived around the Rajmahal hills, subsisting on forest produce and practising shifting cultivation. They cleared patches of forest by cutting bushes and burning the undergrowth. On these patches, enriched by the potash from the ash, the Paharias grew a variety of pulses and millets for consumption
- The life of the Paharias - as hunters, shifting cultivators, food gatherers, charcoal producers, silkworm rearers - was thus intimately connected to the forest.
- The zamindars on the plains had to often purchase peace by paying a regular tribute to the hill chiefs. Traders similarly gave a small amount to the hill folk for permission to use the passes controlled by them. Once the toll was paid, the Paharia chiefs protected the traders, ensuring that their goods were not plundered by anyone.
- Many Paharia chiefs refused the allowances. Those who accepted, most often lost authority within the community. Being in the pay of the colonial government, they came to be perceived as subordinate employees or stipendiary chiefs.
- Santhals were pouring into the area, clearing forests, cutting down timber, ploughing land and growing rice and cotton. As the lower hills were taken over by Santhal settlers, the Paharias receded deeper into the Rajmahal hills.

The Santhal: Pioneer Settlers

- A Revolt in the Countryside the Bombay Deccan
- One way of exploring such changes is by focusing on a peasant revolt
- Alarmed the Santhals had begun to come into Bengal around the 1780s. Zamindars hired them to reclaim land and expand cultivation, and British officials invited them to settle in the Jangal Mahals.
- By 1832 a large area of land was demarcated as Damin-i-Koh. This was declared to be the land of the Santhals.
- The land grant to the Santhals stipulated that at least one-tenth of the area was to be cleared and cultivated within the first ten years. The territory was surveyed and mapped. Enclosed with boundary pillars, it was separated from both the world of the settled agriculturists of the plains and the Paharias of the hills
- Shifting agriculture depended on the ability to move to newer and newer land and utilisation of the natural fertility of the soil. When the most fertile soils became inaccessible to them, being part of the Damin, the Paharias could not effectively sustain their mode of cultivation. When the forests of the region were cleared for cultivation the hunters amongst them also faced problems.

- The Santhals, by contrast, gave up their earlier life of mobility and settled down, cultivating a range of commercial crops for the market, and dealing with traders and moneylenders.
- The state was levying heavy taxes on the land that the Santhals had cleared, moneylenders (dikus) were charging them high rates of interest and taking over the land when debts remained unpaid, and zamindars were asserting control over the Damini area
- Buchanan had specific instructions about what he had to look for and what he had to record. When he arrived at a village with his army of people, he was immediately perceived as an agent of the Sarkar.
- He searched for minerals and stones that were commercially valuable, he recorded all signs of iron ore and mica, granite and saltpetre. He carefully observed local practices of salt-making and iron ore-mining.
- He was inevitably critical of the lifestyles of forest dwellers and felt that forests had to be turned into agricultural lands by the actions of rebels and keen on restoring order, state authorities do not simply repress a rebellion

Account Books are Burnt

- On 12 May 1875, ryots from surrounding rural areas gathered and attacked the shopkeepers, demanding their bahi khatas (account books) and debt bonds. They burnt the khatas, looted grain shops, and in some cases set fire to the houses of sahuikars
- From Poona the revolt spread to Ahmednagar. Then over the next two months it spread even further, over an area of 6,500 square km. More than thirty villages were affected.
- Everywhere the pattern was the same: sahuikars were attacked, account books burnt and debt bonds destroyed. Terrified of peasant attacks, the sahuikars fled the villages, very often leaving their property and belongings behind

A new revenue system

- As British rule expanded from Bengal to other parts of India, new systems of revenue were imposed. The Permanent Settlement was rarely extended to any region beyond Bengal.
- Since the revenue demand was fixed under the Permanent Settlement, the colonial state could not claim any share of this enhanced income.
- When the land yielded more than this “average rent”, the landowner had a surplus that the state needed to tax. If tax was not levied, cultivators were likely to turn into rentiers, and their surplus income was unlikely to be productively invested in the improvement of the land
- The revenue system that was introduced in the Bombay Deccan came to be known as the ryotwari settlement.

Revenue Demand and Peasant Debt

- The first revenue settlement in the Bombay Deccan was made in the 1820s
- When rains failed and harvests were poor, peasants found it impossible to pay the revenue. However, the collectors in charge of revenue collection were keen on demonstrating their efficiency and pleasing their superiors.
- So, they went about extracting payment with utmost severity. When someone failed to pay, his crops were seized and a fine was imposed on the whole village
- One third of the cattle of the Deccan were killed, and half the human population died. Those who survived had no agricultural stocks to see them through the crisis. Unpaid balances of revenue mounted
- Inevitably, they borrowed. Revenue could rarely be paid without a loan from a moneylender. But once a loan was taken, the ryot found it difficult to pay it back

- Then came the cotton boom
- Before the 1860s, three-fourths of raw cotton imports into Britain came from America
- In 1857 the Cotton Supply Association was founded in Britain, and in 1859 the Manchester Cotton Company was formed. Their objective was “to encourage cotton production in every part of the world suited for its growth
- While the American crisis continued, cotton production in the Bombay Deccan expanded. Between 1860 and 1864 cotton acreage doubled. By 1862 over 90 per cent of cotton imports into Britain were coming from India.
- But these boom years did not bring prosperity to all cotton producers. Some rich peasants did gain, but for the large majority, cotton expansion meant heavier debt

Credit Dries Up

- As the Civil War ended, cotton production in America revived and Indian cotton exports to Britain steadily declined.
- Export merchants and sahkukars in Maharashtra were no longer keen on extending long-term credit
- While credit dried up, the revenue demand increased. The first revenue settlement, as we have seen, was in the 1820s and 1830s. Now it was time for the next. And in the new settlement, the demand was increased dramatically: from 50 to 100 per cent

The Experience of Injustice

- In 1859 the British passed a Limitation Law that stated that the loan bonds signed between moneylenders and ryots would have validity for only three years. This law was meant to check the accumulation of interest over time. The moneylender, however, turned the law around, forcing the riot to sign a new bond every three years.

The Deccan Riots Commission

- When the revolt spread in the Deccan, the Government of Bombay was initially unwilling to see it as anything serious. But the Government of India, worried by the memory of 1857, pressurised the Government of Bombay to set up a commission of enquiry to investigate into the causes of the riots.
- The commission produced a report that was presented to the British Parliament in 1878. This report, referred to as the Deccan Riots Report, provides historians with a range of sources for the study of the riot.
- The commission held enquiries in the districts where the riots spread, recorded statements of riots, sahkukars and eyewitnesses, compiled statistical data on revenue rates, prices and interest rates in different regions, and collated the reports sent by district collectors.

Unit - II

REBELS AND THE RAJ THE REVOLT OF 1857 AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS

- They first seized the bell of arms and plundered the treasury. They then attacked government buildings – the jail, treasury, telegraph office, record room, bungalows – burning all records.
- Everything and everybody connected with the white man became a target. Proclamations in Hindi, Urdu and Persian were put up in the cities calling upon the population, both Hindus and Muslims, to unite, rise and exterminate the firangis.
- When ordinary people began joining the revolt, the targets of attack widened. In major towns like Lucknow, Kanpur and Bareilly, moneylenders and the rich also became the objects of rebel wrath.
- Peasants not only saw them as oppressors but also as allies of the British

Lines of Communciation

- The 41st Native Infantry, which was stationed in the same place, insisted that since they had killed all their white officers, the Military Police should also kill Harsey or deliver him as prisoner to the 41st. The Military Police refused to do either, and it was decided that the matter would be settled by a panchayat composed of native officers drawn from each regiment
- The sepoys were the makers of their own rebellion.

Leaders and Followers

- One of the first acts of the sepoys of Meerut, as we saw, was to rush to Delhi and appeal to the old Mughal emperor to accept the leadership of the revolt. This acceptance of leadership took its time in coming. Bahadur Shah's first reaction was one of horror and rejection.
- It was only when some sepoys had moved into the Mughal court within the Red Fort, in defiance of normal court etiquette, that the old emperor, realising he had very few options, agreed to be the nominal leader of the rebellion
- In Kanpur, the sepoys and the people of the town gave Nana Sahib, the successor to Peshwa Baji Rao II, no choice save to join the revolt as their leader
- In Jhansi, the rani was forced by the popular pressure around her to assume the leadership of the uprising. So was Kunwar Singh, a local zamindar in Arrah in Bihar
- In Awadh, where the displacement of the popular Nawab Wajid Ali Shah and the annexation of the state were still very fresh in the memory of the people, the populace in Lucknow celebrated the fall of British rule by hailing Birjis Qadr, the young son of the Nawab, as their leader.
- Shah Mal mobilised the villagers of pargana Barout in Uttar Pradesh; Gonoo, a tribal cultivator of Singhbhum in Chotanagpur, became a rebel leader of the Kol tribals of the region.

Rumours and Prophecies

- Rumours and prophecies played an important part in moving people in to action during the Revolt of 1857
There was a rumour that the new cartridges were greased with the fat of cows and pigs which would pollute their castes and religion.

- The rumours about the British trying to destroy the religion of Indians by mixing the bone dust of cows and pigs into the flour led people to avoid touching the flour. There was fear and suspicion that the British wanted to convert Indians to Christianity.
- The rumour about the British rule coming to an end on the centenary of the Battle of Plassey also reinforced the call for a revolt against the masters (23 June 1857).
- The British policies to reform Indian society by introducing western education and social reforms targeted their long-cherished customs and practices.
- The activities of Christian missionaries also created doubt and discomfort.
- The annexations on the pretext of the Doctrine of Lapse also made the people suspicious of British intention □

Subsidiary Alliance

- Subsidiary Alliance was a system introduced by Lord Wellesley in 1798. Those who entered into such an alliance with the British had to accept certain terms and conditions
 - ▶ The British would be responsible for protecting their ally from external and internal threats to their power
 - ▶ In the territory of the ally, a British armed contingent would be stationed
 - ▶ The ally would have to provide the resources for maintaining this contingent
 - ▶ The ally could enter into agreements with other rulers or engage in warfare only with the permission of the British.
 - ▶ The ally had to keep the resident who was the representative of the Governor General and was not under direct British rule

Awadh in Revolt

- “A cherry that will drop into our mouth one day”
- By the terms of this alliance the Nawab had to disband his military force, allow the British to position their troops within the kingdom, and act in accordance with the advice of the British Resident who was attached to the court. Thus, the Nawab became dependent on British.
- The British were keen to acquire Awadh as its soil was good for growing indigo and cotton and was ideally located for trade.
- Annexation of Awadh would complete the territorial annexation by the British beginning with that of Bengal a century earlier.
- It was annexed on the grounds of maladministration. The British wrongly assumed that the Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was an unpopular ruler; on the contrary he was widely loved.

The Life Was Gone Out of The Body

- Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was dethroned and exiled to Calcutta on the plea that the region was being misgoverned. The British government also wrongly assumed that Wajid Ali Shah was an unpopular ruler. On the contrary, he was widely loved, and when he left his beloved Lucknow
- Firangi raj and the end of a world
- The annexation of Awadh displaced not only the Nawab, but also the taluqdars. They country side of Awadh had many estates and forts of taluqdars. They had held power for generations
- Under the Nawab the taluqdars had enjoyed a fair degree of autonomy as long as they accepted the suzerainty of the Nawab
- They paid revenue of their taluqs to the British. Many taluqdars had armies of about 12,000-foot soldiers and even the smaller ones had armies of about 200

- The British did not tolerate the power of the taluqdars. They were annexed, disarmed and their best forts were destroyed.
- The British land revenue policy reduced their power. They introduced the Summary Settlement in 1856. It was based on the idea that taluqdars had acquired the land by force and fraud and thus had no permanent rights over land.
- They removed them from power. For example, in pre-British times, taluqdars held 67% of the total number of villages in Awadh and after the introduction of the Summary Settlement, this number reduced to a mere 38%.
- By removing them, the British thought they will settle the land with the owners of soil. They wanted to reduce exploitation done to peasants.
- They wanted to increase the revenue returns to the state. In actual practice, this did not happen-although the revenues increased, the burden on the peasants did not reduce. Officials soon found out that there was increase in revenue rates from 30 to 70 percent and large areas of Awadh were heavily over assessed.
- With the removal of the taluqdars, the peasants were directly exposed to the harsh revenue policies of the British and could no longer avail loans in times of hardship or crop failure.
- There were no means by which the payment of revenue could be postponed upon failure of the crop or other unforeseen situation.
- The ties of loyalty and patronage had bound the peasant to the taluqdar but it was disrupted. The British over-assessed the revenue due and used inflexible methods of collection.
- This link between the sepoys and the rural world had important implications in the course of the uprising. When the sepoys defied their superior officers and took up arms, they were joined very swiftly by their brethren in the villages.
- Everywhere, peasants poured into towns and joined the soldiers and the ordinary people of the towns in collective acts of rebellion.

The Vision of Unity

- The rebel proclamations in 1857 repeatedly appealed to all sections of the population, irrespective of their caste and creed. Many of the proclamations were issued by Muslim princes or in their names but even these took care to address the sentiments of Hindus.
- The rebellion was seen as a war in which both Hindus and Muslims had equally to lose or gain. The ishtahars harked back to the pre-British Hindu-Muslim past and glorified the coexistence of different communities under the Mughal Empire.
- The proclamation that was issued under the name of Bahadur Shah appealed to the people to join the fight under the standards of both Muhammad and Mahavir.

Against The Symbol of Oppression

- The rebellion against the British widened into an attack on all those who were seen as allies of the British or local oppressors. Often the rebels deliberately sought to humiliate the elites of a city. In the villages they burnt account books and ransacked moneylenders' houses.
- This reflected an attempt to overturn traditional hierarchies, rebel against all oppressors. It presents a glimpse of an alternative vision, perhaps of a more egalitarian society. Such visions were not articulated in the proclamations which sought to unify all social groups in the fight against firangi raj.

Repression

- By a number of Acts, passed in May and June 1857, not only was the whole of North India put under martial law but military officers and even ordinary Britons were given the power to try and punish Indians suspected of rebellion.
- In other words, the ordinary processes of law and trial were suspended and it was put out that rebellion would have only one punishment – death.
- In Awadh, for example, a British official called Forsyth estimated that three-fourths of the adult male population was in rebellion. The area was brought under control only in March 1858 after protracted fighting.
- But this was not the only instrument they used. In large parts of present-day Uttar Pradesh, where big landholders and peasants had offered united resistance, the British tried to break up the unity by promising to give back to the big landholders their estates. Rebel landholders were dispossessed and the loyal rewarded

Images of The Revolt

- The stories of the revolt that were published in British newspapers and magazines in gory detail the violence of the mutineers and these stories inflamed public feelings and provoked demands of retribution and revenge.
- One important record of the mutiny is the pictorial images (posters and cartoons) produced by the Indians and British. British pictures provide a variety of images that were meant to provoke emotions and reactions

Celebrating the Saviours

- Some of them commemorate the British heroes who saved the English and repressed the rebels. Relief of Lucknow painted by Thomas Jones Barker is an example. It represents the siege of Lucknow by mutineers and the British heroes-Campbell, Outram and Havelock.
- In Memorium painted by Joseph Noel Paton depicts violence against English women and children. MS. Wheeler's painting- Miss Wheeler is shown as defending herself against the Sepoys at Cawnpore'

No Time for Clemency

- Punch (Magazine) Cartoons published in Britain (1857)- "Justice", "The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger" and "The clemency of Canning." Images of executions of Indian soldiers in Peshawar

Nationalist Imaginaries

- It was celebrated as the First War of Independence in which all sections of the people of India came together to fight against imperial rule.
- Rani of Jhansi was represented as a masculine figure chasing the enemy, slaying British soldiers and valiantly fighting till her last
- Children in many parts of India grow up reading the lines of Subhadra Kumari Chauhan: "Khoob lari mardani woh to Jhansi wali rani thi" (Like a man she fought, she was the Rani of Jhansi)
- In popular prints Rani Lakshmi Bai is usually portrayed in battle armour, with a sword in hand and riding a horse – a symbol of the determination to resist injustice and alien rule.

KEY WORDS

1. Bell of arms: A storeroom in which weapons are kept
2. Firangi: A term used to designate foreigners
3. Mutiny: A collective disobedience of rules and regulations within armed forces Revolt: A rebellion of people against established authority and power.
4. Resident: The designation of a representative of the Governor General who lived in a state which was not under direct British rule.

Unit - III

COLONIAL CITIES URBANISATION, PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

Towns and The Cities In Pre-Colonial Times

- Besides, there was a reverse flow of humans and goods from towns to villages
- Agra, Delhi and Lahore were important centres of imperial administration and control. Mansabdars and jagirdars who were assigned territories in different parts of the empire usually maintained houses in these cities: residence in these centres of power was symbolic of the status and prestige of a noble
- In the towns of South India such as Madurai and Kanchipuram the principal focus was the temple. These towns were also important commercial centres. Religious festivals often coincided with fairs, linking pilgrimage with trade.
- Medieval towns were places where everybody was expected to know their position in the social order dominated by the ruling elite. In North India, maintaining this order was the work of the imperial officer called the kotwal who oversaw the internal affairs and policing of the town.

Changes In The Eighteenth Century

- Some local notables and officials associated with Mughal rule in North India also used this opportunity to create new urban settlements such as the qasbah and ganj
- The European commercial Companies had set up base in different places early during the Mughal era: the Portuguese in Panaji in 1510, the Dutch in Masulipatnam in 1605, the British in Madras in 1639 and the French in Pondicherry (present-day Puducherry) in 1673
- From the mid-eighteenth century, there was a new phase of change. Commercial centres such as Surat, Masulipatnam and Dhaka, which had grown in the seventeenth century, declined when trade shifted to other places.
- British gradually acquired political control after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, and the trade of the English East India Company expanded, colonial port cities such as Madras, Calcutta and Bombay rapidly emerged as the new economic capitals

Colonial Records and Urban History

- By the mid-nineteenth century several local censuses had been carried out in different regions. The first all-India census was attempted in 1872. Thereafter, from 1881, decennial (conducted every ten years) censuses became a regular feature. This collection of data is an invaluable source for studying urbanisation in India.
- The endless pages of tables on disease and death, or the enumeration of people according their age, sex, caste and occupation, provide a vast mass of figures that creates an illusion of concreteness.

Trends of Change

- The introduction of railways in 1853 meant a change in the fortunes of towns. Economic activity gradually shifted away from traditional towns which were located along old routes and rivers. Every railway station became a collection depot for raw materials and a distribution point for imported goods.
- With the expansion of the railway network, railway workshops and railway colonies were established. Railway towns like Jamalpur, Waltair and Bareilly developed.

Ports, Forts and Centres for Service

- By the eighteenth century Madras, Calcutta and Bombay had become important ports. The settlements that came up here were convenient points for collecting goods

- The English East India Company built its factories (i.e., mercantile offices) there and because of competition among the European companies, fortified these settlements for protection.
- In Madras, Fort St George, in Calcutta Fort William and in Bombay the Fort marked out the areas of British settlement.
- Indian merchants, artisans and other workers who had economic dealings with European merchants lived outside these forts in settlements of their own
- There were only two proper “industrial cities”: Kanpur, specialising in leather, woollen and cotton textiles, and Jamshedpur, specialising in steel. India never became a modern industrialised country, since discriminatory colonial policies limited the levels of industrial development. Calcutta, Bombay and Madras grew into large cities, but this did not signify any dramatic economic growth for colonial India as a whole.

A New Urban Milieu

- Colonial cities reflected the mercantile culture of the new rulers. Political power and patronage shifted from Indian rulers to the merchants of the East India Company
- Economic activity near the river or the sea led to the development of docks and Ghats.
- Along the shore were godowns, mercantile offices, insurance agencies for shipping, transport depots, banking establishments. Further inland were the chief administrative offices of the Company.
- Pasturelands and agricultural fields around the older towns were cleared, and new urban spaces called “Civil Lines” were set up. White people began to live in the Civil Lines
- The “Black” areas came to symbolise not only chaos and anarchy, but also filth and disease
- For a long while the British were interested primarily in the cleanliness and hygiene of the “White” areas.
- But as epidemics of cholera and plague spread, killing thousands, colonial officials felt the need for more stringent measures of sanitation and public health.
- They feared that disease would spread from the “Black” to the “White” areas

The First Hill Station

- Shimla (present-day Shimla) was founded during the course of the Gurkha War (1815-16); the Anglo-Maratha War of 1818 led to British interest in Mount Abu; and Darjeeling was wrested from the rulers of Sikkim in 1835
- Hill stations became strategic places for billeting troops, guarding frontiers and launching campaigns against enemy rulers
- Shimla also became the official residence of the commander-in-chief of the Indian army

Social Life In New Cities

- Within the cities new social groups were formed and the old identities of people were no longer important. All classes of people were migrating to the big cities. There was an increasing demand for clerks, teachers, lawyers, doctors, engineers and accountants. As a result, the “middle classes” increased. They had access to new educational institutions such as schools, colleges and libraries
- Even reformers who supported women’s education saw women primarily as mothers and wives, and wanted them to remain within the enclosed spaces of the household. Over time, women became more visible in public, as they entered new professions in the city as domestic and factory, teacher and theatre and film actresses.
- They were enthusiastic participants in religious festivals, tamashas (folk theatre) and swangs (satires) which often mocked the pretensions of their masters, Indian and European.

Segregation, Town planning and Architecture

Madras, Calcutta And Bombay

Settlement And Segregation In Madras

- The Company had first set up its trading activities in the well-established port of Surat on the west coast.
- In 1639 they constructed a trading post in Madraspatam. This settlement was locally known as Chenapattanam
- Madras became more secure and began to grow into an important commercial town
- Fort St George became the nucleus of the White Town where most of the Europeans lived
- The new Black Town resembled traditional Indian towns, with living quarters built around its own temple and bazaar. On the narrow lanes that criss-crossed the township, there were distinct caste-specific neighbourhoods.
- The dub ashes were Indians who could speak two languages – the local language and English.

Town Planning in Calcutta

- In 1757, when Sirajudaula was defeated in the Battle of Plassey, the East India Company decided to build a new fort, one that could not be easily attacked. Calcutta had grown from three villages called Sutanati, Kolkata and Govindapur.
- The Company cleared a site in the southernmost village of Govindapur and the traders and weavers living there were asked to move out. Around the new Fort William, they left a vast open space which came to be locally known as the Maidan or garer-math

Architecture in Bombay

- Buildings in cities could include forts, government offices, educational institutions, religious structures, commemorative towers, commercial depots, or even docks and bridges. Although primarily serving functional needs like defence, administration and commerce these were rarely simple structures. They were often meant to represent ideas such as imperial power, nationalism and religious glory
- Bombay was initially seven islands
- By the end of the nineteenth century, half the imports and exports of India passed through Bombay. One important item of this trade was opium that the East India Company exported to China.
- This importation of European styles reflected the imperial vision in several ways.
- First, it expressed the British desire to create a familiar landscape in an alien country, and thus to feel at home in the colony.
- Second, the British felt that European styles would best symbolise their superiority, authority and power.
- Third, they thought that buildings that looked European would mark out the difference and distance between the colonial masters and their Indian subjects. Initially, these buildings were at odds with the traditional Indian buildings
- The most spectacular example of the neo-Gothic style is the Victoria Terminus, the station and headquarters of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company.
- Towards the beginning of the twentieth century a new hybrid architectural style developed which combined the Indian with the European. This was called Indo-Saracenic. “Indo” was shorthand for Hindu and “Saracen” was a term Europeans used to designate Muslim.
- The Gateway of India, built in the traditional Gujarati style to welcome King George V and Queen Mary to India in 1911, is the most famous example of this style. The industrialist Jamsetji Tata built the Taj Mahal Hotel in a similar style.

Unit - IV

MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Civil Disobedience and Beyond

- Gandhiji had fought a lifelong battle for a free and united India. When the country was divided, he urged that the two parts People gather on the banks of the Sabarmati River to hear Mahatma Gandhi speak before starting out on the Salt March in 1930 In the history of nationalism a single individual is often identified with the making of a nation.
- Thus, for example, we associate Garibaldi with the making of Italy, George Washington with the American War of Independence, and Ho Chi Minh with the struggle to free Vietnam from colonial rule. In the same manner, Mahatma Gandhi has been regarded as the 'Father' of the Indian nation.
- In January 1915, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to his homeland after two decades of residence abroad.
- These years had been spent for the most part in South Africa, where he went as a lawyer, and in time became a leader of the Indian community in that territory.
- As the historian Chandran Devanesan has remarked, South Africa was "the making of the Mahatma". It was in South Africa that Mahatma Gandhi first forged the distinctive techniques of non-violent protest known as satyagraha, first promoted harmony between religions, and first alerted upper -caste Indians to their discriminatory treatment of low castes and women.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal of Bengal, and Lala Lajpat Rai of Punjab.
- The three were known as "Lal, Bal and Pal", the alliteration conveying the all-India character of their struggle, since their native provinces were very distant from one another Where these leaders advocated militant opposition to colonial rule, there was a group of "Moderates" who preferred a more gradual and persuasive approach.
- Among these Moderates was Gandhiji's acknowledged political mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, as well as Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who, like Gandhiji, was a lawyer of Gujarati extraction trained in London.
- On Gokhale's advice, Gandhiji spent a year travelling around British India, getting to know the land and its peoples. His first major public appearance was at the opening of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in February 1916.
- At the annual Congress, held in Lucknow in December 1916, he was approached by a peasant from Champaran in Bihar, who told him about the harsh treatment of peasants by British indigo planters

The Making and Unmaking Of Non-Cooperation

- Mahatma Gandhi was to spend much of 1917 in Champaran, seeking to obtain for the peasant's security of tenure as well as the freedom to cultivate the crops of their choice.
- In, 1918, Gandhiji was involved in two campaigns in his home state of Gujarat. First, he intervened in a labour dispute in Ahmedabad, demanding better working conditions for the textile mill workers. Then he joined peasants in Kheda in asking the state for the remission of taxes following the failure of their harvest.
- Gandhiji called for a countrywide campaign against the "Rowlatt Act". In towns across North and West India, life came to a standstill, as shops shut down and schools closed in response to the bandh call.

- The protests were particularly intense in the Punjab, where many men had served on the British side in the War – expecting to be rewarded for their service. Instead they were given the Rowlatt Act.
- when a British Brigadier ordered his troops to open fire on a nationalist meeting, more than four hundred people were killed in what is known as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
- To further broaden the struggle, he had joined hands with the Khilafat Movement that sought to restore the Caliphate, a symbol of Pan-Islamism which had recently been abolished by the Turkish ruler Kemal Attaturk
- Non-cooperation, wrote Mahatma Gandhi American biographer Louis Fischer, “became the name of an epoch in the life of India and of Gandhiji. Non-cooperation was negative enough to be peaceful but positive enough to be effective. It entailed denial, renunciation, and self-discipline. It was training for self-rule.
- Then, in February 1922, a group of peasants attacked and torched a police station in the hamlet of Chauri, in the United Provinces (now, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal).
- It was no longer a movement of professionals and intellectuals; now, hundreds of thousands of peasants, workers and artisans also participated in it. Many of them venerated Gandhiji, referring to him as their Mahatma.
- The act of spinning allowed Gandhiji to break the boundaries that prevailed within the traditional caste system, between mental labour and manual labour
- While Mahatma Gandhi’s own role was vital, the growth of what we might call “Gandhian nationalism
- The included leaders are Mahadev Desai, Vallabh Bhai Patel, J.B. Kripalani, Subhas Chandra Bose, Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Govind Ballabh Pant and C. Rajagopalachari.
- Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison in February 1924, and now chose to devote his attention to the promotion of home-spun cloth (khadi), and the abolition of untouchability.
- Indians of one faith had also to cultivate a genuine tolerance for Indians of another – hence his emphasis on Hindu-Muslim harmony. Meanwhile, on the economic front Indians had to learn to become self-reliant – hence his stress on the significance of wearing khadi rather than mill-made cloth imported from overseas

The Salt Satyagraha

- Mahatma Gandhi focused on his social reform work. In 1928, however, he began to think of re-entering politics. That year there was an all-India campaign in opposition to the all-White Simon Commission, sent from England to enquire into conditions in the colony.
- Gandhiji did not himself participate in this movement, although he gave it his blessings, as he also did to a peasant satyagraha in Bardoli in the same year
- The meeting was significant for two things: the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as President, signifying the passing of the baton of leadership to the younger generation; and the proclamation of commitment to “Purna Swaraj”, or complete independence.
- Now the pace of politics picked up once more. On 26 January 1930, “Independence Day” was observed, with the national flag being hoisted in different venues, and patriotic songs being sung.

Dandi

- Soon after the observance of this “Independence Day”, Mahatma Gandhi announced that he would lead a march to break one of the most widely disliked laws in British India, which gave the state a monopoly in the manufacture and sale of salt. His picking on the salt monopoly was another illustration of Gandhiji’s tactical wisdom

- The state monopoly over salt was deeply unpopular; by making it his target, Gandhiji hoped to mobilise a wider discontent against British rule.
- Although Gandhiji had given advance notice of his “Salt March” to the Viceroy Lord Irwin, Irwin failed to grasp the significance of the action. On 12 March 1930, Gandhiji began walking from his ashram at Sabarmati towards the ocean. He reached his destination three weeks later.
- Across large parts of India, peasants breached the hated colonial forest laws that kept them and their cattle out of the woods in which they had once roamed freely. In some towns, factory workers went on strike while lawyers boycotted British courts and students refused to attend government-run educational institutions

Dialogue

- The socialist activist Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay had persuaded Gandhiji not to restrict the protests to men alone.
- Kamala Devi was herself one of numerous women who courted arrest by breaking the salt or liquor laws. The most significant, it was the Salt March which forced upon the British the realisation that their Raj would not last forever, and that they would have to devolve some power to the Indians
- The British government convened a series of “Round Table Conferences” in London. The first meeting was held in November 1930, but without the pre-eminent political leader in India
- Gandhiji was released from jail in January 1931 and the following month had several long meetings with the Viceroy. These culminated in what was called the “Gandhi-Irwin Pact’, by the terms of which civil disobedience would be called off, all prisoners released, and salt manufacture allowed along the coast.
- A second Round Table Conference was held in London in the latter part of 1931. Here, Gandhiji represented the Congress
- The Conference in London was inconclusive, so Gandhiji returned to India and resumed civil disobedience. The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, was deeply unsympathetic to the Indian leader
- In 1935, however, a new Government of India Act promised some form of representative government. Two years later, in an election held on the basis of a restricted franchise, the Congress won a comprehensive victory.
- Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had both been strongly critical of Hitler and the Nazis. Accordingly, they promised Congress support to the war effort if the British, in return, promised to grant India independence once hostilities ended.
- Through 1940 and 1941, the Congress organised a series of individual satyagraha’s to pressure the rulers to promise freedom once the war had ended.
- Meanwhile, in March 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding a measure of autonomy for the Muslim-majority areas of the subcontinent.
- Churchill was persuaded to send one of his ministers, Sir Stafford Cripps, to India to try and forge a compromise with Gandhiji and the Congress.
- Talks broke down, however, after the Congress insisted that if it was to help the British defend India from the Axis powers, then the Viceroy had first to appoint an Indian as the Defence Member of his Executive Council.

Quit India

- After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch his third major movement against British rule. This was the “Quit India” campaign, which began in August 1942

- Particularly active in the underground resistance were socialist members of the Congress, such as Jayaprakash Narayan. In several districts, such as Satara in the west and Medinipur in the east, “independent” governments were proclaimed
- In June 1944, with the end of the war in sight, Gandhiji was released from prison.
- Lord Wavell, brought the Congress and the League together for a series of talks.
- A Cabinet Mission sent in the summer of 1946 failed to get the Congress and the League to agree on a federal system that would keep India together while allowing the provinces a degree of autonomy.
- After the talks broke down, Jinnah called for a “Direct Action Day” to press the League’s demand for Pakistan. On the designated day, 16 August 1946, bloody riots broke out in Calcutta

The Last Heroic Days

- Mahatma Gandhi was not present at the festivities in the capital on 15 August 1947. He was in Calcutta, but he did not attend any function or hoist a flag there either. Gandhiji marked the day with a 24-hour fast. The freedom he had struggled so long for had come at an unacceptable price, with a nation divided and Hindus and Muslims at each other’s throats
- Other Indians were less forgiving. At his daily prayer meeting on the evening of 30 January, Gandhiji was shot dead by a young man. The assassin, who surrendered afterwards, was a Brahmin from Pune named Nathuram Godse, the editor of an extremist Hindu newspaper who had denounced Gandhiji as “an appeaser of Muslims”

Unit - V

UNDERSTANDING PARTITION POLITICS, MEMORIES, EXPERIENCE

A MOMENTOUS MARKER

Partition Or Holocaust

- Several hundred thousand people were killed and innumerable women raped and abducted. Millions were uprooted, transformed into refugees in alien lands
- In all probability, some 15 million had to move across hastily constructed frontiers separating India and Pakistan
- As they stumbled across these “shadow lines” – the boundaries between the two new states were not officially known until two days after formal independence – they were rendered homeless, having suddenly lost all their immovable property and most of their movable assets, separated from many of their relatives and friends as well, torn asunder from their moorings, from their houses, fields and fortunes, from their childhood memories. Thus, stripped of their local or regional cultures, they were forced to begin picking up their life from scratch.
- The survivors themselves have often spoken of 1947 through other words: “maashal-la” (martial law), “mara-mari” (killings), and “raula”, or “hullar” (disturbance, tumult, uproar).
- The term “holocaust” in a sense captures the gravity of what happened in the subcontinent in 1947, something that the mild term “partition” hides
- The power of stereotypes
- India-haters in Pakistan and Pakistan-haters in India are both products of Partition. At times, some people mistakenly believe that the loyalties of Indian Muslims lie with Pakistan.
- Partition generated memories, hatreds, stereotypes and identities that still continue to shape the history of people on both sides of the border.
- These hatreds have manifested themselves during inter-community conflicts, and communal clashes in turn have kept alive the memories of past violence.
- The relationship between Pakistan and India has been profoundly shaped by this legacy of Partition. Perceptions of communities on both sides have been structured by the conflicting memories of those momentous times.

Culminating point of a long history?

- Some historians, both Indian and Pakistani, suggest that Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s theory that the Hindus and Muslims in colonial India constituted two separate nations can be projected back into medieval history
- They suggest that separate electorates for Muslims, created by the colonial government in 1909 and expanded in 1919, crucially shaped the nature of communal politics.
- Separate electorates meant that Muslims could now elect their own representatives in designated constituencies. This created a temptation for politicians working within this system to use sectarian slogans and gather a following by distributing favours to their own religious groups.

- Muslims were angered by “music-before-mosque”, by the cow protection movement, and by the efforts of the Arya Samaj to bring back to the Hindu fold (shuddhi) those who had recently converted to Islam. Hindus were angered by the rapid spread of tabligh(propaganda) and Tanzim(organisation) after 1923.
- Every communal riot deepened difference between communities, creating disturbing memories of violence.

What Is Communalism?

- Communalism refers to a politics that seeks to unify one community around a religious identity in hostile opposition to another community. It seeks to define this community identity as fundamental and fixed. It attempts to consolidate this identity and present it as natural – as if people were born into the identity, as if the identities do not evolve through history over time. In order to unify the community, communalism suppresses distinctions within the community and emphasises the essential unity of the community against other communities.
- The provincial elections of 1937 and the Congress ministries
- In 1937, elections to the provincial legislatures were held for the first time. Only about 10 to 12 per cent of the population enjoyed the right to vote. The Congress did well in the elections, winning an absolute majority in five out of eleven provinces and forming governments in seven of them.
- In the United Provinces, the Muslim League wanted to form a joint government with the Congress. The Congress had won an absolute majority in the province, so it rejected the offer.
- The Congress ministries also contributed to the widening rift. In the United Provinces, the party had rejected the Muslim League proposal for a coalition government partly because the League tended to support landlordism, which the Congress wished to abolish, although the party had not yet taken any concrete steps in that direction.
- Maulana Azad, an important Congress leader, pointed out in 1937 that members of the Congress were not allowed to join the League, yet Congressmen were active in the Hindu Mahasabha– at least in the Central Provinces (present-day Madhya Pradesh).
- Only in December 1938 did the Congress Working Committee declare that Congress members could not be members of the Mahasabha
- The “Pakistan” Resolution the Pakistan demand was formalised gradually. On 23 March 1940, the League moved a resolution demanding a measure of autonomy for the Muslim majority areas of the subcontinent. This ambiguous resolution never mentioned partition or Pakistan.
- The origins of the Pakistan demand have also been traced back to the Urdu poet Mohammad Iqbal, the writer of “Sare Jahan Se Achha Hindustan Hamara”. In his presidential address to the Muslim League in 1930, the poet spoke of a need for a “Northwest Indian Muslim state”. Iqbal, however, was not visualising the emergence of a new country in that speech but a reorganisation of Muslim-majority areas in north-western India in to an autonomous unit within a single loosely structured Indian federation.

The Suddenness of Partititon

- Initially even Muslim leaders did not seriously raise the demand for Pakistan as a sovereign state. In the beginning Jinnah himself may have seen the Pakistan idea as a bargaining counter, useful for blocking possible British concessions to the Congress and gaining additional favours for the Muslims.
- The pressure of the Second World War on the British delayed negotiations for independence for some time. Nonetheless, it was the massive Quit India Movement which started in 1942, and persisted despite intense repression, that brought the British Raj to its knees and compelled its officials to open a dialogue with Indian parties regarding a possible transfer of power.

- Post-War developments When negotiations were begun again in 1945, the British agreed to create an entirely Indian central Executive Council, except for the Viceroy and the Commander -in-Chief of the armed forces, as a preliminary step towards full independence.
- Discussions about the transfer of power broke down due to Jinnah's unrelenting demand that the League had an absolute right to choose all the Muslim members of the Executive Council and that there should be a kind of communal veto in the Council, with decisions opposed by Muslims needing a two-thirds majority
- Provincial elections were again held in 1946. The Congress swept the general constituencies, capturing 91.3 per cent of the non-Muslim vote. The League's success in the seats reserved for Muslims was equally spectacular: it won all 30 reserved constituencies in the Centre with 86.6 per cent of the Muslim vote and 442 out of 509 seats in the provinces.
- About 10 to 12 per cent of the population enjoyed the right to vote in the provincial elections and a mere one per cent in the elections for the Central Assembly

A Possible Alternative to Partition

- In March 1946 the British Cabinet sent a three-member mission to Delhi to examine the League's demand and to suggest a suitable political framework for a free India. The Cabinet Mission toured the country for three months and recommended a loose three-tier confederation
- India was to remain united. It was to have a weak central government controlling only foreign affairs, defence and communications with the existing provincial assemblies being grouped into three sections while electing the constituent assembly: Section A for the Hindu majority provinces, and Sections B and C for the Muslim-majority provinces of the north-west and the north-east (including Assam) respectively.
- Only Mahatma Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan of the NWFP continued to firmly oppose the idea of partition.

Towards the Partition

- After withdrawing its support to the Cabinet Mission plan, the Muslim League decided on "Direct Action" for winning its Pakistan demand. It announced 16 August 1946 as "Direct Action Day". On this day, riots broke out in Calcutta, lasting several days and leaving several thousand people dead. By March 1947 violence spread to many parts of northern India.
- Problems were compounded because Indian soldiers and policemen came to act as Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs. As communal tension mounted, the professional commitment of those in uniform could not be relied upon. In many places not only did policemen help their co-religionists but they also attacked members of other communities.
- The one-man army Amidst all this turmoil, one man's valiant efforts at restoring communal harmony bore fruit. The 77-year-old Gandhiji decided to stake his all in a bid to vindicate his lifelong principle of non-violence, and his conviction that people's hearts could be changed
- In October 1946, Muslims in East Bengal targeted Hindus. Gandhiji visited the area, toured the villages on foot, and persuaded the local Muslims to guarantee the safety of Hindus.
- A Delhi Muslim, Shahid Ahmad Dehlavi, compelled to flee to a dirty, overcrowded camp in Purana Qila, likened Gandhiji's arrival in Delhi on 9 September 1947 to "the arrival of the rains after a particularly long and harsh summer".

Gendering Partition

Recovering Women

- Women were raped, abducted, sold, often many times over, forced to settle down to a new life with strangers in unknown circumstances.
- Believing the women to be on the wrong side of the border, they now tore them away from their new relatives, and sent them back to their earlier families or locations. They did not consult the concerned women, undermining their right to take decisions regarding their own lives

Preserving "Honour"

- This notion of honour drew upon a conception of masculinity defined as ownership of *zan* (women) and *zamin* (land), a notion of considerable antiquity in North Indian peasant societies.
- At times, therefore, when the men feared that "their" women – wives, daughters, sisters – would be violated by the "enemy", they killed the women themselves.
- Urvashi Butalia in her book, *The Other Side of Silence*, narrates one such gruesome incident in the village of Thoa Khalsa, Rawalpindi district. During Partition, in this Sikh village, ninety women are said to have "voluntarily" jumped into a well rather than fall into "enemy" hands.

Regional Variations

- The near -total displacement of Hindus and Sikhs eastwards into India from West Punjab and of almost all Punjabi-speaking Muslims to Pakistan happened in a relatively short period of two years between 1946 and 1948
- Many Muslim families of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh continued to migrate to Pakistan through the 1950s and early 1960s, although many chose to remain in India. Most of these Urdu-speaking people, known as *muhajirs* (migrants) in Pakistan moved to the Karachi Hyderabad region in Sind.
- Many Bengali Hindus remained in East Pakistan while many Bengali Muslims continued to live in West Bengal. Finally, Bengali Muslims (East Pakistanis) rejected Jinnah's two-nation theory through political action, breaking away from Pakistan and creating Bangladesh in 1971-72.
- Dishonouring women of a community was seen as dishonouring the community itself, and a mode challenges of the times.

Oral Testimonies and History

- Oral narratives, memoirs, diaries, family histories, first-hand written accounts – all these help us understand the trials and tribulations of ordinary people during the partition of the country.
- Millions of people viewed Partition in terms of the suffering and the Times.
- As with the Holocaust in Germany, we should understand Partition not simply as a political event, but also through the meanings attached to it by those who lived it. Memories and experiences shape the reality of an event.

Unit - VI

FRAMING THE CONSTITUTION THE BEGINNING OF NEW ERA

- The Indian Constitution, which came into effect on 26 January 1950, has the dubious distinction of being the longest in the world

A Tumultuous Time

- On 15 August 1947, India had been made free, but it had also been divided. Fresh in popular memory were the Quit India struggle of 1942 – perhaps the most widespread popular movement against the British Raj – as well as the bid by Subhas Chandra Bose to win freedom through armed struggle with foreign aid.
- Royal Indian Navy in Bombay and other cities in the spring of 1946.
- One striking feature of these popular upsurges was the degree of Hindu-Muslim unity they manifested. In contrast, the two leading Indian political parties, the Congress and the Muslim League, had repeatedly failed to arrive at a settlement that would bring about religious reconciliation and social harmony.
- The Great Calcutta Killings of August 1946 began a year of almost continuous rioting across northern and eastern India (see Chapters 13 and 14). The violence culminated in the massacres that accompanied the transfer of populations when the Partition of India was announced.
- But innumerable Muslims in India, and Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan, were now faced with a cruel choice – the threat of sudden death or the squeezing of opportunities on the one side, and a forcible tearing away from their age-old roots on the other.
- Millions of refugees were on the move, Muslims into East and West Pakistan, Hindus and Sikhs into West Bengal and the eastern half of the Punjab. Many perished before they reached their destination
- During the period of the Raj, approximately one-third of the area of the subcontinent was under the control of nawabs and maharajas who owed allegiance to the British Crown, but were otherwise left mostly free to rule – or misrule – their territory as they wished

The Making of The Constitution Assembly

- The members of the Constituent Assembly were not elected on the basis of universal franchise. In the winter of 1945-46 provincial elections were held in India. The Provincial Legislatures then chose the representatives to the Constituent Assembly.
- The Constituent Assembly that came into being was dominated by one Congress party: The Congress swept the general seats in the provincial elections, and the Muslim League captured most of the reserved Muslim seats.
- But the League chose to boycott the Constituent Assembly, pressing its demand for Pakistan with a separate constitution.
- The Socialists too were initially unwilling to join, for they believed the Constituent Assembly was a creation of the British, and therefore incapable of being truly autonomous.

- Many of the linguistic minorities wanted the protection of their mother tongue, religious minorities asked for special safeguards, while Dalits demanded an end to all caste oppression and reservation of seats in government bodies.
- Important issues of cultural rights and social justice raised in these public discussions were debated on the floor of the Assembly.

The Dominance Voice

- The Constituent Assembly had 300 members. Of these, six members played particularly important roles.
- Three were representatives of the Congress, namely, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh Bhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad. It was Nehru who moved the crucial “Objectives Resolution”, as well as the resolution proposing that the National Flag of India be a “horizontal tricolour of saffron, white and dark green in equal proportion”, with a wheel in navy blue at the centre.
- During the period of British rule, Ambedkar had been a political opponent of the Congress; but, on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, he was asked at Independence to join the Union Cabinet as law minister
- In this capacity, he served as Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution.
- Serving with him were two other lawyers, K.M. Munshi from Gujarat and Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar from Madras, both of whom gave crucial inputs in the drafting of the Constitution.
- These six members were given vital assistance by two civil servants. One was B. N. Rau, Constitutional Advisor to the Government of India, who prepared a series of background papers based on a close study of the political systems obtaining in other countries.
- The other was the Chief Draughtsman, S. N. Mukherjee, who had the ability to put complex proposals in clear legal language. Ambedkar himself had the responsibility of guiding the Draft Constitution through the Assembly. This took three years in all, with the printed record of the discussions taking up eleven bulky volumes.

The Vision of The Constitution

- On 13 December 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru introduced the “Objectives Resolution” in the Constituent Assembly. It was a momentous resolution that outlined the defining ideals of the Constitution of Independent India, and provided the framework within which the work of constitution-making was to proceed.
- It proclaimed India to be an “Independent Sovereign Republic”, guaranteed its citizens justice, equality and freedom, and assured that “adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and Depressed and Other Backward Classes ...
- The objective of the Indian Constitution would be to fuse the liberal ideas of democracy with the socialist idea of economic justice, and re-adapt and re-work all these ideas within the Indian context. Nehru’s plea was for creative thinking about what was appropriate for India.

The Will of The People

- An interim administration headed by Jawaharlal Nehru was in place, but it could only operate under the directions of the Viceroy and the British Government in London
- He aspirations of those who had participated in the movement for independence. Democracy, equality and justice were ideals that had become intimately associated with social struggles in India since the nineteenth century.
- When the social reformers in the nineteenth century opposed child marriage and demanded that widows be allowed to remarry, they were pleading for social justice.
- When Swami Vivekananda campaigned for a reform of Hinduism, he wanted religions to become more just.

- When Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra pointed to the suffering of the depressed castes, or Communists and Socialists organised workers and peasants, they were demanding economic and social justice.
- The national movement against a government that was seen as oppressive and illegitimate was inevitably a struggle for democracy and justice, for citizens' rights and equality. In fact, as the demand for representation grew, the British had been forced to introduce a series of constitutional reforms.
- A number of Acts were passed (1909, 1919 and 1935), gradually enlarging the space for Indian participation in provincial governments.
- The executive was made partly responsible to the provincial legislature in 1919, and almost entirely so under the Government of India Act of 1935. When elections were held in 1937, under the 1935 Act, the Congress came to power in eight out of the 11 provinces.
- The legislatures elected under the 1935 Act operated within the framework of colonial rule, and were responsible to the Governor appointed by the British.
- The vision that Nehru was trying to outline on 13 December 1946 was of the Constitution of an independent, sovereign Republic of India

The Problems With Separate Electorate

- Only separate electorates would ensure that Muslims had a meaningful voice in the governance of the country. The needs of Muslims, Bahadur felt, could not be properly understood by non-Muslims; nor could a true representative of Muslims be chosen by people who did not belong to that community.
- The Constitution would grant to citizens' rights, but citizens had to offer their loyalty to the State. Communities could be recognised as cultural entities and assured cultural rights
- Not all Muslims supported the demand for separate electorates. Begum Aizaas Rasul, for instance, felt that separate electorates were self-destructive since they isolated the minorities from the majority.
- By 1949, most Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly were agreed that separate electorates were against the interests of the minorities. Instead Muslims needed to take an active part in the democratic process to ensure that they had a decisive voice in the political system.

We Were Suppressed for Thousands Of Years

- Some members of the Depressed Castes emphasised that the problem of the "Untouchables" could not be resolved through protection and safeguards alone.
- Their disabilities were caused by the social norms and the moral values of caste society. Society had used their services and labour but kept them at a social distance, refusing to mix with them or dine with them or allow them entry into temples.
- After the Partition violence, Ambedkar too no longer argued for separate electorates. The Constituent Assembly finally recommended that untouchability be abolished, Hindu temples be thrown open to all castes, and seats in legislatures and jobs in government offices be reserved for the lowest castes.
- Many recognised that this could not solve all problems: social discrimination could not be erased only through constitutional legislation, there had to be a change in the attitudes within society. But the measures were welcomed by the democratic public.

The Powers of The State

- The Draft Constitution provided for three lists of subjects: Union, State, and Concurrent. The subjects in the first list were to be the preserve of the Central Government, while those in the second list were vested with the states. As for the third list, here Centre and state shared responsibility.

- However, many more items were placed under exclusive Union control than in other federations, and more placed on the Concurrent list too than desired by the provinces.
- The Union also had control of minerals and key industries. Besides, Article 356 gave the Centre the powers to take over a state administration on the recommendation of the Governor.
- The Constitution also mandated for a complex system of fiscal federalism. In the case of some taxes (for instance, customs duties and Company taxes) the Centre retained all the proceeds; in other cases (such as income tax and excise duties) it shared them with the states; in still other cases (for instance, estate duties) it assigned them wholly to the states. The states, meanwhile, could levy and collect certain taxes on their own: these included land and property taxes, sales tax, and the hugely profitable tax on bottled liquor.

The Language of The Nation

- Hindustani ought to be the national language. Mahatma Gandhi felt that everyone should speak in a language that common people could easily understand. Hindustani – a blend of Hindi and Urdu – was a popular language of a large section of the people of India, and it was a composite language enriched by the interaction of diverse cultures.
- This multi-cultural language, Mahatma Gandhi thought, would be the ideal language of communication between diverse communities: it could unify Hindus and Muslims, and people of the north and the south.
- As communal conflicts deepened, Hindi and Urdu also started growing apart. On the one hand, there was a move to Sanskritise Hindi, purging it of all words of Persian and Arabic origin.
- On the other hand, Urdu was being increasingly Persianized. As a consequence, language became associated with the politics of religious identities

A Plea Foe Hindi

- The Language Committee of the Constituent Assembly had produced its report and had thought of a compromise formula to resolve the deadlock between those who advocated Hindi as the national language and those who opposed it.
- It had decided, but not yet formally declared, that Hindi in the Devanagari script would be the official language, but the transition to Hindi would be gradual. For the first fifteen years, English would continue to be used for all official purposes
- Each province was to be allowed to choose one of the regional languages for official work within the province. By referring to Hindi as the official rather than the national language, the Language Committee of the Constituent Assembly hoped to placate ruffled emotions and arrive at a solution that would be acceptable to all.

The Fear of Domination

- Congressman and a follower of Mahatma Gandhi he had accepted Hindustani as a language of the nation, but he warned: “if you want my wholehearted support (for Hindi) you must not do now anything which may raise my suspicions and will strengthen my fears.”
- The fears of the people, even if they were unjustified, had to be allayed, or else “there will be bitter feelings left behind”. “When we want to live together and form a united nation,” he said, “there should be mutual adjustment and no question of forcing things on people”