chapter seven

Many Voices of a Nation

7.1. MUSLIM ALIENATION

The mainstream Indian nationalism-as it was developing gradually since the late nineteenth century under the aegis of the Indian National Congress-was contested incessantly from within the Indian society. What we find as a result is a series of alternative visions of nation, represented by a variety of minority or marginal groups, who constantly challenged and negotiated with the Congress. The Muslims of India, as already noted (chapter 5.4), were the first to contest this version of nationalism and almost from the beginning many of them did not consider the Indian National Congress to be their representative. Between 1892 and 1909 only 6.59 per cent of the Congress delegates were Muslims. Muslim leaders like Sayyid Ahmed Khan clearly considered it to be the representative of the majority Hindus. He was not anti-nationalist, but favoured a different conception of nation. For him the nation was a federation of communities having entitlement to different kinds of political rights depending on their ancestry and political importance and the Muslims, being an ex-ruling class had a special place within the framework of the new cosmopolitan British empire. This was in sharp contrast to the Congress vision of nation consisting of individual citizens. The prospect of the introduction of representative government created the political threat of a majority domination, which led to the formation of the All India Muslim League in 1906. This was the beginning of a search for distinctive political identity—not a quest for separate homeland-with a demand for the protection of their political rights as a minority community through the creation of separate electorate. The granting of this privilege of separate electorate by the colonial state in the Morley-Minto reform of 1909 elevated them to the status of an "all-India political category", but positioned them as a "perpetual minority" in the Indian body politic.' These structural imperatives of representative government henceforth began to influence the relationship between the Congress and the Muslim League.

A brief period of compromise with the Congress followed the signing of the Lucknow Pact in 1916, which recognized the Muslim demand for separate electorate. But soon all such arrangements became irrelevant, as the whole structure of Indian politics was changed by the coming of Gandhi and the advent of the masses into the previously enclosed arena of nationalist politics. Gandhi by supporting the Khilafat movement, which used a pan-Islamic symbol to forge a pan-Indian Muslim unity, went a long way in producing unprecedented Hindu–Muslim rapport (chapter 6.3). But the movement died down by 1924 due to internal divisions and finally, because of the abolition of the Caliphate through a republican revolution in Turkey under Kemal Pasha. But what is important, the Khilafat movement itself contributed further to the strengthening of Muslim identity in Punjab and Bengal. Frequent use of religious symbols by the overzealous ulama, who were pressed into service, highlighted the Islamic self of the Indian Muslims. It was indeed from the Khilafat movement that a serious communal riot erupted in Malabar in 1921. So this Muslim mobilisation under the banner of Khilafat, as Christophe Jaffrelot (1996) has argued, generated a sense of inferiority and insecurity among the Hindus, who in emulation of their aggressive Other now started counter-mobilisation. The Arya Samaj started a militant suddhi campaign in Punjab and UP and the Hindu Mahasabha launched its drive towards Hindu *sangathan* (organisation) in 1924; the Rasrriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, an overtly aggressive Hindu organisation, was also born in the same year. The inevitable result of such mobilisation along community lines was the outbreak of a series of riots between the Hindus and the Muslims in the 1920s, affecting practically all parts of India.[2] An exasperated Gandhi lamented in 1927 that the resolution of the problem of Hindu-Muslim relations was now beyond human control, and had passed on to the hands of God.[3]

How do we explain this rapid deterioration of Hindu-Muslim relations in the wake of the decline of Khilafat movement? Gyanendra Pandey (1985) has argued that in the 1920s there had been a remarkable shift in the Congress conceptualisation of nationalism. There was now a distinct tendency to delegitimise religious nationalism by relegating religion to the private sphere. Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru in their public pronouncements emphasised a secularist view of Indian nation, which was conceived to be above community interests. A binary opposition was visualised between nationalism and communalism and therefore whoever talked about community were dubbed as anti-nationalists or communaJists. This

eliminated the likelihood of accommodating the community identities within a composite nationhood and destroyed all possibilities of a rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim League. The Muslims at this juncture, as Ayesha Jalal argues, "required a political arrangement capable of accommodating cultural differences." They looked for "shared sovereignty"; they were not against a united India, but contested Congress's daim to indivisible sovereignty. [4]

The public pronouncements of Congress secularism came at a time when religious identity was being articulated practically at every sphere of public life by both the Muslims as well as Hindus. So far as the latter were concerned, unlike the earlier nationalist leaders who used Hindu revivalist symbols but remained within the Congress framework, the present leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha decided to operate as a separate pressure group within the Congress, trying constantly to marginaJise the secularists and destroy any possibility of an understanding with the Muslims. There went on within the Congress, as jaffrelot (1996) shows, a constant contest between two rival concepts of nationalism, one based on the idea of composite culture, i.e., nation above community, and the other founded on the idea of racial domination of the Hindus, more particularly, of the subordination of the Muslims. What was significant, the protagonists of the former often gave way to or made compromises with those of the latter, giving ample reasons to the Muslims to be suspicious about the real intent of Congress politics.

This contestation was visible very clearly in the arena of instirutional politics, which the Swarajist group within the Congress, under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, had decided to re-enter, with Gandhi's endorsement, following the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement. At the municipal level, in UP, the alliance between the swarajists and the khilafatists won most of the seats in 1923 on a note of communal harmony. But their support base was systematically undercut by the Hindu Mahasabha under Madan Mohan Malaviya, whose actions contributed to further Hindu-Muslim tension that resulted in riots in Allahabad and Lucknow in 1924. In the next municipal election of 1925, the swarajists lost all seats to the Hindu Mahasabhites. In the Muslim majority province of Punjab, communal tension escalated in the wake of the Municipal Amendment Act of 1923, which by providing additional scats for Muslims reduced the Hindus to a minority in the municipal boards. With the blessings of Malaviya and the Hindu Mahasabha, the local Hindus took up cudgels against Muslims and so intense was the communal hatred that when Gandhi came to Lahore in December

1924 to restore harmony, the local Hindus gave him a cold shoulder. On the Muslim side, leaders like Muhammad Ali, who favoured communal harmony and once visualised lndia as a federation of faiths, were now marginalised; and leaders like Dr Kirchlew who were once staunchly in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity, now turned uncompromi ingly against any communal reconciliarion.[5]

At the Central Legislative Assembly, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, elected by the Bombay Muslims, appeared as the most prominent spokesman of the Muslims. Jinnah's preference for constitutional methods and abhorrence for agirational politics had driven him away from Gandhian Congress. But now after the withdrawal of Non-cooperation, when Congress once again reverted to consritutionalism under the swarajisrs, he was willing to cooperate with them. His 'Independent Party' formed an alliance with the swarajists and together they came to be known as the Nationalist Party in the Assembly. But at the ame time, he focused on reviving the Muslim League at its Lahore ession in 1923; decided to work on a new constitutional arrangement for India, and for that purpose, wanted to renegotiate the Lucknow Pact with the Congress. Although swarajists were willing, the Mahasabhites like Malaviya, B.S. Moonje and Lajpat Rai were not, and they successfully torpedoed all efforts at reconciliation. Even the BengaJ Pact, which C.R. Das had negotiated with the local Muslims, was rejected at the Coconada session of the Congress in December 1923 on the ground that a national issue could not be resolved on a provincial basis.[6]

In the meanwhile, outside the arena of institutional politics, mobilisation of Hindus around the claim of a right to play music before mosques was gathering momentum in various parts of the country. From the late nineteenth century, indeed, as mentioned earlier (chapter 5.4), ever since the colonial state started defining a new public sphere contest over sacred space, such as a dispute over the route of a religious procession, was fast becoming the bone of communal contention and a mode of defining communal identities in lndia.[7] And now, as the public contest for contending community rights became sharper, as over the cow slaughter/protection issue in the 1890s, "ritual space" came to be "defined by acoustic range"[8] and became a major symbol of communal mobilisation throughout India. Gandhi described this tradition of playing music in public as a non-essential aspect of Hinduism. But in a war of symbols, such non-essentials became non-negotiable demands for those wanting to mobilise communities along religious lines. This issue was used in UP, Punjab and Bengal to consolidate Hindu solidarity, and in CP

and Bombay to divert attention from the rising tide of anti-Brahmanism. This "music before mosque" not only sparked off a series of violent riots between 1923 and 1927, but also in the election of 1926 it became an emotive issue dividing the electorate along communal lines.

Within the Congress swarajists like Motilal Nehru were now being increasingly sidelined and they succumbed to pressure to nominate pro-Mahasabha candidates. There was not a single Muslim among the Congress candidates in Bengal or Punjab in 1926; elsewhere all the Congress Muslim candidates lost. The majority of the elected Congress members were those with known pro-Hindu sympathies. A resolution condemning separate electorate for Muslims was just prevented from being passed at the Guwahati Congress by timely intervention of Gandhi and Nehru. But the process of renegotiating the Lucknow Pact was finally derailed by the Mahasabhites at the All Parties Conference at Delhi in January 1928. It is not difficult to understand why Muslim support for Congress further diminished around this rime. Aligarh Muslims now became afraid of being swamped by Hindus. Shaukat Ali ruefully observed in 1929 that "Congress ha[d] become an adjunct of Hindu Mahasabha".[9] Muslim alienation from Congress politics was then boldly inscribed in their large-scale abstention from the Civil Disobedience and the Quit India Movements.

This Muslim alienation –often stigmatised in Indian historiography as "communalism"–is a contentious issue among historians. One way to explain it is to dismiss it as "false consciousness" of a self-seeking petty bourgeoisie and misguided workers and peasants, who mistakenly saw their interests through the communal mirror and sought to safeguard them with constitutional privileges. Their frustration increased in the years after 1929, as depression constricted opportunities, leading to more tension, conflicts and *violence*.[10] On the other hand, it is also to a large extent true that the imperatives of representative government—the granting of separate electorate and conferment of minority status by the colonial state-contributed to the forging of an all-India Muslim political identity. It is, therefore, explained in terms of Islamic ideas of representation founded on ascriptive criteria, i.e., Muslims liked to be represented by Muslims alone, and not by those who were not members of their community.[11] While dismissal of communalism as a false consciousness does not take us anywhere so far as understanding of this political vision is concerned, the latter argument about a hegemonic Islamic ideology is also problematic. This explanation is essentially

based on the assumption of a substantive ideological consensus within the Muslim community, which has been questioned by a number of historians.'?

The Muslims were not a political community yet, not even in the late 1930s. There had been positional differences and ideological contestation within Muslim politics from its very beginning. Even in the 1930s, Muslim politics remained caught in provincial dynamics, as their interests in Bengal and Punjab, where they were a majority, were different from those of others in the minority provinces. In Bengal, the Krishak Praja Party under A.K. Fazlul Huq mobilised both the Muslim and lower caste Hindu peasants on class based demands, and competed with the Muslim League, after its revival in 1936, for Muslim votes." In Punjab, the Unionist Party led by Fazl-i-Husain, Sikandar Hayat Khan, as well as the Jat peasant leader Chhotu Ram, appealed to a composite constituency of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh rich landlords and peasant producers-who had benefited from the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900–and had a complete control over rural politics." The All India Muslim League, on the other hand, was until 1937, as Ayesha JalaJ puts it, "little more than a debating forum for a few articulate Muslims in the minority provinces and had made no impact on the majority provinces".15 In the election of 1937, both the regional parties did well, while Muslim League had a dismal performance throughout India. The resounding victory of the Congress in this election and the arrogance that it bred, however, gradually brought all these divergent groups together under the banner of a revived and revitalised Muslim League under the leadership of Jinnah.

As partners of the Raj, as R.J. Moore (1988) has shown, the Muslims had politically gained a lot in the 1920s and 1930s. The doctrine of separate electorate was now firmly enshrined in the Indian constitution. They had wrested power from the Congress in the majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab. And two other Muslim majority areas, Sind and the North-West Frontier Province, had been elevated to full provincial status. All these came to be threatened by the Congress victory in the 1937 elections. Not only did Congress refuse to enter into any coalition government in the minority provinces like UP to share power with the Muslim League, butjawaharlal Nehru declared with supreme arrogance that there were now only two parties in the Indian political scene, the Raj and the Congress. From now on, there was a steady Congress propaganda against separate electorate and a constant vilification of the Muslim League as unpatriotic and reactionary. In view of the electoral debacle of the

meeting of the Sind branch of the Muslim League, presided over by Jinnah himself, that a resolution was passed which mentioned the need for "political self-determination of the two nations, known as Hindus and Muslims"[21] and asked the Muslim League to think of appropriate measures to realise it. It was the first declaration of the "two nation" theory, but it was not separatism yet; the two federations of Hindus and Muslims were meant to be united through a common centre. Since then, public discussions went on about the practicality of a constitutional arrangement that could give shape to this abstract notion, with intellectual inputs coming from a variety of Muslim leaders, from the Sindhi leader Abdoola Harun, Dr Syed Abdul Latif, Abdul Bashir of the Pakistan Majlis in Lahore, to the prominent Aligarh scholars, Professor Syed Zafarul Hasan and Dr M.A.H. Qadri. Finally, the Lahore resolution of the Muslim League in March 1940 formally proclaimed the Muslims as a nation. It did not mention partition or Pakistan, but only talked about "Independent states" to be constituted of the Muslim majority provinces in an unspecified "future".[22] The resolution, in other words, only signalled the transformation of Indian Muslims from a 'minority' to a 'nation', so that no future constitutional arrangement for India could any more be negotiated without their participation and consent. The central plank in Jinnah's politics henceforth was to be a demand for 'parity' between the Hindus and the Muslims in any such arrangement.

The road from this declaration of nationhood to the actual realisation of a separate sovereign state in 1947 was long and tortuous. It may suffice here to mention that this conceptualisation of a Muslim nation was not the imagining of Jinnah alone or of a select group of articulate intellectuals. It was legitimated by thousands of ordinary Muslims who joined the processions at Karachi, Patna or Lahore, participated in the hartals, organised demonstrations or even took part in riots between 1938 and 1940.[23] And their alienation was born of provocations from the militant Hindu nationalists, as well as constant sneering by an intransigent secularist leadership of the Congress. For Muslim leaders, who in 1921 saw no conflict between their Indianness and Muslim identity, recognition of their separate Muslim nationhood became a non-negotiable minimum demand in the 1940s. And gradually these sentiments were shared by a wider Muslim population. Indeed, as Achin Vanaik has argued, "the Congress-led National Movement cannot escape most of the responsibility" for this emergence of a separate Muslim identity, at a period when an anti-colonial pan-Indian national identity was in the making.[24]

7.2. NON-BRAHMAN AND DALIT PROTEST

The other important social groups in India who also expressed their dissent from this Congress version of nationalism, were the non-Brahman castes and the untouchable groups. The latter, from around the 1930s, began to call themselves dalit or oppressed. The term more appropriately signified their socio-economic position in Hindu India, than the colonial terms "depressed classes", replaced after 1936 by "Scheduled Castes", or the Gandhian term "Harijan" (meaning God's people). As the term dalit indicates, any understanding of their protest needs to begin from a discussion of the evolution of caste system as a mode of social stratification and oppression in India. Anthropologists and social historians have considered it to be the most unique feature of Indian social organisation expressed in two parallel concepts of varna and jati. The four-fold division of varna was the ancient most social formation dating back to about 1000 BC, when the "Aryan" society was divided into Brahmans or priests, Kshatriyas or warriors, Vaishyas or farmers, traders and producers of wealth, and the Sudras who served these three higher groups. Untouchabiliry as a fully developed institution appeared sometime between the third and sixth centuries AD, when the untouchables came to constitute a fifth category, known variously by terms like Panchamas, Ati-sudras or Chandalas.P

However, this varna division had little relevance to subsequent social realities, providing nothing more than "a fundamental ternplate"[26] within which social ranks were conceptualised across regions. For actual social organisation, more important were the numerous jatis that were vaguely referred to as castes, a term derived from the Portuguese word *castas*. Jaris as occupational groups, which number more than three thousand in modern India-? were emerging side by side with the varnas, and often they were again further subdivided on the basis of professional specialisation. Some anthropologists would call those smaJler groups subcastcs, while Iravati Karve (1977) would consider them as castes and the larger groups as "caste-dusters". Without going further into this debate over nomenclature, we may identify jaris or castes as occupational groups, whose membership was determined by birth, and whose exclusiveness was maintained by stringent rules of endogamy and commensality restrictions. Each and every caste was ascribed a ritual rank, which located its members in an elaborate hierarchy that encompassed the entire society.

What determined this rank is again a subject of intense controversy. Structural anthropologists like Louis Dumont (1970) believed, that this ranking system was essentially religious, as in Indian society

the sacred encompassed the secular, making the Brahman priest more powerful than the Kshatriya king. In this cultural environment, social rank was determined by a purity-pollution scale: the Brahman, being the embodiment of purity, was located at the top of the scale and the untouchables being impure were at the bottom, while in the middle there were various groups with varying grades of purity/impurity. However, later social historians have argued that ritual rank was never unconnected with the power structure; the crown was never that hollow as it was made our to be by some colonial ethnographers.[28] In this situation, factors like nature of occupation and distance from the centre of power etc determined the ritual rank-in other words, there was close positive correlation between power, wealth and rank. This was a social organisation, which Gail Omvedt has described as the "caste-feudal society", marked by "caste/class confusion".[29] However, it was not exactly a class system in disguise. It was not a dichotomous system, but a system of gradation, with "a great deal of ambiguity in the middle region",[30] where various peasant castes competed with each other for superiority of status.

Within this scheme of things, members of each caste were assigned a moral code of conduct-their dharma-the performance or non-performance of which--or their karma-determined their location in caste hierarchy in next life. Although this implies a rigid social order enjoined by scriptures, the reality of caste society differed significantly from this ideal. For dharma was not always universally accepted and its hegemony was from time to time contested from within, most significantly in the medieval bhakti movement, which questioned the ritualistic foundation of religious and social life and emphasised simple devotion (bhakri) in its place.[31] Apart from that, opportunities for limited social mobility often led to positional changes and readjustments. Colonisation of wasteland, rise of warrior groups, emergence of new technology or new opportunities of trade at various stages of history helped groups of people to improve their economic and political status, and to translate that into higher ritual ranks in the caste hierarchy.[32] Indeed, the system could survive for so many centuries because it could maintain such a "dynamic equilibrium"[33] and absorb shocks from below.

Colonial rule disengaged caste system from its pre-colonial political contexts, but gave it a new lease of life by redefining and revitalising it within its new structures of knowledge, institutions and policies." First of all, during its non-interventionist phase, it created opportunities, which were *"in theory* casre-free"." Land became a marketable commodity; equality before law became an established

principle of judicial administration; educational institutions and public employment were thrown open to talent, irrespective of caste and creed. Yet the very principle of non-intervention helped maintain the pre-existing social order and reinforced the position of the privileged groups. Only the higher castes with previous literate traditions and surplus resources, could go for English education and new professions, and could take advantage of the new judicial system.[36] Moreover, in matters of personal law, the Hindus were governed by the *dharmashastra,* which upheld the privileges of caste order.[37] As the Orientalist scholars, immersed in classical textual studies, discovered in the caste system the most essential form of Hindu social organisation, more and more information was collected through official ethnographic surveys, which gave further currency to the notions of caste hierarchy. Furthermore, the foremost of such colonial ethnographers, Herbert Risley, following Alfred Lyall and the French racial theorist Paul Topinard, now provided a racial dimension to the concept of caste, arguing that the fair-skinned higher castes represented the invading Aryans, while the darker lower castes were the non-Aryan autochthons of the land.[38]

This racial stereotype and the scriptural view of caste were gradually given enumerated shape, and above all an official legitimacy, through the decennial census classification of castes, which Susan Bayly has described as the "single master exercise of tabulation" of the entire colonial subject society.[39] When Risley became the Census Commissioner in 1901, he proposed not only to enumerate all castes, but also to determine and record their location in the hierarchy of castes. To the Indian public this appeared to be an official attempt to freeze the hierarchy, which had been constantly, though imperceptibly, changing over time. This redefined caste now became what Nicholas Dirks has called the "Indian colonial form of civil society".[40] Voluntary caste associations emerged as a new phenomenon in Indian public life, engaging in census based caste movements, making petitions to census commissioners in support of their claims for higher ritual ranks in the official classification scheme.[41] Ironically, caste thus became a legitimate site for defining social identities within a more institutionalised and apparently secularised public space.

These caste associations, where membership was not just ascriptive but voluntary, gradually evolved into tools of modernisation in colonial India. Their goals shifted from sacred to secular ones and, as Lloyd and Susanne Rudolf have put it, they tried "to educate ... [their] members in the methods and values of political dernoo racy".[42] What contributed to this development was another set of

also engaged in a cultural movement, which noted sociologist M.N. Srinivas (1966) has called the process of "Sanskritizarion". As status was still being defined and expressed in the language of caste–which enjoyed both official legitimacy and social currency-rhe upwardly mobile groups sought to legitimise their new status by emulating the cultural and ritual practices of the upper castes. This was one of the reasons why customs like sati, prohibition of widow remarriage, child marriage-the performance of which was regarded as hallmarks of high caste status–were in the nineteenth century being more widely practised by the upwardly mobile lower peasant groups. Ironically, what this behaviour signified was an endorsement of the caste system, and seeking a positional readjustment within the existing ritual hierarchy. However, not all castes at all times followed this same behavioural trajectory.

There were movements which instead of seeking positional changes within the caste system, questioned the fundamentals of this social organisation, the most notable of them being the non-Brahman movements in western and southern India and some of the more radical movements among the dalit groups. The non-Brahman movement started in Maharashtra under the leadership of an outstanding leader of the Mali (gardener) caste, jotirao Phule, who started his Saryasodhak Samaj (Truthseekers' Society) in 1873. Phule argued that it was Brahman domination, and their monopoly over power and opportunities that lay at the root of the predicament of the Sudra and Ati-sudra castes. So he turned the Orientalist theory of Aryanisation of India (see chapter 2.1) upside down." The Brahmans, he argued, were the progeny of the alien Aryans, who had subjugated the aurochthons of the land and therefore the balance now needed to be redressed and for achieving that social revolution, he sought to unite both the non-Brahman peasant castes as well as dalir groups in a common movement. But in the 1880s and 1890s, there were certain subtle shifts in the non-Brahman ideology, as Phule focused more on mobilising the Kunbi peasantry. There was now more emphasis on the unity of those who laboured on the land and a contestation of the claim by the Brahman-dominated Poona Sarvajanik Sabha that they represented the peasantry. This shift of focus on the Kunbi peasants also led to the privileging of the Maratha identity which was dear to them, and an assertion of their Kshatriyahood, which, as Rosalind O'Hanlon has argued, "seemed at times perilously close to a simple Sanskritising claim"." Phule tried to overcome this problem by claiming that these Ksharriyas, who were the ancestors of the Marathas, lived harmoniously with

motivated the Vellala elite to uphold their Dravidian identity. For some time the Christian missionaries like Rev Robert Caldwell and G.E. Pope were talking about the antiquity of Dravidian culture. Tamil language, they argued, did not owe its origin to Sanskrit, which had been brought to the south by the colonising Aryan Brahmans, while the Vellalas and other non-Brahmans could not be described as Sudras, as this was a status imposed on them by the Brahman colonists trying to thrust on them their idolatrous religion.[49] The non-Brahman elite appropriated some of these ideas and began to talk about their Tamil language, literature and culture as an "empowering discourse" and to assert that caste system was not indigenous to Tamil culture." This cultural movement to construct a non-Brahman identity-which began like its western Indian counterpart with an inversion of the Aryan theory of Indian civilisation-always had as its central theme an emotional devotion to Tamil language, which could bring disparate groups of people into a "devotional communiry".[!] On the political front the movement followed a familiar trajectory that began with the publication of a 'Non-Brahman Manifesto' and the formation of the Justice Party in 1916, as a formal political party of the non-Brahmans. It opposed the Congress as a Brahman dominated organisation, and claimed separate communal representation for the non-Brahmans as had been granted to the Muslims in the Morley–Minto reform. This demand, supported by the colonial bureaucracy, was granted in the Montagu-Chelmsford reform of 1919, as it allocated twenty-eight reserved seats to the non-Brahmans in the Madras Legislative Council. Opposed to the Congress and to its programme of non-cooperation, the Justice Party had no qualm in contesting the election in 1920, which the Congress had given a call for boycott. As a result, the council boycott movement (see chapter 6.3) had no chance of success in Madras, where the Justice Party won 63 of the 98 elected seats, and eventually came to form a government under the new reforms.

The formation of a ministry in 1920 was the high point in the career of the Justice Party, and also the beginning of its decline. It was a movement patronised mainly by richer landowning and urban middle class non-Brahmans, like the Vellalas in the Tamil districts, the Reddis or Kapus and Kammas in the Telugu districts, the Nairs in Malabar and the trading Beri Chettis and Balija Naidus scattered all over south India.[52] Soon after assumption of office, these elite members of the Justice Party became engrossed in using and abusing their newly gained power, gave up their reformist agenda and became less interested in the plight of the untouchables. The latter as a result,

under the leadership of M.C. Rajah, left the party in disgust. The decline in popular base which thus began, ultimately culminated in their electoral defeat in 1926 at the hands of the swarajists. Many non-Brahmans thereafter left the party and joined the Congress, which regained its power. This was reflected adequately in the success of the Civil Disobedience campaign in 1929–30. The Quit India movement of 1942 (see chapter 8.1) finally took the wind out of its sails; in the election of 1946, the Justice Party did not even field a candidate.

But if the justice Party gradually paled into political insignificance, another more radical and populist trend within the non-Brahman movement emerged in south India around this rime in the "Self-Respect" movement, under the leadership of E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, "Periyar". Once an enthusiastic campaigner for the non-cooperation programme, he left the Congress in 1925, believing that it was neither able nor willing to offer "substantive" citizenship to the non-Brahmans.P He was incensed by Gandhi's pro-Brahman and pro-varnashram dharma utterances during his tour of Madras in 1927 and constructed a trenchant critique of Aryanism, Brahmanism and Hinduism, which he thought created multiple structures of subjection for Sudras, Adi-Dravidas (untouchables) and women. So before self-rule what was needed was self-respect, and its ideology was predicated upon a sense of pride in-though not an uncritical valorisation of-the Dravidian antiquity and Tamil culture and language. Indeed, Ramaswamy had reservations about privileging Tamil, as this could alienate the other non-Tamil speaking Dravidians of south India. Yet, Tamil language remained at the centre of the movement, sometimes creating tension between 'Tamil' and 'Dravidian' identities.H The movement, however, was more clear in identifying its oppositional Other, as it mounted scathing attacks on the Sanskrit language and literature, being the cultural symbols of Aryan colonisation of the south. The story of the *Ramayana* was inverted to make Ravana an ideal Dravidian and Rama an evil Aryan. Unlike Justice Party, this ideology was more inclusive in its appeal. What is significant, the Self-Respect movement also drew its inspiration from and gave more currency to the earlier writings of the Adi Dravida intellectuals like Iyorhee Thass and M. Masilamani. Both were publishing since the first decade of the twentieth century numerous articles against the caste system, Brahman domination and Indian nationalism.P During the 1930s, as the Congress gradually became more powerful, the non-Brahman movement became more radical and populist in its appeal, with more emphasis on the boycott of

south India.[59] But conversion itself was not a signifier of liberation, as often the converted dalits were appropriated back into the existing structures of local society. What was really significant was the message of self-respect that the missionaries and the new education inculcated in these groups. Some of the articulate sections among them successfully integrated that message into their own local tradition of bhakti and constructed an ideology of protest against the degradations of caste.[60] This led to the emergence of organised caste movements among various dalir groups all over India, such as the Ezhavas or Iravas[61] and Pulayas of Kerala,[62] Nadars of Tarnilnad,[63] Mahars of Maharashtra, [64] Chamars of Punjab,[65] UP[66] and Chartisgarh in central India,[67] Balmikis of Delhi,[68] and the Namasudras of Bengal," to name only a few.

Without denying the distinctiveness of each movement, we may discuss here some of the shared features of these dalit protests. What some of these organised groups (not all) tried first of all, was to appropriate collectively some visible symbols of high ritual status, such as wearing of sacred thread, participation in ritual ceremonies such as community pujas, and entering temples from where they were historically barred by the Hindu priests. A number of organised temple entry movements took place in the early twentieth cen[7] tury, the most important of them being the Vaikkam satyagraha in 1924-25 and the Guruvayur saryagraha in 1931-33 in Malabar," the Munshiganj Kali temple satyagraha in Bengal in 1929[71] and the Kalaram temple saryagraha in Nasik in western India in 1930-35. Apart from such religious rights, the organised dalit groups also demanded social rights from high caste Hindus, and when denied, they took recourse to various forms of direct action. For example, when the higher castes resisted the Nadar women's attempt to cover their breasts like high caste women, this resulted in rioting in Travancore in 1859. The issue remained an irritant in the relationship between the Ezhavas and Nairs and again led to disturbances in 1905 in Quilon. In Bengal, when the high caste Kayasthas refused to attend the funeral ceremony of a Namasudra in 1872, the latter for six months refused to work in their land in a vast tract covering four eastern districts. In Maharashtra, the celebrated Mahar leader, Dr B.R. Arnbedkar organised in 1927 a massive satyagraha with ten to fifteen thousand dalits to claim the right to use water from a public tank in Mahad under the control of the local municipality.

This social solidarity and the spirit of protest were to a large extent the result of a resurgence of bhakri among the untouchables during this period. A number of protestant religious sects, like the

Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam among the Ezhavas or the Matua sect among the Namasudras, inculcated the message of simple devotion and social equality, and thus interrogated the fundamentals of Hindu social hierarchy. A few religious sects emphasised the fact that the dalirs were indeed the original inhabitants of the land subjugated by the intruding Aryans. So now they had to be accepted as they were, without requiring any changes in their culture or way of life, be compensated for their past losses and be given back all their social rights. This self-assertion or endeavour to reclaim lost social grounds was quite evident in the Ad Dharam movement among the Chamars of Punjab or the Adi Hindu movement among the Chamars and other urbanised dalits of UP. On the other hand, some religious movements went even further. The Satnampanth among the Chamars of Chattisgarh manipulated ritual symbols to construct their superiority over the Brahmans, *ri* while the Balahari sect among the untouchable Hadis of Bengal went on to imagine an inverted ritual hierarchy where the Brahmans were located at the bottom and the Hadis at the top. [73]

Although many of these movements did not last long, their implications were quite subversive for Hindu society, as not only did they unite dalits around the message of a commonly shared brotherhood, they also indicated their defiance of the Hindu notions of hierarchy and untouchability. This tendency to repudiate Hindu theology as a disempowering and subordinating ideology for the dalits came to an explosive high point when in December 1927 Dr Ambedkar in a public ceremony burnt a copy of *Manusmriti,* the most authentic discursive text authorising untouchability. In 1934 he wrote totemple satyagrahis at Nasik about the futility of temple entry or seeking redress for their grievances within a Hindu religious solution. What he suggested instead, was a "complete overhauling of Hindu society and Hindu theology", and advised the dalits to "concentrate their energy and resources on politics and education. "[74]

This tendency to seek a secular or political solution to the problems of their social and religious disability was indeed a prominent feature of the movement of the backward castes during the early decades of the twentieth century. For many of these dalit associations, not just integration of public institutions, but caste based reservation in education, employment and legislatures as a compensation for historical injustices became a non-negotiable minimum demand. And in this, they found patronage from the colonial state, since "protective discrimination" became a regular feature of colonial public policy since the 1920s. From the official standpoint, this

was partly to redress social imbalances, but partly also to divide and ruJe. At the actual field level, it is true, the colonial bureaucracy often did not implement this policy, and in the name of maintaining social equilibrium supported the local conservative elites' opposition to the entry of dalit students into public schools.[75] Yet, for the first time, there was in place such a public policy to promote their education, and there were always some bureaucrats who would be prepared to lend them a sympathetic ear. This brought the dalits closer to the government and estranged them from the Congress. The final solution of their problem, many of the dalits now believed, lay in the provision for separate electorate for them, which the Congress opposed tooth and nail.

This dalit alienation from Congress politics was also to a large extent the result of Congress approach to the question of caste and untouchability. In its eagerness to avoid socially sensitive issues, it ignored the question till 1917 and then took it up only when dalit leaders had organised themselves and were about to steal the initiative from the Congress." Brahman domination and social conservatism of the early Congress, which we have discussed earlier (chapters 4.4 and 5.2), were much to blame for this inaction. But other than this, the mental gap with the untouchables also widened as many of the Hindu nationalist groups, unlike the earlier reformists, now openly tried to glorify and rationalise caste system as a unique social institution of ancient India that united disparate groups of Indians in harmonious solidarity.[rt] For the dalits, however, this solidarity meant a subterfuge for ensuring subordination. These attempts to define Indian national identity in terms of Hindu tradition isolated them as they had developed a different perspective about Indian history. If the Hindu nationalists imagined a golden past, for the dalits it was the dark age marked by untouchability and caste discrimination, in contrast to the golden present, when the British made no distinction of caste and had thrown away the rules of Manu that sanctioned caste disabilities.[78]

Gandhi for the first time had made untouchabiliry an issue of public concern and the 1920 Non-cooperation resolution mentioned the removal of unrouchabiliry as a necessary pre-condition for attaining swaraj. But his subsequent campaign for the welfare of the Harijans after the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement, could neither arouse much caste Hindu interest in the reformist agenda nor could satisfy the dalits. He condemned unrouchabiliry as a distortion, but until the 1940s upheld *uamasbram* dharma or caste system as an ideal non-competitive economic system of social division

of labour as opposed to the class system of the West.[79] This theory could not satisfy the socially ambitious groups among the untouchables as it denied them the chances of achieving social mobility. For the eradication of untouchabiliry too, Gandhi took essentially a religious approach: temple entry movement, initiated by caste Hindus as an act of penance, and the idealisation of "Bhangi", the self-sacrificing domestic sweeper, were his answers to the problem. This campaign significantly undermined the moral and religious basis of unrouchabiliry, but, as Bhikhu Parekh has argued, failed to deal with its *"economic* and *political* roots". It dignified the untouchables, but failed to empower them.[80] The dalit leaders argued that if they were given proper share of economic and political power, the gates of temples would automatically open for them. The Gandhian approach, in other words, failed to satisfy dalit leaders like Ambedkar who preferred a political solution through guaranteed access to education, employment and political representation. Ambedkar (1945) later charged Gandhi and Congress for obfuscating the real issue and the demand for a separate political identity for the dalits became a sticky point in the relationship between the dalit political groups and the Congress.

Although the first meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Bahishkrut Parishad (or AH India Depressed Classes Conference) held at Nagpur in May 1920 under the presidency of the Maharaja of Kolhapur, was the modest beginning,[81] the actual pan-Indian dalit movement at an organised level started at the All India Depressed Classes Leaders' Conference held at the same city in 1926. Here the All India Depressed Classes Association was formed, with M.C. Rajah of Madras as its first elected president. Dr Ambedkar, who did not attend the conference, was elected one of its vice-presidents. Ambedkar later resigned from this association and in 1930 at a conference in Nagpur, founded his own All India Depressed Classes Congress. As for its political philosophy, in his inaugural address Ambedkar took a very clear anti-Congress and a mildly anti-British position, thus setting the tone for the future course of history.[82]

It was in his evidence before the Simon Commission in 1928 that Ambedkar had first demanded separate electorate—in the absence of universal adult franchise–as the only means to secure adequate representation for the dalits. During the first session of the Round Table Conference, he moved further towards this position, as many of his comrades were in its favour.[83] Following this, on 19 May 1931, an All India Depressed Classes Leaders' Conference in Bombay formally resolved that the depressed classes must be guaranteed

"their right as a minority to separate electorate".[84] It was on this point that Ambedkar had a major showdown with Gandhi at the second session of the Round Table Conference in 1931, as the latter opposed it for fear of permanently splitting the Hindu society. Nor was there a consensus among the dalits over this issue. The M.C. Rajah group was staunchly in favour of joint electorate and the Working Committee of their All India Depressed Classes Association in February 1932 deplored Ambedkar's demand for separate electorate and unanimously supported joint electorate with the Hindus, with provision of reservation of seats on the basis of population. An agreement, known as the 'Rajah-Munje Pact', was also reached to this effect between Rajah and Dr B.S. Munje, the president of the All India Hindu Mahasabha. The dalit leadership, in other words, was divided "down the middle" over the electorate issue.[85]

The differences persisted when the Communal Award in September 1932 recognised the right to separate electorate for the untouchables—now called the Scheduled Castes-and Gandhi embarked on his epic fast unto death to get it revoked. Ambedkar now had little choice but to succumb to the moral pressure to save Mahatma's life and accepted a compromise, known as the Poona Pact, which provided for 151 reserved seats for the Scheduled Castes in joint electorate. For the time being, it seemed as if all conflicts had been resolved. There was a nationwide interest in temple entry movement and Gandhi's Harijan campaign. Even, there was cooperation between Gandhi and Ambedkar in relation to the activities of the newly founded Harijan Sevak Sangh. The provisions of the pact were later incorporated into the Government of India Act of 1935. Although there were many critics of the pact at that time, Ravinder Kumar has argued that it represented a triumph for Gandhi who prevented a rift in India's body politic and offered a nationalist solution to the untouchabiliry problern.[86]

But disunity reappeared very soon, as Congress and Ambedkar again began to drift apart. While Gandhi's Harijan Sevak Sangh was involved in social issues, the other Congress leaders had little interest in his mission. They needed a political front to mobilise dalit voters to win the reserved seats in the corning election. For this purpose, they founded in March 1935 the All India Depressed Classes League, with Jagjivan Ram, a nationalist dalit leader from Bihar, as the president. But still in the election of 1937 the Congress won only 73 out of 151 reserved seats all over India. Subsequently, situations changed in different areas in different ways, depending on the

nature of commitment the local Congress leaders had towards the Gandhian creed of eliminating untouchabiliry. In the non-Congress provinces like Bengal, the leaders were more sensitive to electoral arithmetic and assiduously cultivated the friendship of the dalit leaders.[87] But in the eight provinces where the Congress formed ministries and remained in power for nearly two years, they performed in such a way that not just critics like Ambedkar were unimpressed, but even those dalit leaders like M.C. Rajah of Madras who once sympathised with the Congress, were graduaJly alienated.[88]

Ambedkar in 1936 founded his Independent Labour Party, in a bid to mobilise the poor and the untouchables on a broader basis than caste alone-on a programme that proposed "to advance the welfare of the labouring classes".[89] In the election of 1937, his party won spectacular victory in Bombay, winning eleven of the fifteen reserved seats. The Ambedkarites also did well in the Central Provinces and Berar. But from this broad-based politics of caste-class cluster, Ambedkar gradually moved towards the more exclusive constituency of the dalits. He also became a bitter critic of the Congress, as in the 1930s the "secularist" approach of leaders like Nehru and their persistent refusal to recognise "caste as a political problem" most surely alienated the dalit leadership." The difference between the two groups now rested on a contradiction between two approaches to nationalism, the Congress being preoccupied with transfer of power and independence, and the dalits being more concerned with the conditions of citizenship in a future nation-state. Ambedkar was prepared to join the struggle for swaraj, he told the Congress. But he made one condition: "Tell me what share I am to have in the Swaraj".[91] Since he could not get any guarantee, he preferred to steer clear of the Congress movement. In July 1942 he was appointed the Labour Member in the viceroy's council. At a conference from 18 to 20 July 1942 in Nagpur, he started his All India Scheduled Caste Federation, with its constitution claiming the dalits to be "distinct and separate from the Hindus". Leaders like Rajah were now only too happy to join this new exclusive dalit organisation.

This statement of dalit dissent and their claim of a separate identity came just a few days before the beginning of the Quit India movement (8-9 August), which the Muslims bad also decided to stay away from. But unlike Muslim breakaway politics, dalit self-assertion did not go very far, and their politics was soon appropriated by the Congress in the late 1940s. This happened due to various reasons. First of all, not all dalits believed in this politics, particularly at a period when Gandhian *mass* nationalism had acquired an

unprecedented public legitimacy. The Scheduled Caste Federation neither had the opportunity nor time or resources to build up a mass organisation that could match that of the Congress at a time when the Gandhian reformist agenda, and later the revolutionary programme of the communists, were constantly corroding its support base. FinaJly, the imperatives of the transfer of power process left very little elbow room for the dalir leadership to manoeuvre, compelling them to join hands with the Congress. In the election of 1946, like all other minor political parties-including the Hindu Mahasabha and the Communist Party-the Scheduled Caste Federation was practically wiped off, wining only 2 of the 151 reserved seats for the dalits. The overwhelming majority of these seats went to the Congress, which was at that time riding on the crest of a popularity wave generated by the Quit India movement and later he anti-INA trial agitation (see chapter 8). On the basis of the election results, the Cabinet Mission that visited India in 1946 to negotiate the modalities of transfer of power came to a conclusion that it was Congress, which truly represented the dalits and would continue to do so in all official fora. Ambedkar responded furiously to this "crisis of representation" and staged a mass satyagraha to prove his popular support. But the agitation did not last long due to lack of organisation. So, with official patronage withdrawn, and the direct action failing, he was left with no political space where he could project the separate identity of the dalits or fight for their citizenship.[92]

At this historic juncture-just on the eve of independence-the Congress endeavoured to absorb dalit protest, by offering nomination to Ambedkar for a seat in the Constituent Assembly and then by choosing him for the chairmanship of the constitution drafting committee. Under his stewardship, the new Indian constitution declared untouchabiliry illegal, and he became after independence the new law minister in the Nehru cabinet. Thus, as Eleanor Zelliot describes the scenario, "(a)ll the varying strains of Gandhi-Congress-Untouchable situation seemed to come together„.[93] But this moment of integration was also fraught with possibilities of rupture. Soon Ambedkar realised the futility of his association with the Congress, as its stalwarts refused to support him on the Hindu Code Bill. He resigned from the cabinet in 1951 and then on 15 October 1956, barely a month and a half before his death, he converted to Buddhism, along with three hundred and eighty thousand of his followers. This event is often celebrated as an ultimate public act of dissent against a Hinduism that was beyond reform. But what needs to be remembered here is that Ambedkar actually redefined Buddhism, criticised its

canonical dogmas and foregrounded its radical social message, so that it could fit into the moral role which he envisaged for religion in Indian society." le is for chis reason that his particular reading of Buddhism could be seen by the dalits as the basis of a new world view and a socio-political ideology, which contested the dominant religiou idioms of the society and the power tructure that continually reinforced and reproduced them.

7.3. BUSINESS AND POLITICS

From politics of the communities we may now turn to politics of the classes. Since the late nineteenth century, the Indian capitalist class, more specifically an industrial bourgeoisie, was gradually becoming more matured and influential in policies. Tall the end of World War One for various reasons the number of registered industrial enterprises had been steadily rising," while developments in the interwar period further strengthened their position. The factors which facilitated a modest Indian industrial development, despite an obstructing colonial presence, were many, such as a growing tendency cowards import substitution in consumer goods, shifting of attention towards the domestic markets, growth in internal trade, shifting of traditionally accumulated capital through trade, moneylending and landowning co industrial investments and the outflow of foreign capital creating a space for indigenous entrepreneurs. By 1944, nearly 62 per cent of the larger industrial units employing more than one thousand workers, and 58 per cent of their labour force were controlled by the Indian capital. And in the smaller factories, which con- rirured 95.3 per cent of che industrial sector, the control of the Indian capital, as Adirya Mukherjee has emphasised, was "absolure" .96 This development happened as Indian capital moved into areas hitherto not developed by foreign capital, such as sugar, paper, cement, iron and steel etc. Indian capital also intruded into areas so long dominated by expatriate capital, such as finance, insurance, jute, mining and plantation. But it also consolidated its position in its traditional areas of strength, such as cotton. Indeed, most spectacular was the rise of the cotton industry, which was now catering for the domestic consumers, reducing Manchester's market share to less than 40 per cent by 1919.97

As mentioned already, this modest growth in Indian industrialisation took place not because of colonial rule, but in spite of it (chapter 2.5). The earlier generation of Indian businessmen, too dependent on foreign capital, were prepared to accept its domination, and with it the realities of a discriminatory colonial state. But the newer

generation of industrialists, coming from an expanded social base, were more matured and less prepared to surrender their rights. To consolidate their position, they began to organise themselves, and so the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce in 1887 and the Indian Merchants' Chamber in Bombay in 1907 came into existence. But the question is, what really at this stage was the political attitude of the Indian business community towards nationalism vis-a-vis imperialism. Historians seem to be divided on this issue. Bipan Chandra, on the one hand, thinks that the "Indian capitalist class had developed a long-term contradiction with imperialism while retaining a relationship of short-term dependence on and accommodation with it".[98] In the long run the capitalists desired the end of imperial exploitation and the coming of a nation-state; but their structural weaknesses and dependence on the colonial government dictated a prudent strategy of combining pressure with compromise. They preferred a nationalist movement within safe and acceptable limits, not guided by left-wing radicals, but in the reliable hands of right-wing moderates. This position is further developed by Adirya Mukherjee, who has talked about a "multi-pronged" capitalist strategy to overthrow imperialism and maintain capitalism.[99] They were afraid of organised labour, left-wing radicalism and mass movement; but as safeguards against these, they did not surrender to imperialism. They evolved a class strategy to guide the nationalist movement into the path of constitutionalism, patronise the right-wingers and thus follow a Congress, which would remain under a "bourgeois ideological hegemony".[100]

As opposed to this Marxist view, which looks at the capitalists as a matured class with a well-defined anti-imperialist ideology, other historians are less sure about it. Basudev Chatterji, for example, is more direct: "Politically", he thinks, "Indian business groups were overwhelmingly loyalist".[101] A.D.D. Gordon, looking at the Bombay business groups, makes a distinction between the merchants and the industrialists; while the former, he thinks, were more nationalist, the latter were the "traditional allies of government".[102] Claude Markovirs (1985) too has observed similar rifts, but over a longer period also rapprochement and shifts in the political attitudes of the different groups of Indian businessmen towards nationalism and Congress. So far as the colonial authorities were concerned, as Rajat Ray has observed, the Indian businessmen were both "co-operating and opposing at the same time", and thus their attitudes preclude any "clear-cut generalisation".[103] On the whole, argues Dwijendra Tripathi, business politics was guided by a "pragmatic approach" to

issues as they arose, maintaining the policy of "equidistance" or avoiding a tilt either in favour of Congress or government for fear of antagonising or alienating either of them. Talking of a capitalist "grand strategy", he thinks, is to make an "overstatement" .1 In other words, what appears from these writings is that the Indian businessmen hardly constituted a "class for itself" in the first half of the twentieth century. They did not pull together, had divided interests, clash of ideas and contradictions in strategies; during this period it is difficult to talk about their politics in generalised terms. We will, therefore, try to understand these complexities, instead of attempting to identify a unified capitalist ideology or political strategy towards nationalism or imperialism.

World War One and the period immediately after it brought mixed fortunes for the Indian business communities. While the industrialists prospered due to wartime developments, the merchants suffered due to currency fluctuations and high truces. The rupee collapsed in December 1920, threatening the Indian importers with a possible loss of nearly 30 per cent on their previous contracts; but this helped the Indian exporters and mill owners. The high wartime taxation affected everybody, but the particular changes in the income tax law hurt the indigenous joint family businesses, as their accounting system did not fit in well with the requirements of filling tax returns under the new law.[105] Although the Marwari and Gujarati traders were aggrieved with the government's taxation and currency policies, the industrialists and big businessmen were less concerned, as the government was also trying hard to buy their support. The Montagu-Chclmsford Reforms in 1919 introduced the system of "interest representation", thus giving Indian business-along with labour–representation in the central and provincial legislatures.P' Other than that, the Fiscal Autonomy Convention in 1919 and the promise of a policy of "discriminatory protection" after 1922 brought the hope of protective tariffs.!" Therefore, when mass nationalism started with the advent of Gandhi, it evoked mixed responses from India's business communities.

Some of the Marwari and Gujarati merchants and new entrepreneurs, who were deeply religious, were drawn irresistibly towards Gandhi as they could find common ground in his Jain and Vaishnava philosophy. His emphasis on non-violence was reassuring against any kind of political radicalism; and his "trusteeship" theory legitimised wealth. Thus although Gandhian ideology was not based on capitalist interests, some of its concepts were attractive to them. Hence, they happily contributed for Gandhi's constructive pro-

grammes and some big businessmen like G.D. Birla or Jamnalal Bajaj became his close associares.l'" But there were some irritants as well; particularly Ahmedabad mill owners like Ambalal Sarabhai was not entirely happy with his leadership style in the labour strike of 1918 (see chapter 6.2). But Gandhi somehow overcame this barrier, as the Indian businessmen realised very well that it was only he who could prevent the Congress from becoming anti-capitalist. [109] Yet, when the Rowlatt satyagraha started in 1919, the industrialists remained skeptical, although the merchants of Bombay supported overwhelmingly. When Gandhi was arrested in April there was a complete business strike in the Bombay city. When the Non-cooperation movement started, the cotton merchants again supported the boycott movement and donated generously to the Tilak Swaraj Fund.[110] But many industrialists on the other hand remained silent, or opposed mass agitation outright. An Anti-Non-cooperation Society was started in Bombay with the blessings of Purushottamdas Thakurdas and funds from R.D. Tata. The split in the business community was visible nowhere more clearly than in Bombay, where the dominance of the industrialists in the Indian Merchants, Chamber came under threat twice in 1920 and 1921–first time on the issue of council boycott and then on the question of presenting an address to the visiting Prince of Wales whom Congress wanted to be boycotted.'!' Clearly the merchants were on the side of the Congress and the Congress too needed their support, as without them the boycott movement had little chance of success.

After 1922, however, due to the deteriorating economic conditions all sections of the Indian business community were drawn more closely to the side of nationalism, the industrialists included. The wartime boom collapsed in 1921–22 and was followed by a slump in the industry throughout the 1920s. The non-saleability of goods and large unsold stocks were accompanied by rising labour costs. The situation for the Bombay cotton mill owners was further worsened by their dependence on imported yarn and the growing competition from cheap Japanese goods that started inundating Indian markets from around this time, pushing prices further down. The prices of cotton mill shares plunged sharply between 1920 and 1923, [112] sending shivers down the spines of many industrialists. Their major grievance at this stage was against the 3.5 per cent excise duty on cotton, for the abolition of which they now joined hands with the swarajists in the legislative assembly. The duty was abolished in December 1925, but that did not solve the problems of the cotton mill owners. In 1926 eleven mills were closed and 13 per

which increasingly came under communist leadership. The red scare prompted Dorabji Tata to offer a desperate proposal to form an Indo-European political organisation of the capitalists to contain communism. It was stopped through the intervention of Birla and Thakurdas and thus an open rift with the nationalists was averted. Although in 1929, the government came down heavily against the communists in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, still the only hope of the Indian capitalists to win their battle against communism was an AJl India Trade Union Congress (which had been formed in 1920) under the sober influence of Gandhi.

Thus for various reasons, by the beginning of 1930 all sections of the Indian business community had been drawn towards the Congress. And the Congress too was sensitive to their conditions and interests. So when Gandhi announced his 11 point ultimatum to Irwin, it contained three specific capitalist demands-a rupee-sterling exchange rate of Is 4d, protection for cotton industry and reservation of coastal shipping for the Indian companies (see chapter 6.4). But as the Civil Disobedience movement started, the business response once again was mixed. The traders and marketeers were more enthusiastic: they contributed funds and participated in the boycott movement. It was, indeed, the cloth merchants, particularly the importers, who contributed most to the success of the boycott movement by refusing to indent foreign goods for specific periods. The mill owners, on the other hand, were nervous and offered little concrete support, while some Bombay industrialists like the Taras, who depended on government orders, remained skeptical. But complete neutrality would have been suicidal; so the FICCI supported the principles of the movement and condemned police brutalities.

The practicalities of the boycott movement also resulted in clashes of interests between the Congress and the mill owners. Gandhi's idea of boycott was to replace foreign cloth with khadi; although he was willing to accept some amount of profiteering by the Indian mill owners, but this had to be contained within limits. So the Congress in 1928 devised certain rules, and the mills that agreed to abide by them were classified as swadeshi mills, not to be boycotted. But the rules were too stringent for the mill owners and therefore they had to be relaxed in 1930 and lengthy negotiations followed between the Congress and the Ahmedabad and Bombay mill owners. In the end, by March 1931, only eight mills still refused to accept the pledge of swadeshi; others signed the pledge, but rarely cared to go by the rules.[117] And whatever enthusiasm the mill owners had for

Civil Disobedience, it clearly evaporated by September 1930, when they found themselves saddled with huge unsold stocks. The growing civil unrest not only hampered day-to-day business; it struck terror in the minds of the big business about the loss of respect for authority and the spectre of a social revolution. They clearly now wanted to get back to constitutionalism, and leaders like Birla and Thakurdas preferred to play the role of honest brokers between the Congress and the government. If Gandhi signed the truce with Irwin because of a "host of other factors", as Aditya Mukherjee has claimed,[118] business pressure was certainly one of them—and an important one.

In February 1931, just before the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed in March, the Government of India had offered an important concession to cotton mill owners by raising duties by a further 5 per cent on cotton piecegoods, and this time without giving preference to Lancashire.[119] But this did not mean that the business leaders were bought off. At the second Round Table Conference, where Gandhi represented the Congress, and the FICCI delegation was led by Birla and Thakurdas, the latter strictly adhered to the Gandhian line in all negotiations on economic matters.[120] Yet, they did not certainly like to revert to agitation when the constitutional negotiations failed in London. When the Congress launched the second Civil Disobedience movement in January 1932, business support was clearly not forthcoming, although there was no consensus on this matter either. The political pressure around this time split the business community into several warring factions. The Bombay business was split into four groups, with some like Tata and Sir Homi Mody openly condemning Civil Disobedience. At the all-India level, big business was split into three factions: the Ahmedabad mill owners supporting the movement, the Bombay mill owners along with some lobbies in Calcutta and in the south opposing it, and some prominent FICCI leaders like Birla and Thakurdas constantly vacillaring.[121]

The fractious nature of business politics became more evident when the government announced the proposal for an Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa in 1932. Its purpose was to foster imperial economic cooperation, by establishing "a *new* specialization of production between and within different industries in the empire".[122] The FICCI leaders were initially enthusiastic about cooperating with the government on this issue, but a distrustful Viceroy Willingdon turned down the hands of friendship and instead sent an Indian business delegation comprising confirmed loyalists and second rate business leaders. As a result, the Ottawa

patronise the right-wingers within the Congress, i.e., people like "Vallabhbhai, Rajaji and Rajendrababu" who were, in the words of Birla, "all fighting communism and socialism"[124]-and finally, to throw in their lot behind Gandhi. The Gandhians too were eager to get capitalist support and their financial backing in their bid to regain control of the Congress. In the election of 1934, business finance was a crucial factor behind Congress victory.

The major interests of the capitalists at this juncture were to keep the Congress within the bounds of constitutional politics and to clip its socialist wings. For this, they were even prepared to meddle in the internal politics of the Congress. The 'Bombay Manifesto', signed in 1936 by twenty-one Bombay businessmen, contained an open indictment of Nehru's preaching of socialist ideals, which were deemed prejudicial to private property, and to the peace and prosperity of the country. Although it did not evoke support from any other section of the business community, it strengthened the hands of the moderates within the Congress, like Bhulabhai Desai and G.B. Pant, who put pressure on Nehru to tone down his socialist utterances. The Congress decision to participate in the election of 1937 and accept office thereafter brought the capitalists closer to it. Even skeptics like Mody, in the context of continually deteriorating economic conditions, now drifted closer to the nationalists. But although business finance once again became a crucial factor behind the spectacular victory of the Congress in the election of 1937, the party was far from under capitalist domination.

Indeed, when the Congress formed ministries in eight provinces, it evoked jubilation and expectations from both labour and capital and the party had to continually balance between the two contradictory interests. During the first two years in office, trade union activities and labour unrest increased phenomenally in the Congress-ruled provinces, particularly in Madras and the United Provinces and the Congress ministries had to adopt a number of resolutions implementing the labour welfare programmes, which it had promised during the election. This irritated the capitalists no doubt, but what further added to it were the conservative economic and fiscal policies of the provincial governments. Faced with financial stringency, these governments had very little choice but to increase taxes, like the property tax or sales tax, which the business did not quite like. They now closed ranks and this alarmed the Congress high command. Therefore, by the spring of 1938, there was a remarkable change in Congress policies, as it tried to placate capitalist interests. The most authentic manifestation of this shift was in its labour

unskilled people" constituted "the majority of the working mass employed in the jute mills". However, he also concedes that "a sizeable proportion" of them belonged to "land-holding peasant groups".[129] The stereotype has been further questioned in recent times, for example, by Arjan de Haan (1995), who finds in eastern India a multiplicity of factors, including attractions for industrial employment and the lure of urban living—and not just "'push' of shortage of land"-as motivations behind labour migration. The motivations varied from person to person; people both with and without land migrated. And in most cases, it was cyclical migration, as most of these migrants retained their regular connections with the villages, went back to their ancestral homes either at harvesting times or during the marriage or festival seasons, and regularly sent money to their families. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar has argued that migration to cities and retaining connections with their villages were for them a matter of "conscious choice", as it was seen as a means to repay their debts, hold on to their lands and improve their position and status in village society.[130] Moreover, the uncertainties of urban living were offset by the psychological reassurance provided by their continuing connections with an ancestral village "home".[131]

In the urban industrial neighbourhoods, therefore, these migrant labourers instead of developing a working-class consciousness maintained a cultural dual self of a peasant and an industrial worker and remained divided among religious groups and castes. The demographic composition of the working-class neighbourhoods looked exactly like that of the villages where they came from; their village ties, in other words, operated in the urban-industrial settings as well. Apart from the spatial segregation of religious groups in the working-class *moballas,* their community identity manifested itself in their observance of caste oriented cornmensaliry restrictions, in their dress codes and in their slogans which frequently used overt religious idioms.[P!] Even at work, various departments in an industry were manned exclusively by members of particular religious communities or social groups.[P!] Often, the higher castes got the better jobs, while lower castes and the untouchables got the low paid and risky jobs.[P'] Thus this working class from the very beginning remained differentiated and hierarchised and this happened, according to some historians, because of a structured recruitment system.

Unlike the European situation, in India there was no random or open recruitment from among a proletarianised peasantry; recruitment was usually made through jobbers. Known as *sardars* in eastern and western India or *mistri* in the north, they were appointed from

among the labourers themselves. From the employers' point of view, given the fluctuating demand for labour, the jobbers ensured a steady supply of labour. For the workers, in view of the extremely temporary nature of employment, the jobbers were a source of patronage, as they provided jobs, helped them in finding shelter and guaranteed them access to credit at times of unemployment. The sardars had their own preferences in terms of village, community and caste ties and thus wove around them social networks of mutual dependence. These were articulated in various forms in the working class neighbourhoods in the cities and the workers being in a most vulnerable position had to depend on these ties as sources of patronage and security. And therefore, as Morris has argued, the jobbers not only hired workers, they also had "uncontrolled power in the administration of labor discipline". *us*

Some modern researchers, however, have questioned this overemphasis on the role of sardars. The clustering of communities in certain departments happened also because of particular recruitment policies of the employers, who were often guided by colonial stereotypes.136 And if religious and ethnic categorisation mattered so much, gender inequities were far more deeply entrenched in Indian industrial policies. As Samita Sen has shown, in the Bengal jute mills certain jobs were identified as particularly "suitable" for women, because of their family engagements and reproductive role. And these were usually the unskilled and therefore low-paid jobs.P? So, in other words, for getting employment the workers had to depend on a whole set of ideological preferences and personal connections, and the sardars were only a part of that network. us While the workers depended on the sardars, they also defied the latter's authority and turned against them when the patrons failed to deliver or did something against their interests. There were several strikes and agitations against sardars in the Calcutta jute mills in 1919-20, which explodes the "myth of sardari power".139 On the other hand, far from always serving the interests of the employers and ensuring shopfloor discipline, sometimes sardars themselves became organisers of working-class agitations, as it happened in the Calcutta jute mills in 1929 and 1937.1~0 In western India too, the sardar's agency was constrained by various other focuses of power within the neighbourhood and in the workplace and the growth of working class politics in the 1920s and 1930s definitely resulted in a diminution of their social influence. As Chandavarkar argues, the sardars were a part of an informal network of social interdependence; the sardari system was in fact the result of "actions and autonomous

organisations of rural migrants", not just a creation of the employers to control the workforce.[141]

However, what can hardly be denied is the fact that these migrant workers remained embedded in their community relationships and organisations, and this, it has been pointed out, hindered the growth of a class consciousness. That does not, of course, mean that they were not conscious of their social situation. As Dipesh Chakrabarty has shown,[142] they were perfectly aware of their poverty, conscious of the power relations in the factory and dissatisfied about their subordination in jobs. There were instances of incendiarism and attempts to turn the power structure in the factory upside down. Yet, their anti-employer mentality, their sense of identity as workers or poor people were often enmeshed with other narrower and conflicting identities. Hence the religious and caste divisions kept the working class divided horizontally, and often the employers took advantage of this to weaken industrial action. In the Madras textile strike in 1921, for example, the Adi-Dravidas or the untouchables were used as strike breakers against the caste Hindu and Muslim unionists.[143] Communal riots between the Hindu and Muslim workers occurred regularly in the industrial neighbourhoods, the Talia riot in Calcutta, which took place on 29 June 1897 over the demolition of a mosque, is just a glaring example of that. The workers' actions, it is argued, were thus motivated more by "community" consciousness than class consciousness, which can be explained, according to Chakrabarty, in terms of their "precapitalist culrure'l.!" This was most evident in the limited growth of trade unionism, although there was no dearth of industrial actions: "so much militancy, yet so little organization", Chakrabarry argues, constituted a "paradox" of working class history.[145] This happened because the concept of trade union as a "bourgeois-democratic organisation" was alien to the cultural space of the Indian workers.':" Even their relationship with the middle-class trade union leaders was locked in a hierarchical structure-the *"babu-coolie* relationship".':" No wonder that a more sophisticated class consciousness did not emerge under such circumstances.

However, if we give up our expectations that the Indian industrial workers ought to have evolved a working-class consciousness like that of their European counterparts, we may perhaps look at their history in a different way and discover the more interesting nuances of their politics. In Madras, for example, the Adi-Dravidas became strike breakers more because compared with caste Hindus and Muslims they were economically much too vulnerable due to their total dependence on wage for survival.[148] In many cases what appeared

encountered the landlord-state combination, while in the industrial centres they witnessed another version of that same alliance dominating their daily lives.[157] The employers' organisations like the Indian Jute Mills Association in Calcutta were dominated by the Europeans; the Bombay Mill Owners' Association, though controlled by the Indian capitalists, was still viewed as an extension of that same alien imperialist culture. This was largely because of the latter's European lifestyle, their free social mixing with the European mill owners, and the pro-employer policies of the state which further contributed to such images.[158] There were, of course, legislations, like the Bengal Factory Acts of 1881 or 1911, regulating the age of employment and working hours. But the employers flouted them with impunity with the active connivance of the state and the workers continued to work for long hours, were paid low wages and lived in squalid conditions.[157] In the coalfields of eastern India, the collieries actually acted as the "industrial variant of the zamindary estate", with the zamindary managers being invariably Europeans. The usual practice was to bind the miners in service tenancy arrangements, under which a small plot of land was given to them in exchange for their labour in the mines. In 1908 the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act prohibited such service arrangements. But it continued unabated until the depression made it obsolete in the 1930s, and the local colonial officials saw nothing wrong with that deliberate infringement of law.[158] Similarly, in the Assam tea gardens where the bated indentured system was abolished in 1926, the "extra-legal" practice of "reindenturing" the labourers continued without any intervention from the state.[159]

In the 1920s, although only for a while, the colonial state and also some employers realised the usefulness of trade unions as legitimate channels of negotiations. This was in response to the granting of representation to the labour in the legislative councils in the Act of 1919, later this principle being extended to municipalities as well. 'se this change of attitude was much less a change of heart, and more the pursuance of a "notion of containment".[160] In Bombay, after the general textile strike of 1928, and throughout the 1930s, the state showed only unmitigated hostility towards the trade unions and working class activism.[161] Not only were a number of anti-labour legislations passed in 1934, 1938 and 1946 to contain working class militancy and trade union activities, but also frequent use of police became a handy tool to break strikes and ensure labour discipline. This happened at every industrial centre throughout India, where the police, being the only visible representative of the state, appeared in the eyes of the workers as the long hand of tyranny.

That Indian workers remained divided among them, competed with each other and did not join the trade union movements, was largely because of this employer-state collusion. Both at industry and factory levels, workers were victimised, intimidated, coerced, often physically attacked for attempting to combine and at the event of a strike, due to an oversupply of labour, the employers could easily dismiss the striking workers. And in all these, the state was always on their side. These factors, as Chandavarkar has argued, constrained the growth of trade unionism. Even larger unions like the Bombay Textile Labour Union or the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association (ATLA) were vulnerable to pressures from the employers and the state.[162] The Madras Labour Union was temporarily crushed in 1921 by the British textile magnates, the Binnys, with rather overt assistance from the provincial bureaucracy.[163] The TISCO management, whenever it found an opportunity, tried to crush the Jamshedpur Labour Association OLA), even though it was actively patronised by the Congress leaders, and was known for its loyalty to the employers; and in this, the local colonial administration was always with the management.[164] Even the goondas or hooligan elements, who were as a matter of routine patronised by the employers and hired as strike breakers, were protected by the local police officials as institutionalised tools of violence.[165] There were, in other words, serious obstacles that prevented and even discouraged workers from combining.

But despite such impedance and limited trade unionism, labour unrest, as mentioned earlier, began to grow from the late nineteenth century. In the 1890s, a series of strikes took place in the jute mills in Calcutta because of the new workplace discipline, denial of holidays on the occasion of religious festivals like Bakr Id and the active intervention of the state to enforce such restrictions.[166] There was greater unrest towards the closing years of World War One due to wartime decline in real wages (see chapter 6.2), leading to a series of strikes, the most important of them being the Ahmedabad textile strike in March 1918 led by Gandhi himself and the Bombay textile strike in January 1919. These industrial actions are often described as 'spontaneous' movements with no centralised leadership, no coordination among the strikers, no programme and no organisation- something like "a working class *jacquerie*".[161] Like the western Indian cotton mills, the Calcutta jute mills also witnessed unprecedented labour unrest around this time: there were 119 strikes in 1920, followed by 152 in 1921.[168] If things began to improve a little from 1922, the onset of depression worsened the situation once again. To overcome the crisis the Bombay mill owners had resorted

to rationalisation policies, causing retrenchment, wage losses and higher workloads. This magnified the problems of the mill-hands to such an extent that they could no longer be dealt with at individual mill level and resulted in an industry-wide general textile strike in 1928–29.[169] Rationalisation policies also resulted in a serious industrial action by twenty-six thousand TISCO workers in Jamshedpur in 1928.[170] In the Calcutta jute mills, prescription of long working hours by the IJMA resulted in a general strike in 1929 involving 272 thousand workers.[171] The working class militancy had by now reached a proportion when it could no longer be ignored by the established political groups.

The Indian National Congress from the very beginning took an ambivalent position vis-a-vis the working class. During the Swadeshi period there were isolated attempts to organise labour strikes in European owned industries and railways. But the nationalist leaders hardly took any initiative to mobilise the workers. Where a congenial situation was created by the "spontaneous" action of the working class, they only intervened to harness it to their own movement.[172] By 1918, as strikes began and the working class asserted itself, it became increasingly difficult for Congress to ignore them. So in 1919 at its Amritsar session it adopted a resolution urging the provincial committees to "promote labour unions throughout India".[173] But by this rime it had also developed a close relationship with the big business. So in the labour front, Congress could afford to be more articulate only where European capitalists were involved, such as the railways, jute mills or the tea gardens; and they exerted a moderating influence where the Indian capitalists were affected, like the Jamshedpur steel plants or the textile industry in Bombay and Ahmedabad. The workers were often asked to sacrifice their present day needs for the future of the nation, as a strike affecting Indian business was portrayed as likely to perpetuate foreign economic domination. The workers' unresolved grievances were to be met once the swaraj was attained. From the 1920s these dilemmas of the Congress were very clearly visible, often inviting articulate, even violent, disapproval of the workers themselves.

Some of the Congress leaders did from rime to time participate in strike , such as Gandhi in the Ahmedabad textile strike in 1918 or Subhas Bose in the Jamshedpur steel strike in 1928-29; others got involved in trade union movement, such as V. V. Giri in Madras or Guljarilal Nanda in Ahmedabad. But they did so as individuals, often to increase their own popularity as nationalist leaders. Some of them were involved in the formation of the All India Trade Union

run by the Binnys invited the Congress Non-cooperators to give them leadership.!" The strikes of the Nonh-Western Railways in 1919 and 1920 were also inspired by the Congress movement. The Civil Disobedience movement too generated similar responses. The industrial workers participated in the boycott movement; there were strikes in the Great Indian Peninsular (GIP) Railway in 1930, and the Dockworkers struck in 1932.[183] In Cbota Nagpur in 1930, the workers began to wear Gandhi caps and attended nationalist meetings in thousands, despite the fact that the Congress leaders had scandalously mishandled the Golmuri Tinplate strike in 1929.[114] By linking up the strikes with the nationalist movement the workers sought greater legitimacy for their own struggles, in which Congress as a party took little interest. And rarely the Congress leaders themselves were directly responsible for organising these strikes. In Bengal, for example, in only 19.6 per cent of all strikes between 1918 and 1921 any "outsiders" were actually involved; others took place through workers' own initiative.[tu] Sometimes, workers' own nationalism surpassed that of the Congress leaders in its radicalism and militancy. In 1928 the Calcutta session of the Congress was taken over for two hours by thirty thousand workers who passed resolutions for the complete independence of India and for a labour welfare scheme.P"

Gandhi disapproved of this autonomous labour militancy and after the Chandpur tragedy in May 1921 (see chapter 6.3) seriously reprimanded the Bengal Congress leadership for their misadventure in trying to harness this militancy in the cause of nationalism. "We seek not to destroy capital or capitalists", he reasoned, "but to regulate the relations between capital and labour".[187] The same argument resonated in jawaharlal Nehru's statement in 1929. As the President of the AITUC, he reminded everybody that Congress was "not a labour organisation", but "a large body comprising all manner of people".[181] Although the Congress Socialists showed greater sympathy for labour, the compulsion to remain an umbrella organisation representing the interests of all the classes prevented Congress from integrating the working classes more closely into its movement. Compulsions to seek labour votes in the provincial elections of 1937 forced the Congress to include in its election manifesto some promises for labour welfare programmes. Its subsequent victory, therefore, aroused great enthusiasm and expectations among the working classes, as a number of trade union leaders became labour ministers in €ongress cabinets. Trade union membership increased by 50 per cent during this time, leading to a spectacular

and power, which the workers could rely upon. The development of the new institutional structures and legal frameworks made the services of such outsiders more vitally important to the workers than those of the traditional jobbers or neighbourhood organisations. The communist trade unions also utilised community tics and informal social networks. In Kanpur, for example, in the 1930s, the emerging communist leadership of the Kanpur Mazdoor Sabha specificaJly targeted the Muslim workers alienated by the Congress and the Arya Sarnaj.!" In Ahmedabad too, the communist dominated Mill Mazdoor Sangh drew its support from the Muslim workers dissatisfied with the Gandhiire ATLA. Religious ties were frequently used to organise strikes by these communist trade unions, which thus appeared as class orientated organisations operating essentially within the hierarchical cultural milieu of the Indian workers.

This communist penetration into the labour front and the series of strikes that followed in the wake of the trade depression in the middle of the 1920s precipitated a crisis for them in 1928-29. The government offensive against the communists came in the form of two legislations in Bombay. The Public Safety Bill and the Trades Disputes Act of April 1929-which virtually banned strikes-were passed without any Congress opposition. A major crack down on the communists came in March 1929 when 31 top labour leaders were arrested and tried for conspiring against King-Emperor in the notorious Meerat Conspiracy Case. The case continued for four years and ended in long jail sentences for all the leaders, who were thus sent behind bars till the late 1930s. But the labour upsurge under communist leadership did not die down, as a second wave of general strikes in cotton mills, jute mills and the GIP Railways were organised in 1929-30. Yet, the communists were weakened no doubt, as the workers' allegiance to them was neither permanent nor unconditional. Their decision to dissociate themselves from the Congress under a fiat from Cominrern in 1928 cost the Indian communists dearly, as the Civil Disobedience movement soon diverted mass attention to Gandhi and the Congress.

There was a communist revival around 1933-34, after the Civil Disobedience movement was withdrawn and the Comintern in the summer of 1935 mandated in favour of a united front strategy. The Congress socialists also began to collaborate with the communists and the results were increasing working class enthusiasm and militancy around 1937-38, manifested in another strike wave across the country. This consolidation of communist position among the working classes was perhaps one reason why the provincial Congress

governments became so sternly anti-labour at this stage. The ban on the Communist Party was lifted in 1942, as it supported British war efforts, since Soviet Union was now involved in it. But communist endeavours to consolidate popular support for the "Peoples, War" did not succeed. The workers' allegiance to them in the past was largely because of their continued resistance to the state. Since their role now reversed, "their fortunes [also] began to wane",!" as the Quit India movement drew huge mass support. Although the communists in the 1940s took control of a few trade unions and came to dominate the AITUC, in real terms this did not indicate their rising popularity, as very few workers were actually unionised. In 1942, the AITUC had a membership of only 337,695.[196] In 1952 at a convention of the AITUC, the communist leader Indrajit Gupta acknowledged that about 95 per cent of the jute mill workers were not unionised yet.[197] But that did not mean that these workers were unable to perceive of their relationship with the colonial state, the capitalist class and nationalism. They were neither unresponsive to, nor dissociated from the nationalist or leftist politics organised by educated middle-class politicians; but their support was conditional, not absolute. There were, to reiterate our point once again, various meanings of freedom for different groups of people and these variegated forms of consciousness continually contested and interacted with each other within the dynamics of the national movement.

7.5. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The colonial discourses on India from very early on were gendered, as the colonised society was feminised and its "effeminate" character, as opposed to "colonial masculinity", was held to be a justification for its loss of independencc.[198] The "women's question" figured prominently in these discourses as Western observers, like James Mill, used it to construct a "civilizational critique of India". The degraded condition of Indian women was taken as an indicator of India's inferior status in the hierarchy of civilisations.[199] It is no wonder therefore that the status of women became the main focus of the reforming agenda of the modernising Indian intellectuals of the nineteenth century. In their response to the damning critique of the West, they imagined a golden past where women were treated with dignity and honour; they urged reforms of those customs, which they considered to be distortions or aberrations. Thus female infanticide was banned, sati was abolished and widow remarriage was legalised. In all cases reforms were legitimated by referring to the shastras and no women were ever involved in the reform movements. It will be

political influence. The ideal of secluded womanhood came to be universalised only in the nineteenth century. [202]

The Muslim society too put similar restrictions on women. In the nineteenth century, there were two reform movements among the Indian Muslims: one was Islamic revivalism spearheaded by the ulama, and the other a modernisation campaign led by the educated middle classes. Both these movements, as Azra Asghar Ali has argued, "constructed *sharif* culture almost as a private polity", with the status of women being central to it, as an indicator of the "progress" of the Muslim community as a whole.[203] It is no wonder, therefore, that the sharif Muslims in Bengal shuddered at the thought of their women transgressing the norms of purdah (a Persian word, literally meaning curtain).[2~] For both Hindu and Muslim women, this metaphor of purdah did not merely mean their physical seclusion behind the veil or the walls of the zenana {the women's quarter in the inner part of the house). It meant, according to one scholar, "multitudes of complex social arrangements which maintain[ed] *social* and not just physical distance between the sexes".[205] It "entailed an all-encompassing ideology and code of conduct based on female modesty which determined women's lives wherever they went."[206] In other words, even when they stepped out of their houses, which they increasingly did from the mid-nineteenth century, their movements and conduct were to be contained within these ethical parameters. By the nineteenth century, the ideal of purdah had become universalised for both Muslim and Hindu women and for both elites and commoners, although in its practical implications it acted differently for different groups.

In the nineteenth century as the women's question became a part of the discourses of progress and modernity, a movement for female education started as a part of the colonised males' search for the "new woman". The agency for the spread of education lay with three groups of people, as Geraldine Forbes has classified them: "the British rulers, Indian male reformers and educated Indian women".[207] The initiative was taken in Calcutta by men like Radhakanta Deb and the School Book Society and later by Keshub Chandra Sen and the Brahmo Samaj, in western India by Mahadev Govind Ranade and Prarthana Samaj, in north India by Swami Dayanand and his Arya Sarnaj and in Madras by Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society. So far as Indian educated women were concerned, we may mention the endeavours of Pandita Ramabai in western India, Sister Subbalaksmi in Madras and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain among the Muslim women in Bengal. As for the education of Muslim

Hindu counterparts.[212] The goal of the Muslim educators of women, as Gail Minault argues, was "to create women who would be better wives, better mothers and better Muslims"."!

Voices of protest from within the Indian womanhood against such public stereotyping were rare, but not altogether absent. In 1882, Tarabai Shinde, a Marathi woman from Berar, published a book entitled, *A Comparison Between Women and Men.* In this she protested against the fact that in a new colonial society men enjoyed all the rights, opportunities and benefits of change, while women were blamed for all the evils and were still bound by the old strictures of *pativrata* (duty to husband). Yet, ultimately, Tarabai was no rebel; what she claimed for Indian women was more respect and dignity in a happy home and the enlightenment that the colonial state had supposedly promised.[214] But there were other rebels-like Pandita Ramabai–who challenged more directly the new role model of educated but compliant wives. She was a Brahman woman who remained unmarried for a long time; she was well versed in the ancient shastras, married a man from a Sudra caste defying the restrictions on hypergamy, then became a widow with an infant daughter, refused to withdraw herself from public life, went to England to study medicine, and there converted to Christianity, went to America and raised money for a widows' home in Bombay which was later shifted to Poona. As she asserted her independent choice and crossed the boundaries that Indian patriarchy had set on the freedom of women, she was equally criticised by the reformers and damned by the conservatives, as both considered her to be a social threat.[215] But then, Shinde or Ramabai were exceptions; most educated women knew and minded their boundaries very well. For, if the indigenous elite, attached to the middle-class gender ideology of Victorian England, tended to privatise the women's spheres, the colonial state too wanted to confine women to domesticity. For it was there that they would be safe both for themselves and for the state. Both the customary Hindu and Islamic personal laws which the courts upheld and the new statutory laws which the state promulgated, sanctified the rights of the patriarchal family and constricted the freedom of choice for women. It was in this area, as Rosalind O'Hanlon argues, that there was a "broad degree of consensus" between the colonial state and the nationalist male elites.[216]

This valorisation of 'domesticity' for Indian womanhood impacted also on the conditions of women in peasant families as well as lower class women in urban industrial environments. It is often supposed that among the lower caste labouring women the restrictions

on their freedom were less rigorous. But from the early nineteenth century, this began to erode under the influence of "Sanskritization", as the lower castes began to appropriate the 'respectable' norms of gender relations. Purity of women became an index of the status of a caste; seclusion of women therefore became a cherished ideal, if not always a practical goal For example, more and more lower and middle order castes began to enforce celibate ascetic widowhood on their women, as it became a symbol of high status-indeed, a means to social mobility-both in Bengal[217] and in Maharashtra.[218] In the numerous peasant movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women only "remained conspicuous by their absence't."" In the cultural space, the ideal of chaste and reformed womanhood gradually marginalised and nudged out the indigenous forms of women's popular culture,-their songs, farces and theatrical performances-which used to offer them a space for autonomy. Although belatedly, the women from the lower strata also "had to grasp the logic of an altered social world" and conform to the ideal that was imposed from above.[220]

So far as women's work was concerned, although they did participate in agricultural activities, from the late nineteenth century more and more socially mobile peasant families began to confine their women to household work. *As* they were idealised as wives and mothers, their household responsibilities came to be regarded as sacred duties and were thus emptied of any economic value. Many of those who participated in various crafts began to lose their vocation with the advancement of mechanisation in the early twentieth century. In Bengal, for example, women employed in rice husking began to lose out with the coming of rice-mills, which became predominantly male domains.[P] When men migrated to cities in search of industrial employment, they left their families back home. When women migrated, it was usually under extreme poverty, when rural resources failed to support them any longer. In the early twentieth century considerable number of women were working in the cotton and jute mills, in tea plantations and in the coalmines. But here too the dominant ideology of domesticity affected their conditions. Their reproductive role was considered to be more important than wage labour. Their income was regarded as "supplementary" to family income and therefore of less importance. This argument of domesticity was sponsored by the state and reformers, and used by the capitalists in the cotton mills of Bombay-P and the jute mills of Calcutra+' to stereotype women workers as devoid of skills and commitment. These constructs could then be deployed to justify

lower wages for women or to retrench them first at the rime of rationalisation. In the mines and plantations of eastern India too, women were given less wages than their male counterparts and were always considered as parts of family units.[214] The female workers protested vehemently against this deprivation of rights and inequality. But nothing changed, as even the trade unions valued more their motherhood, than their economic rights and freedom.

When modern nationalism developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, it addressed the women's question within these restrictive parameters of domesticity. *As* reformism gave way to valorisation of tradition through various iconic representations of nation, the Hindu woman became an ideal emblem of the moral order that symbolised the spirit of India, supposedly uncontaminated by the polluting influence of the West. Partha Chatterjee has argued that the nationalist construction of the public and private spaces equated them with the material/spiritual dichotomy. The "world" or the public space, a typically male domain, was the site of the contest and negotiation with the modernising colonial state, while the "home" was the inner domain of sovereignty-which was beyond colonisation-where women were perceived as the protector and nurturer of the spiritual essence of Indian national identity.[w] This nationalist construction of difference in the gender specific models of modernisation removed the earlier dilemmas of reformism, but did not "resolve" the women's question, as expected by Chatterjee. It indeed opened up new areas of conrestation and negotiation for women, as many of them did not accept the attribution of passivity and in the first half of the twentieth century began to claim agency for creating their own autonomous space of action, without however being overtly defiant of the boundaries set by nationalism's historical project.

If women's issues did not figure in the nationalist discourse of the early twentieth century, it was because all other forms of emancipation were being perceived as conditional on national liberation. The Congress until 1917 did not directly address the women's question-just as it did not deal with the untouchabiliry issue-because it was unsure of itself and was oversensitive about the fragility of an incipient nation. However, as extremism gained in strength in Bengal, the nationalists there appropriated the already privileged cultural concept of "motherhood" as an empowering and authentic symbol of indigenous cultural distinctiveness. The nationalist imagining of their country as "motherland"-as opposed to the concept of fatherland in Europe-was initiated when in 1875 the famous

Bengali intellectual Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote the song *Bande Mataram* (Hail Mother), which was later incorporated and contextualised in his novel *Anandamath* (1882). In this novel, he portrays three images of mother-goddess: 'mother as she was', 'mother as she is' and 'mother as she will be'. The three representations were enough to fire the imagination and dedication of her nationalist devotees and permanently inscribed the metaphor of mother-goddess in Indian nationalist discourse. The song was first sung by Rabindranath Tagore at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1896. A few years later during the Swadeshi movement, the Bengali extremist leader Aurobindo Ghosh discovered the potential of the imagery that could excite patriotism and a national awakening. And from now on almost every nationalist leader, from Bepin Chandra Pal[26] to Jawaharlal Nehru=" used this metaphor of motherhood to signify the country and the nation.

In the early nationalist reconstruction of mother-goddess, the familiar image of a nurturing and affectionate Bengali mother was mixed with the concept of *shakti* or primal power that was variously represented in Hindu cosmology as Goddesses Durga or Kali who destroyed the demons and protected the innocent. Gradually, however, this aggressive aspect was toned down, as the mother was imagined to be the epitome of the cultural essence of Indian spiritualism. In nationalist iconography, Abanindranath Tagore's painting of *Bharat Mata* or "Mother India" (c.1904-5) came to symbolise this new image. Here the mother-goddess is more serene and genteel, offering protection and prosperity; it was "an image that was both human and divine", both familiar and transcendenral.P! Whether this imagery of motherhood was just a "cultural artifact" of militant nationalisrn-" or emanated from genuine conviction in mother-nature equarion-" is a matter of debate. What is important however is the discursive implication of this metaphor for the status of women in Indian society. Jasodhara Bagchi has argued that this ideology of motherhood by "creating a myth about her strength and power", took away from women their "real power", confined them exclusively to their reproductive role and thus deprived them of access to education and occupation, or in other words, to all possible avenues to their real ernpowerrnenr.P'

Indeed, in the Swadeshi movement, whatever participation women had, it was within this accepted gender ideology that prescribed home as the rightful arena of activities for women. They boycotted British goods and used swadeshi, crushed their glass bangles and observed non-cooking days as a ritual of protest. Interestingly, the

most powerful imagery that was used to mobilise women's support in Bengal around this time was Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, who had allegedly left her abode because of partition, and who had to be brought back, protected and looked after.[232] There were of course some remarkable exceptions, like Sarala Debi Chaudhurani, who got involved in a physical culture movement for the Bengali youth or a few women who participated in the revolutionary movement. But in the latter case, their involvement was mostly of a supportive or "indirect" nature, that of giving shelter to fugitive revolutionaries or acting as couriers of messages and weapons.[233] This nature of parriciparion thus did not abruptly breach the accepted norms of feminine behaviour or signify their empowerment.

The period after World War One witnessed the rise of two eminent women in Indian politics. Annie Besant, the president of the Theosophical Society and a founder of the Home Rule League, was elected president of the Congress in 1917. The same year, Sarojini Naidu, the England-educated poet who had been delivering patriotic speeches at Congress sessions since 1906, led a delegation to London to meet Secretary of State Montagu to demand female franchise. The following year she moved a resolution at the Congress session demanding equal eligibility for voting rights for both men and women. In 1925, she too was elected president of the Congress. But despite being "inspirational figures", these rwo leaders could neither evolve an ideology for women's emancipation, nor could carve out for them a niche in nationalist politics.[234]

So it was only with the advent of Gandhi that we see a major rupture in this story of women's involvement in the nationalist movement. Gandhi, in conceptualising the ideal Indian womanhood, shifted the focus from motherhood to sisterhood, by negating women's sexuality. It was in South Africa that he had realised the power of self-less sacrifice that women could offer and decided to harness it in the service of the nation. But his clarion call to women was couched in a language full of religious metaphors that did not appear to be subversive of the traditional values about femininity. Sita-Damayanti-Draupadi were his role models for Indian women. Although taken from Indian mythology, these symbols were reconstituted and loaded with new meanings. These women were represented as no slaves of their husbands, but extremely virtuous, and capable of making supreme sacrifice for the welfare of their family, society and the state. Particularly important was the example of Sita, as the British could conveniently be equated with the demon king Ravana. However while addressing Muslim women, Gandhi would

others participated in the illegal manufacture of salt, pickering foreign cloth and liquor shops and took part in processions. The movement, so far as women's participation was concerned, was most organised in Bombay, most militant in Bengal and limited in Madras. In north India, in cities like Allahabad, Lucknow, Delhi and Lahore, hundreds of women from respectable families shocked their conservative menfolk by openly participating in nationalist demonstrations. Some women in Bengal got involved in violent revolutionary movement, and this time, unlike the Swadeshi period, they were not in supportive roles; they were now actually shooting pistols at magistrates and governors. 239

The trend that was set in the 1930s continued into the 1940s, as women's active role in the public space became accepted in society. It is not difficult to see why women responded to Gandhi's appeal, which made women's service to nation a part of their religious duty. His insistence on non-violence and emphasis on the maintenance of a respectable image of women saryagrahis did not breach the accepted norms of feminine behaviour and as a result, men felt confident that their women would be safe in Gandhi's hands. There was less resistance because, in the ultimate analysis, women participated because their male guardians wanted them to. In most cases, women who joined the nationalist struggle came from families where men were already involved in Gandhian movements. So in their case, their public role was an extension of their domestic roles as wives, mothers, sisters or daughters. Their politicisation therefore did not lead to any significant change in their domestic or family relations. Most of these women came from Hindu middle class respectable families. Although in some areas rural women did take part in the agitations, women's participation remained predominantly an urban phenomenon, and here too emphasis on respectable image kept the lower class and marginal women like prostitutes out. So far as Muslim women were concerned, many of them participated in the Khilafat-Non-cooperation movement in 1921. But if this helped towards weakening of the rigours of purdah, its total abolition was out of question; because for Muslims, it was a symbol of their cultural distinctiveness.[240] On the other hand, if a handful of women actually crossed the socially constituted boundary of feminine modesty by involving in violent revolutionary action, they were heavily censored by a disapproving society. Such "strong traditionalist moorings", argues Tanika Sarkar, explains why this politicisation was possible and why it failed to promote to any significant extent social emancipation of women in lndia.[241] The Congress and its leaders

were simply not interested in women's issues and except for allowing some symbolic presence, never included women in any decision making process. A frustrated Sarala Debi Chaudhurani therefore had to lament that Congress wanted them to be "law-breakers only and not law-makers". [242]

However, having said all this, we have to acknowledge as well that hundreds of women from respectable families marching in files on the streets of India, going to jails, suffering indignity there, and coming back to their families with no stigma attached, signified a remarkable change in Indian social attitudes. And as for agency, as Sujata Patel has succinctly put it, "it is difficult to separate analytically which proceeded first: women's participation or Gandhi's advocacy of this."[243] It may also be pointed out that without being openly deviant, some of these women were slowly pushing the boundaries of their autonomy by manipulating available cultural metaphors, like for example, the "extended family". Bi Amman, the elderly mother of Shaukat and Muhammad Ali, participated in the Khilafat-Non-cooperation movement after a whole life behind purdah. At a mass meeting in Punjab, she lifted her veil and addressed the crowd as her children. A mother did not require a veil in front of her children; the whole nation by implication was thus incorporated into her "extended fictive family".[244] Her rhetoric did not subvert the ideology of purdah; her practice effectively extended its boundary. On the other hand, it is highly unlikely that all those thousands of women who actually participated in the Civil Disobedience movement had actually secured their guardians' prior permission. And even if they did, there are numerous historical examples to show that "once mobilised, women moved on their own".[245] Time and again they disobeyed Gandhian injunctions that set limits to their activism.

But did this activism and politicisation of women promote a feminist consciousness in colonial India? So far as the wider society was concerned, the answer should be clearly no. But for those women who actually participated in the nationalist struggle, and for their more enlightened middle-class women leaders, life could perhaps never be the same again. A burgeoning women's literature of this period indicates that the private/public dichotomy was increasingly being blurred in their consciousness, and that they were resentful of the existing gender asymmetry in their society.[24'] But despite such contestation and "transgressions of 'desirable' codes", as Janaki Nair puts it, these middle class/high caste women also broadly "consented to ... [the] hegemonic aspirations" of the nationalist patriarchy,"?

even less spectacular. This happened because the efforts of the women's organisations and activists remained constrained by what Geraldine Forbes in her most perceptive account of *Women in Modem India* (1998) has described as the "framework of a social feminist ideology" (p.189). It recognised certain public role for women, but accepted at the same time the social, biological and psychological difference between sexes. The nationalist teleological construction of essential Indian womanhood remained privileged in their agenda, which itself was subsumed by that of nationalism.

However, as Forbes further argues,[254] this limiting social ideology and the dominance of the women's organisations which upheld it, came to be seriously challenged in the 1940s, when women across class and religious lines began to claim a more active role for themselves in the public space and fought as comrade-in-arms with their male counterparts in the last phase of the struggle for freedom. This female activism was visible most significantly in the Quit India movement of 1942, in which almost at the very beginning nearly all the front-ranking male Congress leaders were put in prison (details in chapter 8.1). In a contingency like this some prominent women leaders took upon themselves the responsibility of coordinating the movement in the face of unprecedented police repression. Sucheta Kripalani co-ordinated the non-violent resistance, while Aruna Asaf Ali gave leadership to the underground revolutionary activities- and this she did by politely turning down Gandhi's advice to surrender.[255] However, the most important aspect of this movement was the participation of a large number of rural women taking their own initiative to liberate their country. This engagement of rural women was further enlarged with the lifting of the ban on the Communist Party in 1942. Back in the 1920s and 1930s many middle-class educated women had joined the communist movement, and had participated in mobilising the working classes, in organising industrial actions and in campaigning for the release of political prisoners. By 1941 the girls' wing of the All-India Students Federation had about 50,000 members. In 1942 some of the leftist women leaders in Bengal organised a Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti or Women's Self-Defence League, mobilised rural women through it, and organised relief work during the Bengal famine of 1943.[256]

This involvement of women in the communist movement was expanded to a new level when the Tebhaga movement began in Bengal in 1946 under communist-led kisan sabhas with the sharecroppers' demand for two-thirds share of the produce (details in chapter 8.2). It saw widespread autonomous action of the "proletariat and

semi proletariat women", belonging to dalit and tribal communities. Through their own initiative they formed *Nari Bahinis* or women's brigades and resisted the colonial police with whatever weapon they could lay their hands on. In the uneven contest that followed a number of them became martyrs.[257] Similarly in Andhra, where the Telengana movement continued from 1946 to 1951 against the Nizam of Hyderabad and feudal oppression (details in chapter 8.2), women fought side by side with men for better wages, fair rent and greater dignity. By highlighting certain gender specific issues, the Communist Party made special efforts to mobilise women, as without their support the movement could not sustain itself for such a long period. However, in most cases they joined on their own, acted as couriers of secret messages, arranged shelter and few of them took up guns and became participating members of the *dalams* (revolutionary units). But although this movement created for peasant women a new space for militant action, they were not treated as equals even by the communist leaders. The party leadership-just like their counterparts in Bengal-preferred only supportive and secondary roles for women, could not think of women outside the conventional structures of gender relations, i.e., family and marriage, and therefore, could not trust them with guns in the actual battlefield. More significantly, it was women who were considered to be the sources of problems when it came to the issue of maintaining sexual moraliry and discipline within the ranks of the rebels.[258]

Outside the country, around the same time, an experiment to involve Indian women in actual military action had been initiated by Subhas Chandra Bose. Back in 1928, he had been instrumental in raising under the leadership of "Colonel" Latika Ghosh a Congress women's volunteer corps that had marched on the streets of Calcutta in full uniform. When in 1943 he raised an expatriate army in Southeast Asia, known as the Indian National Army (INA) (details in chapter 8.2), he decided to add a women's regiment, which he called the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, named after Rani Lakshmi Bai, the legendary heroine of the revolt of 1857. In October 1943, the training camp was opened for the new regiment, which was joined by about fifteen hundred women from elite as well as working class Indian families of all religions and castes living in Southeast Asia. They were given full military training and were prepared for combat duties. When at the initial stages they were assigned non-combat roles, the ranis protested to their leader, and were later engaged in the actual war operations in the Imphal campaign of 1945. This campaign, however, went seriously wrong and put an end to the whole experiment,

as the INA had to retreat in the face of the advancing British army. Ideologically, this experiment of having women in arms was not perhaps a radical departure, as Bose too believed in and sought to invoke the "spiritual power" of the "mothers and sisters" of India. But it certainly amounted to a significant enlargement of women's role in nationalist politics from the passive role model of mythic Sita to that of the heroic activism of historic Rani of Jhansi fighting as comrade-in-arms with male soldiers.[25']

At another plane, the emergence of the 'Pakistan' movement in the 1940s opened up for the Muslim women of the subcontinent a new space for political action. In the 1930s they had been participating in a united front with their Hindu sisters to claim women's rights, such as female suffrage. But the division appeared in 1935 on the issue of reservation of women's seats on a communal basis. Some of the Muslim leaders of the All India Women's Conference, as Begam Shah Nawaz recollects in her autobiography, refused to "accept joint electorates when their men were not prepared to do so".[260] Thus broader political alignmenrs=or men's politics-influenced women's movements as well. The Muslim League also sought to universalise its politics and in 1938 started a women's sub-committee to involve Muslim women. As the Pakistan movement grew in momentum, more and more of them were sucked into it as election candidates, as voters and as active demonstrators in street politics, particularly in Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. Many of them were ordinary women for whom this political participation was itself a "liberating experience". True, this moment of emancipation was so short-lived that it could hardly bring in any actual change in their daily existence. But it signified nevertheless, an acceptance of a public role for women in Muslim society.[261]

Thus, increasingly in the 1940s Indian women across class, caste and religious barriers claimed agency in their participation in the anti-imperialist and democratic movements. But, as Kumari Jayawardena points out, they "did not use the occasion[s] to raise issues that affected them as women."[2•2] Their own goals were subordinated to those of national liberation, community honour or class struggle. The concept of feminism itself created a lot of confusion; it was either considered as a Western import subversive of the cultural essence of Indian nationhood or as an undesirable digression from the more important cause of the freedom struggle.[263] Some leading nationalists like jawaharlal Nehru believed that once political freedom was achieved, the women's question would resolve itself automatically.[2~] Patriarchal concerns continued to be a major dilemma

for the communist leadership as well. In Tebhaga movement, a women's leadership couJd emerge only when the leadership of the Communist Party "abstained". [265] The trade unions in general, although they mobilised working class women, ignored women's issues, which were "subsumed within male or general working-class interests".[266] If the boundaries were blurred in course of militant action, they were re-established quickJy afterwards without failure. Can we imagine what a woman like Swarajyam, described as "the legendary heroine of Telengana", was doing a few years after the withdrawal of the movement? In the words of her husband: "she is cooking and she is eating. What else?" If the women of Telengana came out of their homes because the movement promised them equality, they soon found out that the metaphor of family was being continually emphasised by the communist leadership whose preference always was to place women within that traditional boundary. [267]

On the other hand, the Pakistan movement did involve some Muslim women in public action, but the partition experience once again reinforced the traditional ashraf ideal of Muslim womanhood, to be protected within the domestic sphere. Any transgression of this boundary would lead to immorality, irreliogiosity and dishonour for the community. [261] Indeed, partition violence brought the worst moment for subcontinental womanhood, both Hindu and Muslim, as they became the objects of male construction of community honour. Women's sexuality became the territory that could either be conquered or be destroyed to deny the enemy the glory of conquering it. As Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin put it, they were caught in a *"continuum of violence",* where they had the choice either to be raped, mutilated and humiliated by men of the 'Other' community or to commit suicide, instigated by their own family members and kinsmen, to prevent the honour of their community from being violated by the enemy. Instances of such collective suicide were disturbingly many,[2"] while on the other hand, in course of a few months of partition madness seventy-five to one hundred thousand women were abducted or raped. [270] Those who survived, lived with an indelible memory of shame, which they have endured in silence in deference to the honour of their community and family.

Thus, as it seems, the women's question in colonial India hardly received the priority it deserved. Although some women became conscious and actively participated in the political struggles, and also identified themselves in many ways with the emerging nation(s), feminism had not yet been incorporated into the prevailing ideologies of liberation. The honour and interests of the community and

nation still prevailed over the rights of women. But that does not mean that no woman ever dreamed of 'freedom' in a way contrary to the dominant patriarchal convention upheld by their nationalist leaders, community elders or party bosses.

NOTES

1. Jalal 1987: 86.
2. Pandey 1992:234.
3. Hasan 1985: 213.
4. See Jalal 2000: 422 and passim.
5. Details in Page 1982.
6. Hasan 1985: 207.
7. Freitag 1989.
8. Datta 1999: 246.
9. Quoted in Hasan 1985: 210.
10. Chandra 1993.
11. Shaikh 1989.
12. Hasan 1996; jalal 1997.
13. Chatterjee 1984a; Murshid 1995.
14. Talbot 1988.
15. Jalal 1994: 19–20.
16. Hasan 1988.
17. Hasan 1993.
18. See Jalal 1994.
19. Gilmartin 1988: 172-73.
20. Moore 1988: 122.
21. Quoted in Moore 1988: 113.
22. Jalal 1994: 58.
23. Talbot 1996b.
24. Vanaik 1997: 31.
25. Jha 1986.
26. Raheja 1994: 95.
27. Sanyal 1981: 17.
28. Dirks 1987.
29. See Omvedt 1994: 42-44 and passim.
30. Beteille 1991: 43.
31. Chatterjee 19 89.
32. See Silverberg 1968; Srinivas 1968; Sanyal 1981.
33. Lynch 1969: 12.
34. Dirks 1992.
35. Srinivas 1966: 90; italics in original.
36. Galanter 1984.
37. Cohn 1987.
38. Bandyopadhyay 1990; Trautmann 1997; Susan Bayly 1999.
39. Susan Bayly 1999: 124.

86. Kumar 1987a: 98-99.
87. Bandyopadhyay 1997a: 179-209.
88. Bandyopadhyay 2000: 899-900.
89. Quoted in Omvedr 1994: 193.
90. Susan Bayly 1999: 260.
91. Quoted in Omvedt 1994: 216.
92. For details, see Bandyopadhyay 2000.
93. Zelliot 1992: 172-73.
94. Rodrigues 1993.
95. Triparhi 1991: 87.
96. Mukherjee 1986: 245-46.
97. Bagchi 1972; Ray 1979.
98. Chandra 1979: 145.
99. Mukherjee 1986: 265.
100. Ibid: 275.
101. Charterji 1992: 319.
102. Gordon 1978: 156.
103. Ray 1979: 292.
104. Triparhi 1991: 118.
105. Gordon 1978: 161-66.
106. Bhattacharya 1986.
107. Charterji 1992.
108. Ray 1979: 295-97.
109. Tripathi 1991: 94.
110. Bhattacharya 1976.
111. Gordon 1978: 170-71.
112. Ibid: 176.
113. Chanerji 1992: 274, 281-87.
114. Bhattacharya 1986.
115. Tripathi 1991: 98-102.
116. Sarkar 1985: 95.
117. Markovits 1985:72–73.
118. Mukherjee 1986: 281.
119. Markovits 1985: 78.
120. Triparhi 1991: 109.
121. Markovits 1985: 834.
122. Charterji 1992: 369.
123. Misra 1999: 172.
124. Quoted in Tripathi 1991: 112.
125. For details, sec Markovits 1985: 180-81.
126. Quoted in Mukherjee 1986: 271–72.
127. For details, see Ray 1979: 332–37.
128. Morris 1965: 41.
129. Das Gupta 1994: 35, 45.
130. Chandavarkar 1998: 66.
131. Joshi 1985: 252.

132. Ibid: 252–59.
133. For examples, see Joshi 1981: 1827; Simmons 1976: 459; Nair 1998: 102.
134. Patankar and Omvedt 1979: 411-12.
135. Morris 1965: 142.
136. Joshi 1981: 1827; Nair 1998: 102.
137. Sen 1999: 89-93 and passim.
138. de Haan 1995.
139. Datta 1993: 70-71.
140. Goswami 1987: 572-73.
141. Chandavarkar 1998: 67.
142. Chakrabarty 1989: 186-89.
143. Murphy 1977.
144. Chakrabarty 1989: 218.
145. Ibid: 123.
146. Ibid: 132.
147. Ibid: 145.
148. Murphy 1977: 319.
149. Basu 1998.
150. Joshi 1985: 265.
151. Simeon 1995: 332.
152. Nair 1998: 118.
153. Simeon 1995: 326–27.
154. Chandavarkar 1998: 68, 75.
155. Ghosh 2000: 85–86.
156. Rajat Ray 1979: 310.
157. See Ghosh 2000: 89-94.
158. Simmons 1976: 463-70.
159. Das Gupta 1994: 149.
160. Ghosh 1994: 2025.
161. Chandavarkar 1994: 406.
162. Chandavarkar, 1998.
163. Murphy 1977: 291.
164. Bahl 1995: 373.
165. Simeon 1995: 330.
166. Basu 1998.
167. Kumar 1983: 219.
168. Datta 1993: 58.
169. Chandavarkar 1994: 407.
170. Bahl 1995: 319.
171. Goswami 1987: 560.
172. Sumit Sarkar 1984: 279.
173. Quoted in Bahl 1988: 3.
174. Chandavarkar 1998: 95.
175. Quoted in Bahl 1988: 6.
176. Sen 1977: 222.
177. Patel 1987: 58-62.

178. Bahl 1995: 315–16.
179. Datta 1993.
180. Ray 1984: 277–84.
181. Patel 1987: 52, 56.
182. Murphy 1977: 307–11.
183. Chandavarkar 1994: 417.
184. Simeon 1995: 134.
185. Gourlay 1988: 35–36.
186. Bahl 1988: 22.
187. Quoted in Ray 1984: 284.
188. Quoted in Chandavarkar 1994: 414.
189. Quoted in Basu 1994: 86.
190. Quoted in Bahl 1995: 381.
191. Sarkar 1987a: 69-72.
192. Chakrabarty 1989: 126–27.
193. Chandavarkar 1994: 411 and passim.
194. Joshi 1985: 272, 277.
195. For details, see Chandavarkar 1998: 320.
196. Desai 1959: 195.
197. Chakrabarty 1989: 116.
198. Sinha 1995: 18.
199. Chakrabarty 1994: 54.
200. Thapar 1975: 7.
201. Leslie 1989: 273–304.
202. O'Hanlon 1994: 21-22, 48-49.
203. Azra Asghar AJi 2000: xiii.
204. Amin 1995: 112.
205. Jeffrey 1979: 4.
206. Engels 1996: 2.
207. Forbes 1998: 60.
208. For details see ibid: 44-45.
209. See ibid: 60-61.
210. For details, see Borthwick 1984; Murshid 1983.
211. Samita Sen 1993: 234.
212. Amin 1995: 109.
213. Minault 1998: 215.
214. O'Hanlon 1994: 7.
215. Chakravarti 1998: 303-42.
216. O'Hanlon 1994: 51.
217. Bandyopadhyay 1995: 11–12.
218. Chakravarti 1998: 52.
219. Sarkar 1984: 94.
220. Banerjee 1990: 130.
221. Mukherjee 19.83, 1995.
222. Kumar 1983.
223. Sen 1999.
224. Engels 1996: 207–11.

225. Chatterjee 1993: 116–34.
226. Bose 1997: 52–55 and passim.
227. Prakash 1999: 206.
228. Guha-Thakurta 1992: 255.
229. Sarkar 1987b: 2011.
230. Bose 1997: 54.
231. Bagchi 1990: WS65-66.
232. Engels 1996: 28–29.
233. Ray 1995: 184-89.
234. Forbes 1988: 63.
235. Kishwar 1985.
236. Patel 2000: 305 and passim.
237. Brown 1989: 56-57.
238. Patel 2000: 312.
239. Details in Forbes 1998: 124-56.
240. Minault 1981: 8.
241. Tanika Sarkar 1984: 101.
242. Quoted in Forbes 1998: 143.
243. Patel 2000: 297.
244. Minault 1981: 12–13.
245. Kasturi and Mazumdar 1994: 51.
246. Ray 1995: 212.
247. Nair 1994: 89.
248. Azra Asghar Ali 2000: 247.
249. Pearson 1981: 177.
250. Details in Basu and Ray 1990.
251. Pearson 1981: 177.
252. Pearson 1983.
253. Forbes 1998: 89.
254. Ibid: 222.
255. Aruna AsafAli 1991: 142.
256. Jayawardena 1986: 105-6.
257. Custers 1986: WS-101.
258. Lalita, et al. 1989: 16-17, 262-68 and passim; Kannabiran and Lalitha 1990.
259. For details, see Lebra 1971, 1986; Hills and Silverman 1993.
260. Quoted in Aruna AsafAli 1991: 131.
261. Aruna AsafAli 2000: 197-205.
262. jayawardena 1986: 108.
263. Ibid: 2.
264. Forbes 1998: 193.
265. Custers 1986: WS-97.
266. Sen 1999: 19.
267. Lalita, et al. 1989: 263, 272 and passim.
268. jalal 2000: 564–66.
269. Menon and Bhasin 1998: 57 and passim; italics in original.
270. Butalia 2001: 208.