

Nationalism and Democracy in India

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The strength and balance of a nationalist movement can be determined by the degree to which its economic and social aspects have been joined on to the political aspect. The moment a nationalist movement gets divorced from necessary social and economic reform it loses its vitality as well as its hold on the people and gives place, almost inexorably, to a more revolutionary movement. Kuomintang China is the classic example of such a development.

In India, as in most other countries of Asia and Africa, nationalism has thus to be understood in the sense of a constructive and liberating force. It is also a comprehensive concept transcending the boundaries of ordinary political usage in the West.

NATIONALISM is the background against which the drama of democratic development has been unfolding itself in India since Independence. Every aspect of development—social, economic, political and cultural—is informed by the spirit of nationalism, and moved by its emotional impetus. For a renaissance nation like India, awakening from centuries of political subjection and economic degradation, it is only natural that the nationalist spirit should be the presiding force in society.

Unlovely Forms

In the past nationalism has expressed itself in so many unlovely forms, both in Asia and Europe, that it is often regarded as a narrow and dangerous creed in the modern world. Colonial imperialism, Fascism, and the 'co-prosperity sphere' concept of the Japanese, were some of its most spectacular manifestations in recent history. Even the international creed of communism bears the imprint of the big-power nationalism of Soviet Russia and Peoples China. While these political ideologies are not merely expressions of nationalism, but something infinitely more complex and explosive, there is behind them a common irrational glorification of the nation, or the race, or of an ideology embodied in the concept of the nation. This kind of expansive and aggressive nationalism has played a black role in human history, and in our own atomic age it is, undoubtedly, a major anachronism. The touch of technology has made 'the whole world kind' in so real a sense that the other expression of nationalism, that of arrogant and brooding isolationism, has also become completely outmoded.

Nevertheless, nationalism seems to be a phase through which every nation has to go through, and it is not inevitable that it should always take a military or aggressive or isolationist form. On the contrary, it has often been a powerful defence against tyranny and oppression. Napoleon laced nationalism in this as-

pect in Europe, the British in their colonial empire, the Russians in Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary, and the Chinese in Tibet. Indeed, many a battle of human liberty was fought under the nationalist banner, and even today over vast areas of the globe nationalism spells freedom and dignity for man. One must, therefore distinguish between the nationalism of a big industrial and military power projecting itself in the international arena, and of new underdeveloped nations struggling to become independent entities or establish their newly-won independence on firm foundations. Thus while the word conjures up many a fear and suspicion, it also summons from the depths aspirations of freedom, equality and prosperity for many millions of people.

In the Indian Context

In regard to India, and most other countries of Asia and Africa, nationalism has to be understood in the latter sense of a constructive and liberating force. It is also a comprehensive concept transcending the boundaries of ordinary political usage in the West. In origin it was, no doubt, a political movement born under the impact of foreign domination, with the central objective of attaining the political independence of India. At the same time it was not a purely political, but a renaissance, movement embracing almost every sphere of Indian life. One could describe Indian nationalism as a vast movement of a whole people towards national independence, national self-respect, national well-being and national enlightenment. Except for certain sporadic attempts at the apotheosis of Mother India, the movement did not develop a mystique or myth of its own but remained mostly on a pragmatic plane, swept though it was by the winds of passionate ideas. In other words, nationalism in India was not the dream-child of a febrile collective-

mind, but the manifestation of concrete forces and palpable psychological attitudes in society. This was largely due to the peaceful and rational approach of the leaders themselves who were constantly, even in the thick of the fray, examining and explaining the aims, methods and meaning of the movement. It is, therefore, easy to reduce Indian nationalism to its basic elements which are political, social, economic and cultural. When taken together these amount to an Indian Renaissance. One could even go further and say that it was as if the Renaissance and the Reformation have been taking place in India at the same period. There was the idea of the rebirth of the past glory of India, and also of the reformation of the existing social order. While the vision of the past greatness of India was conjured up, it was combined with the challenging of old ideas, beliefs, practices and institutions. Thus nationalism has been operating as a revolutionary force transforming, or more appropriately rough-hewing, the age-old Indian social order into a system more rational and modern. The rationality and the modernity were, in the main, the result of the impact of Western education and technology. A new spirit of reason, of enquiry, of scepticism and of criticism has been let loose in India for the first time since the spacious days of the Upanishads and of the Buddha. Though confined, in the beginning, to the educated upper and middle classes, this new spirit slowly percolated to the broad masses in thousand subtle ways and stung them with the desire for progress.

A Vehicle of Social Change

Therefore in India nationalism has not merely been an instrument of political change, but a vehicle of social and economic revolution. More than one stage of historical development is being pressed into one perverted period of history. Struggle for

national independence, for political democracy, for economic freedom and social equality are all telescoped in a single period of change. The strength and inner balance of a nationalist movement could be determined by the degree to which these various aspects, particularly the economic and social aspects, have been joined on to the political aspect. In an underdeveloped country purely political nationalism is a hollow thing, and is replete with irrational potentialities. The moment a nationalist movement gets divorced from necessary social and economic reform it loses its vitality as well as hold on the people, and gives place, almost inexorably, to a more revolutionary kind of movement. Kuomintang China is the classic example of such a development. After independence from foreign domination has been achieved the main *raison d'être* of a nationalist movement lies in its ability to engineer a socio-economic revolution. It may be that the purely political revolution can still fulfil a certain residual function in the way of preserving the independence of the country from outside pressures. The point, however, is that after independence this is at best a residual emotion which could, no doubt, be kept at a high pitch by propagandist ravings about foreign enemies, but, ultimately, must yield to social and economic considerations at home. The sanity and strength of Indian nationalism lies in the fact that even during the most fervid stage of its struggle against foreign rule it has developed within itself what might be called a socio-economic soul.

Struggle Against British

It was with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi as the exponent of large-scale mass action and of Pandit Nehru as the impassioned advocate of socialist ideas that the Indian National Congress acquired political dynamism as well as social and economic significance. The objective condition for the growth of social consciousness was inherent in the immense poverty of the people, and the many inequities of the social order in which they lived. In such a context it was natural that enlightened leadership should interpret the struggle against the British rule not only in terms of national freedom, but of economic, social and cultural betterment of the ordinary masses.

Since 1927 the idea of economic freedom became an increasingly im-

portant part of the thinking and programme of the Indian National Congress. "My outlook", wrote Pandit Nehru about this period, "was wider, and nationalism by itself seemed to me definitely a narrow and insufficient creed. Political freedom, independence were no doubt essential, but they were steps only in the right direction. Without social freedom and a socialist structure of society and the State, neither the country nor the individual could develop much". Nehru was very much ahead of the Indian National Congress at that time, but gradually the idea of social and economic freedom took possession of the movement until, as Nehru himself wrote: "The Congress represented not only the nationalist urge of India, which had grown with the growth of the new bourgeoisie, but also to a large extent proletarian urges for social change. In particular, it stood for revolutionary agrarian change". In this respect a resolution adopted by the All India Congress Committee in 1931, on Fundamental Rights and Economic policy, is of particular importance. It stated that "in order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions". In setting down the content of economic freedom the resolution enumerated a series of social and economic measures most of which, after independence, found a place in the Constitution and in the Five Year Plans.

Social and Economic Programmes

There was, thus, within the Congress, a good deal of thinking, discussions and programme-making in regard to the social and economic problems of the country long before the coming of independence. The climax of this process was the establishment in 1938 of the National Planning Committee of the Congress. It was, of course, a non-governmental body, without the supreme power of the State to back up its decisions, and the experience of this first attempt at planning brought home to the nationalist leaders the important lesson that no serious reform of the Indian social order could be undertaken in the absence of political independence. An examination of the work of the National Planning Committee would show the degree to which Indian nationalism nearly ten years before transfer of power, was permeated with the desire

and the will for social and economic development of the country. There was a strong conservative element in the Congress who looked askance at this kind of Socialistic planning. It is a tribute to the progressive potentialities of the Congress and the brilliant Fabian strategy of Pandit Nehru that within a few years after independence the Congress Party and the country as a whole have been committed to an economic plan much more comprehensive and far-reaching, both in physical and social terms, than this first fragmentary and rather academic exercise in planning.

Acceptance of Planning

The composition and membership of this first planning body is worth noting. It consisted of widely differing, and sometimes, conflicting interests. Provincial Governments, industrialists, financiers, economists, scientists, trade unions and village industries, and even Princes were represented on the Committee. This heterogeneous body was, however, able to arrive at some common basis for planning, in very much the same way that India after Independence was able to find a common basis and a common set of objectives and methods for planning on a much larger scale. Pandit Nehru wrote about this early experiment: "Constituted as we were not only in our Committee but in the larger field of India, we could not then plan for Socialism as such. Yet it became clear to me that our plan, as it developed, inevitably led us towards establishing some of the fundamentals of the socialist structure. It was limiting the acquisitive factor in society, removing many of the barriers to growth, and releasing an enormous amount of talent and capacity. All this was attempted in the context of democratic freedom and with a large measure of co-operation of some at least of the groups who were normally opposed to Socialistic doctrine. That co-operation seemed to me worthwhile even if it involved toning down or weakening the plan in some respects". This passage expresses in a nutshell the broad strategy of Pandit Nehru, even after independence, in regard to the establishment of a democratic and socialist society in India. It was Nehru who popularised the ideas of planning and socialism within the nationalist movement. In doing so, he was merely bringing to the surface, boldly and clearly, what

was inherent in Indian nationalism and in the conditions of Indian society. He was in this respect ahead of the majority of his Congress colleagues, but his ideas, slowly and continually, flowed into the stream of nationalism until at last it became almost the main current. The Five Year Plan, with its objective of creating a Socialist pattern of society is the full-fledged post-independence expression of these earlier tendencies.

Britain's Historic Role

One cannot overlook the fact that the first practical foundations of this socio-economic revolutionary process were laid during the years of British rule. Indeed, the present restless desire for economic progress could have emerged only after the age-old rigidities of the Indian social order have been disturbed by the introduction of industrialisation and western education. The gates of modern scientific and technological knowledge were thrown open to the upper and middle classes and the seeds of industrial revolution sown in Indian society. The British contribution was neither deliberate nor planned, nor could it be described as having been adequate or impressive in comparison to the needs and resources of the country or the capacity of the administration to have undertaken had they set themselves to the task of raising living standards in India. Whatever industrialisation or economic development took place during the British period was primarily a by-product of their pursuit after military and commercial interests in India, but it was a by-product of immense and energising importance.

This historical role of England in India was recognised even by Karl Marx. It is worth quoting him on this point both to clinch the point of British contribution to Indian industrial revolution and the contribution now being made by free India: "All that the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive power, but of their appropriation by the people. But what they will not fail to do is lay down the material premises for both.... The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie till in Great Britain itself the new ruling classes shall have been supplanted

by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have gone strong enough to throw off the British yoke altogether. At all event, we may safely expect to see, at a more or less remote period, the regeneration of that great and interesting country". In assessing the British impact on India, Pandit Nehru expressed more or less the same view when he said that the British "represented a new historic force which was going to change the world and were thus unknown to themselves, the forerunners and representatives of change and revolution, and yet they deliberately tried to prevent change, except in so far as this was necessary to consolidate their position and help them in exploiting the country and its people to their own advantage".

Purposive Approach to Development

In the latter years of the British Raj, there was a much more purposive approach to economic development. Ultimately, the British left behind in India a system of railways, irrigation, and the various industries and above all, an educated middle class all of which constituted a foundation on which free India could build her future. But the fact remains that these did not go beyond laying the 'material premises' for the growth of production. What the nationalist movement, and later on the national government of India, have done was to gather up 'the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie', to organise the new productive powers and social forces released by the impact of the West, into a coherent, purposive and ambitious plan of national construction. This is a historic task that could have been done effectively only by a nationalist movement, and an independent Government. Gunnar Myrdal, in one of his books, has observed that a highly developed nationalist movement with a history of active struggle is an essential pre-requisite to the working out of a real economic plan in an under-developed country emerging from colonial status. He goes to the extent of saying that the ability to produce an economic plan of this sort is the hallmark of true nationhood for an under developed country. Viewed from this point of view, the Indian Five Year Plans could be interpreted as the finest expression of Indian nationalism. India is not doing this in a narrowly nationalistic or autarchic

manner, but in full-blooded co-operation with other countries of the world. International co-operation, with all its political and financial implications, is one of the major assumptions on which the Indian Plans have been made.

While Indian nationalism derived its social and economic content from the objective conditions of Indian society, from the technological changes brought about by the contact with Britain, and from the consciously worked-out reform programme of the Indian National Congress, it was also to a certain extent the product of the particular character of the nationalist movement itself and of the unique method of struggle adopted by it. Had the nationalist movement remained an upper and middle class affair, social and economic ideas would not have invaded it so much, and after independence, nationalism would have, probably, degenerated into a conservative, if not a reactionary, force. Under Mahatma Gandhi, the masses, both urban and rural, were drawn into the national struggle and "political freedom took a new shape... and acquired a new content". When the ordinary man became an active participant in the movement, it was inevitable that attention should be focussed on him and his problems. Thus national freedom came to be interpreted in plain bread-and-butter terms and from the stand point of social equality and economic opportunity. In a country so frightfully poor and illiterate as India, it was not only a matter of high morality but of superb political strategy to have interpreted national independence in this manner. This was the surest way of bringing into the thick of the struggle the ordinary masses without whom the politically conscious intelligentsia would have been but ineffectual angels beating their wings against the bars of the golden cage that was the British Raj.

The Social Democratic Twist

In identifying the Congress with the masses, and national freedom with the betterment of their condition, Gandhiji, in his own way, gave a social democratic twist to the nationalist movement. He did not talk the language of socialism as Pandit Nehru did, but set himself straightaway to the task of ameliorating poverty, disease and ignorance through self-help and self-discipline. He chalked out a programme of constructive action for Con-

gressmen which touched intimately the social and economic aspects of village life. Spinning, sanitation, clean housing, improved agriculture, removal of untouchability, emancipation of women, etc were some of the items that figured in the constructive programme. Despite the outmoded concept of village self-sufficiency and the semi-religious idea of simplicity and austerity, Gandhiji's constructive programme helped to sow in the peasant mind the desire and the will for a better life. One might say that the first tadpole wriggle of the modern kind of desire for progress was produced in village India, strangely enough, under the impact of the Gandhian programme. What he promised the masses were more clothes, more food, more housing, more sanitation, more freedom, and more equality than they possessed at the moment. This is clear from Gandhiji's own picture of an ideal Indian village. "An ideal Indian village", he wrote, "will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation, and built of a material available within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have court-yards enabling households to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free from all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs, and accessible to all. It will have houses for worship for all, and also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central fact, and it will have panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruits and its own khadi". From this, it is clear that Gandhiji visualised all round improvement of the economic and social condition of the masses, even though he did not think of it in modern materialistic terms. In fact India's ambitious Community Development Programme of today would not, in the near future, take the agrarian masses beyond the living standards envisaged by Gandhiji. Those who look upon his teachings as contrary to modern progress forget that in the context of Indian poverty what he was offering the masses was really progress and that, in fact, he aroused in them the desire for a better life and for the good things of life. Gandhiji did not, of course, approve of this desire growing into an enormous appetite,

and his philosophy and programme had almost built into them both a spur and a bridle to this economic appetite. This was, in a peculiar way, a contribution to democracy.

The central problem of democracy in an underdeveloped country is how to persuade the people to go without some of the immediate necessities and delights of life until such time that long-term investment projects have begun to yield economic results. The problem is one of withholding from the people a goodly portion of the fruits of their labour so that it may be ploughed back into the process of development and of capital formation. Could this be done, democratically, in a country where living standards are sub-normal, where national independence has given rise to new demands and expectations, and where political democracy has bestowed on people freedom to agitate for the fulfilment of their aspirations to the point of changing the Government in power? It is in respect of this problem that the Gandhian philosophy of economic austerity and contentment could be of considerable service in preserving democracy. I do not say that Gandhi's philosophy should be used as a kind of non-violent opium of the people. But it certainly has the effect of taking the edge off the economic appetite and mollifying its revolutionary hunger. The actual impact of Gandhian ideas on the masses was one of opening up before them new vistas of social and economic well-being. To this extent Gandhi contributed to the social democratic content of Indian nationalism.

Impact of Non-Violence

It is possible to go a step further and argue that the method of non-violent struggle helped to emphasise the social and economic significance of nationalism. In one of his works Lenin advocated conflict as a method of political education of a backward people. If violent conflict arouses the consciousness of a people, non-violent conflict does it even more deeply, since it is a more prolonged process and is based on the utterly voluntary willingness of individuals to non-cooperate and make sacrifices. The long duration of the Indian struggle, its peacefulness and mass character helped to disseminate on a large scale the ideas inherent in nationalism, and made them gradually mature and gather strength until the whole move-

ment, almost unknowingly, was pushed into an essentially revolutionary path.

From the very beginning Indian nationalism was also impregnated with the idea of political democracy. No one in India will deny the historical fact that it was the association with England that gave India the knowledge of and the desire for democratic institutions. Even though in her ancient villages India was familiar with some kind of local democracy, she had no conception of representative institutions of the modern type. Those institutions were, beyond doubt, imported from abroad and imposed from above. However, as a British writer has observed "The fact that Parliament is in origin a western institution is less significant than the fact that Parliament in India has become an Indian institution." The process of this transformation is the real story of political democracy in India. The impact of Britain created in India a bourgeoisie and an educated elite who provided the necessary context in which such a democratic transformation could take place. But the Indian soil had to be receptive to democracy and it was the nationalist movement that prepared the soil first, and also forced the hesitating pace of British constitution development directing it, irrevocably, towards the road to democracy.

Demand for Democracy

The demand of Indian nationalism was not merely for independence but for the establishment in India of a political system similar to the British Parliamentary system. In fact the earlier generations of educated Indians were enchanted by the Parliament at Westminster, and their faith in the British form of Government was profound, almost pathetic. Besides, the ideas of liberty and the rights of man expounded by the poets and philosophers of England created a ferment in Indian middle-class society. In the early stages all that the Indian National Congress asked for was the extension of these British liberties and opportunities to the English educated Indians. Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee, one of the patriarchs of our nationalism, speaking to the Oxford Union in 1887, said "England is the home of representative institutions which have spread far and wide until the country has justly been called the august mother of free nations. The people of

India are children of that mother, and they claim their birth-right, they claim to be admitted into the rights of British citizens and British fellow subjects." Again, in 1906, we find the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress asking for India the system of Government obtaining in the self-governing colonies. Later on the demand became for Dominion status, and at one time even Gandhiji would have been satisfied with it. The significant point in all this is that what India wanted from the very moment of the dawn of political consciousness was a parliamentary system of Government.

Constituent Assembly

When complete independence was declared as the goal of nationalism, this faith in democracy was re-affirmed even more emphatically. The Declaration of January 26, 1930—a day now hallowed as India's Republic Day—was a challenging assertion of not only the right of national self-determination, but also of the basic democratic right of a people to form or change their Government: "We believe that it is the right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and enjoy the fruits of their toil and have necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of their rights and oppresses them the people will have a further right to alter it or to abolish it" This is, indeed, a revolutionary statement of India's democratic credo framed in such terms as to make it valid not only in the period of struggle against foreign rule, but after the attainment of independence.

The Congress carried this concept further in the 1930's when it demanded a Constituent Assembly for India. Pandit Nehru was the exponent of this idea in India. He thought of it as a sovereign body elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. The Constituent Assembly, strictly speaking, is not a British idea or institution, but one borrowed from the revolutionary politics of America and the European Continent. This is characteristic of the Indian approach to democracy. While modelling the political system after that of Britain, ideas from other sources, be they Western or Indian, were freely incorporated into the concept of democracy.

The nationalist movement had rejected the very idea of Britain giving

India a Constitution. Gandhiji argued that "the Constituent Assembly alone can provide a Constitution indigenous to the country and truly representing the people." In 1936, the Congress adopted a Resolution which said: "The Congress stands for a genuine democratic state in India where power has been transferred to the people as a whole and the Government is under their effective control. Such a State can only come into existence through a Constituent Assembly having the power to determine finally the Constitution of the country." Again, in 1939, the Congress re-affirmed that "a Constituent Assembly is the only democratic method of determining the Constitution of a free country and no one who believes in democracy and freedom can possibly take exception to it." This demand was granted only in 1946 when Britain had already decided to quit India. The significant fact, is that the Constitution of independent India was ultimately made in the democratic manner contemplated by the nationalist movement.

"Legalised Terrorism"

While fighting for national freedom and foreign domination, India was, at the same time, fighting against an autocratic form of Government. Today, there is a tendency abroad to look upon British rule in India as if it was nothing but a tender and considerate system of democratic tutelage. In fact, the entire fabric of British administration, from the Viceroy down to the village headman, was shot through with authoritarianism. Therefore, almost naturally, the nationalist movement grew into a struggle for liberal freedoms and civil liberties, and freedom for the individual, freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of association, became some of the major aspirations of nationalism.

These rights and freedoms derived their original inspiration from Europe and, no doubt, the British were responsible for their dissemination in the Indian Empire. Despite the individualism of the Indian and the long tradition of intellectual and religious freedom behind him, these ideas were new to the politics of India. They were, however, absorbed by the educated middle-classes with such avidity that very soon they were to be restated and reasserted by the nationalist movement in opposition to the administration. It is part of the fundamental contradiction of the British Raj that

it was compelled, in the interests of Empire, to control, and on occasions, to suppress most of the liberal ideas that the British themselves had the historic privilege of introducing in India. The Vernacular Press Act (1786), The Arms Act (1876), the Criminal Law Amendment Act (190E), the Indian Press Act (1910), the Defence of India Act (1915), and the Rowlatt Act (1915) were some of the major undemocratic legislations by which freedom was severely curtailed for political purposes. The Rowlatt Act, which instituted a system of summary political trials, deserves special mention, even though it enjoyed only a short span of life. It was provoked by this Act that Gandhiji launched his first Civil Disobedience movement, making the issue of civil liberties a rallying point for the nation. To these laws must be added the Emergency Ordinances of the Second World War period. Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, admitted in the House of Commons that these ordinances covered "almost every activity of Indian life," Gandhiji called them legalised Government terrorism. Many of the best sons and daughters of India spent the best years of their lives in British jails under one or other of these laws.

Battle for Individual Liberty

Within the larger struggle for national freedom there was, thus, in India a continuous battle for individual rights and civil liberties. This was reflected in the various resolutions and policy statements of the Indian National Congress. In 1918, the Congress proposed a Bill of Rights to be included in the new Constitution. One of the articles was to the effect "that no Indian subject of His Majesty's Government shall be liable to suffer in liberty, life, property, or in respect of free speech or writing or of the right of association, except under sentence of an ordinary Court of Justice, and as a result of lawful and open trial."

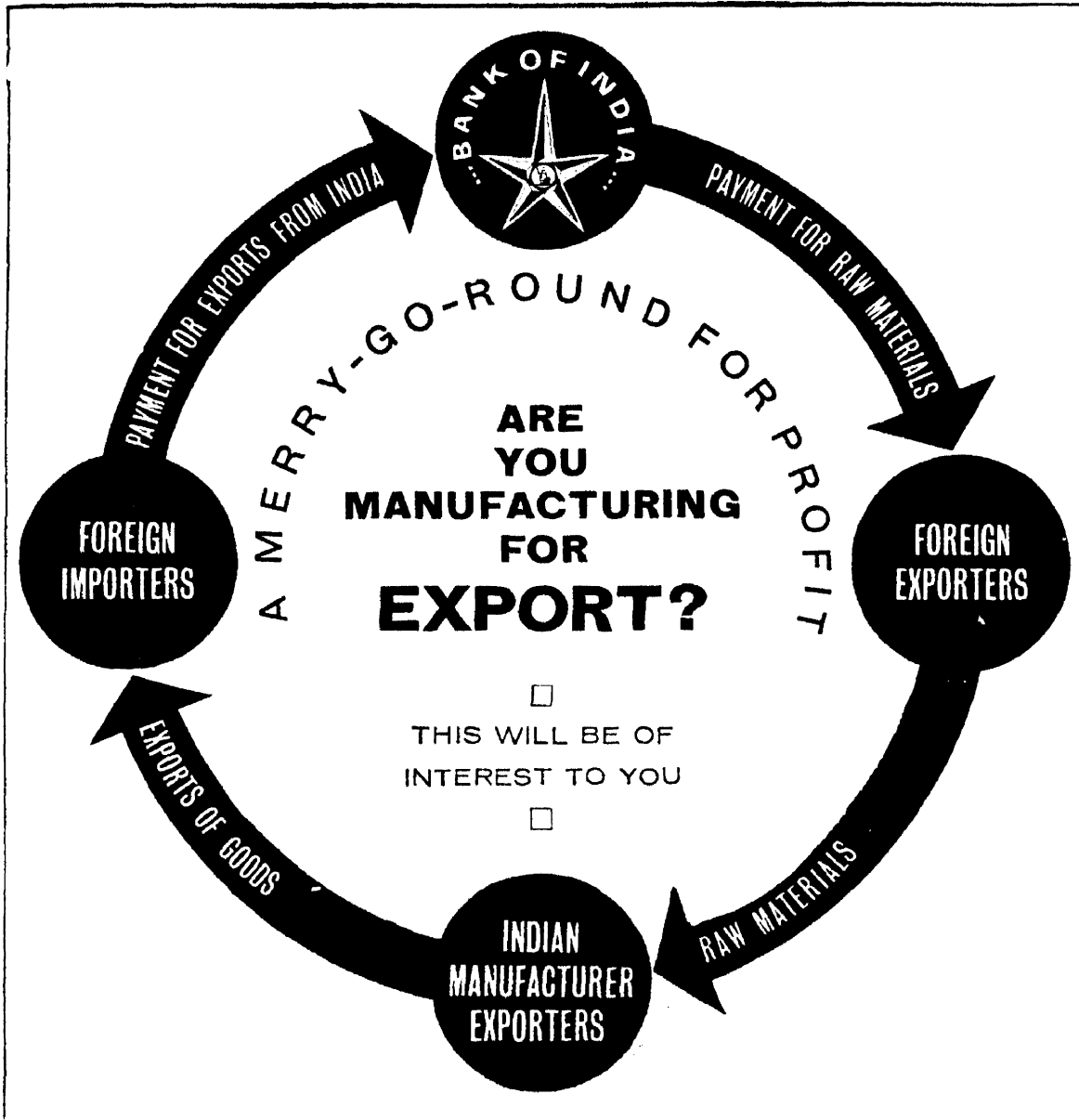
One of the great landmarks in the development of the idea of individual freedom in India was the Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic policy adopted by the All India Congress Committee in 1931. This Resolution, drafted largely by Pandit Nehru, enumerated with passion and clarity of thought, the following Fundamental Rights to be included in a Constitution of India:

"(1) Freedom of association and

combination; (2) Freedom of speech and of the press; (3) Freedom of commercial and free profession and practice of religion, subject to public order and morality; (4) protection of the culture, language and the *scripts* of the minorities; (5) Equal rights and obligations of all citizens without any

bar on account of sex; (6) No disability to attach to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste or creed or sex in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling; (7) Equal rights to all citizens in regard to public roads, wells, schools and other

places of public resort; (8) Right to keep and bear arms in accordance with regulations and reservations made in that behalf; (9) No person shall be deprived of his liberty, nor shall his dwelling or property be entered, sequestered or confiscated save in accordance with law." To these was ad-



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ded religious neutrality on the part of the State, and adult suffrage, and a number of economic and social rights. It is a vindication of the democratic content of Indian nationalism that most of these freedoms were, after independence, enshrined in the Constitution as Fundamental Rights of the citizen.

Democratic Struggle

Political democracy was present in Indian nationalism not only in terms of ideas and aims. It was also inherent in the method of struggle adopted by the nationalist movement. There were, of course, periods of violence and terrorism in the history of the Indian struggle. But these were sporadic and short-lived, and not accepted by the main body of the movement. Until the advent of Gandhiji political agitation was conducted largely through constitutional means, and was confined to public meetings, petitionings, and speech-makings. Under Gandhiji's leadership, the Congress became a mass organisation and the idea of freedom assumed a revolutionary aspect. But even when direct action was advocated constitutional politics were not altogether discarded. While as a matter of basic policy the Congress boycotted the elections and the legislatures, there were also periods when they fought the elections and entered the legislatures and, for a time, assumed office in the Provinces. Whenever the Congress resorted to constitutional politics, it was to wreck the Constitution and not work it, "It was," wrote Nehru referring to the Congress experience of Provincial Autonomy, "the old Constitutional conflict between an autocratic king and parliament which had so often taken place elsewhere, leading to revolutions and oppression of the king. Here the king was in addition a foreign authority supported by foreign military and economic powers and the special interest and lap-dog breed it had created in the country." Therefore, in attempting to wreck from the inside a foreign made Constitution unrepresentative of the people the nationalist party was really moving towards constitutional Government: in the full sense of the term.

The most unique thing about Indian nationalism was the acceptance by it of the non-violent means of struggle. This played a significant role in the development of the democratic method in India. No doubt, non-violent, non-cooperation was an extra-constitutional

technique, and in the hands of Gandhi it was an instrument for the capture of political power, although peacefully. Some of the weapons of direct action like the deliberate defiance of laws, courting of arrests, boycotting of the organs of the State, no-tax campaigns, and fasting for political ends are revolutionary both in conception and execution. The tendency to resort to them has continued even after independence to the detriment of democratic procedures. But there is one great factor that is common to constitutional and non-violent politics — both are peaceful methods. Persuasion and conversion of the other party through peaceful means is the essence of both techniques. Only that non-violence is a more profound approach based not merely on rational persuasion, but also on change-of-heart, on moral conversion. The aim is not to humiliate or destroy your opponent but to win him over. A cause can, therefore, succeed only when it is overwhelmingly right and is pursued with intensity of faith, and without hatred or ill will of the heart. As a result means became all important, the end being the inevitable product. Gandhiji held that ends do not justify the means, and that wrong means do not lead to right ends. Political democracy is nothing if it is not a method of doing things and, therefore, the great emphasis on means must be reckoned as a unique Gandhian contribution to democracy.

One may go a step further and argue that the whole work and philosophy of Gandhi provided for democracy in India a moral and spiritual basis in somewhat the same way as Christianity did for European democracy. The Gandhian movement prepared the Indian soil, socially, morally and psychologically for the growth of democracy. In fact, this preparation was afoot even before the advent of Gandhi, from the time of the Brahma Samaj and other reform movements. What Gandhi did was to cap and carry forward this Reformation of Indian society. For the ordinary man in India the non-violent struggle was an uplifting experience. It showed that an individual, however small, could resist even an Empire with what Gandhi called "soul-force". In other words, it endowed the individual with a sense of dignity, power and challenge. In the Indian context of "pathetic contentment", and fatalistic helplessness this was a stirring idea comparable to the concept of the sovereignty of the

individual conscience that Martin Luther preached in Europe on the eve of the Reformation. Thus, the Congress under Gandhi aroused the consciousness of the Indian and made him aware of his own importance and potentialities. For the masses the nationalist movement was a prolonged and colossal process of education. The democratic value of this can hardly be exaggerated even though it has not been fully appreciated either in India or abroad.

Part of Renaissance Movement

In the preceding paras, I have tried to bring out clearly the ideas of social and political democracy with which Indian nationalism was instinct. But nationalism in India was some thing more than a political, social and economic movement. It was part of a larger Renaissance and Reformation movement. There was a great revival of religions, cultures, languages, arts, etc combined with the spread of scientific knowledge and modern social ideas. This revival, incidentally, threw up a good deal of religious fanaticism and obscurantism that sought to preserve, in the name of religion, many an anti-democratic practice and institution. But the dominant tendency in society was not that of revivalism, but of change. The forces of social change were harnessed to the nationalist movement and, after independence they are, being harnessed to the legislative State that has come into being in India, perhaps for the first time in her history. To a large extent the success of democracy in India would depend on the ability of the State to act as the vehicle of this oncoming social revolution.

Another element of considerable democratic significance present in Indian nationalism was its deep sense of internationalism. From the very beginning India had intimations of belonging to the world community, and participation and cooperation in world affairs was one of her earliest dreams. She not only fought for her own democratic right of independence, but ranged herself on the side of democracy in the world. The Indian National Congress took an uncompromising stand against Fascism and Nazism. and also supported nationalist movements in the colonial territories. The despatch of an Indian Medical Mission to China during the Sino-Japanese war. and of medical and food supplies

to Spain during the Civil War were clear demonstration of the international democratic sympathies of the nationalist movement. Pandit Nehru was the prime mover of these measures. On the outbreak of the War, he drafted a resolution for the Congress Working Committee which said: "In this crisis the sympathies of the Working Committee are entirely with the people who stand for democracy and freedom, and the Congress has separately condemned Fascist aggression in Europe, Africa and the Far East as well as the betrayal of democracy by British imperialism in Czechoslovakia and Spain". During the War, India asked for immediate independence in order that she may mobilise her entire resources on the side of the democracies.

Growth of Internationalism

Pandit Nehru was the passionate and far-sighted advocate of this progressive internationalism. Poet Tagore and Gandhiji also played a predominant role in widening the nationalist horizon and arousing in India a certain world-consciousness. Nehru was, however, the internationalist par excellence. He was sensitive to his fingertips to developments in the outside world, and he had also an enlightened appreciation of the national significance of internationalism. In his "Discovery of India", while discussing the reign of Akbar the Great, Nehru observed that "Akbar might have laid the foundations of social change if his eager, inquisitive mind had turned in that direction and sought to find out what was happening in other parts of the world". Instead, Akbar was pre-occupied with glory and internal consolidation. This inwardness, this lack of lively awareness of developments in the wide world outside, for example, of science and technology and commerce, was one of the reasons for the decline and fall of the Moghul Empire and of India in general. Nehru, therefore, realised that internationalism had an internal significance and the far-flung yet essentially India based, foreign policy he developed after independence bears testimony to this. "Having attained our freedom", Nehru said at the Lahore Congress, "I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world co-operation and federation and will even agree to give up part of her independence to a larger group of which she is an equal member". Mahatma Gandhi stated this internationalism in his own inimitable way when he wrote: "My service

of India includes the service of humanity. Isolated independence is not the goal of the world States. It is voluntary inter-dependence. The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent states, but a federation of friendly inter-dependent states. The consummation of that event may be far off. I want to make no grand claim for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about

our readiness for universal independence' I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence". Indian nationalism was, therefore, no narrow and outworn creed, but a movement that had at its very heart the objectives of political and social democracy, and was constantly stretching its arms towards the ideal of world cooperation and Voluntary inter-dependence¹ of nations



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