

## Nationalism in India

### The First World War, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation

The First World War created a new economic and political situation. It led to a huge increase in defence expenditure which was financed by war loans and increasing taxes: customs duties were raised and income tax introduced. Through the war years prices increased – doubling between 1913 and 1918 – leading to extreme hardship for the common people. Villages were called upon to supply soldiers, and the forced recruitment in rural areas caused widespread anger.

Then in 1918-19 and 1920-21, crops failed in many parts of India, resulting in acute shortages of food. This was accompanied by an influenza epidemic. According to the census of 1921, 12 to 13 million people perished as a result of famines and the epidemic. People hoped that their hardships would end after the war was over. But that did not happen.

### The Idea of Satyagraha

Mahatma Gandhi returned to India in January 1915. Gandhiji had come from South Africa where he had successfully fought the racist regime with a novel method of mass agitation, which he called satyagraha. The idea of satyagraha emphasised the power of truth and the need to search for truth. It suggested that if the cause was true, if the struggle was against injustice, then physical force was not necessary to fight the oppressor. Without seeking vengeance or being aggressive, a satyagrahi could win the battle through nonviolence. This could be done by appealing to the conscience of the oppressor. People – including the oppressors – had to be persuaded to see the truth, instead of being forced to accept truth through the use of violence. By this struggle, truth was bound to ultimately triumph. Mahatma Gandhi believed that this dharma of non-violence could unite all Indians.

After arriving in India, Mahatma Gandhi successfully organized satyagraha movements in various places. In 1916 he travelled to Champaran in Bihar to inspire the peasants to struggle against the oppressive plantation system. Then in 1917, he organised a satyagraha to support the peasants of the Kheda district of Gujarat. Affected by crop failure and a plague epidemic, the peasants of Kheda could not pay the revenue, and were demanding that revenue collection be relaxed. In 1918, Mahatma Gandhi went to Ahmedabad to organize a satyagraha movement amongst cotton mill workers.

### The Rowlatt Act(1919)

This Act had been hurriedly passed through the Imperial Legislative Council despite the united opposition of the Indian members. It gave the government enormous powers to repress political activities, and allowed detention of political prisoners without trial for two years.

Gandhiji in 1919 decided to launch a nationwide satyagraha against the proposed Rowlatt Act (1919). Mahatma Gandhi wanted non-violent civil disobedience against such unjust laws, which would start with a hartal on 6 April.

Rallies were organised in various cities, workers went on strike in railway workshops, and shops closed down. Alarmed by the popular upsurge, and scared that lines of communication such as the railways and telegraph would be disrupted, the British administration decided to clamp down on nationalists. Local leaders were picked up from Amritsar, and Mahatma Gandhi was barred from entering Delhi.

## Jallianwalla Bagh

On 10 April, the police in Amritsar fired upon a peaceful procession, provoking widespread attacks on banks, post offices and railway stations. Martial law was imposed and General Dyer took command.

On 13 April the infamous Jallianwalla Bagh incident took place. On that day a crowd of villagers who had come to Amritsar to attend a fair gathered in the enclosed ground of Jallianwalla Bagh. Being from outside the city, they were unaware of the martial law that had been imposed. Dyer entered the area, blocked the exit points, and opened fire on the crowd, killing hundreds. His object, as he declared later, was to 'produce a moral effect', to create in the minds of satyagrahis a feeling of terror and awe. As the news of Jallianwalla Bagh spread, crowds took to the streets in many north Indian towns. There were strikes, clashes with the police and attacks on government buildings. The government responded with brutal repression, seeking to humiliate and terrorise people: satyagrahis were forced to rub their noses on the ground, crawl on the streets, and do salaam (salute) to all sahibs; people were flogged and villages were bombed. Seeing violence spread, Mahatma Gandhi called off the movement.

### Need of Wider Spread of Movement

While the Rowlatt satyagraha had been a widespread movement, it was still limited mostly to cities and towns. Mahatma Gandhi now felt the need to launch a more broad-based movement in India. But he was certain that no such movement could be organised without bringing the Hindus and Muslims closer together. One way of doing this, he felt, was to take up the Khilafat issue. The First World War had ended with the defeat of Ottoman Turkey. And there were rumours that a harsh peace treaty was going to be imposed on the Ottoman emperor – the spiritual head of the Islamic world (the Khalifa). To defend the Khalifa's temporal powers, a Khilafat Committee was formed in Bombay in March 1919. A young generation of Muslim leaders like the brothers Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, began discussing with Mahatma Gandhi about the possibility of a united mass action on the issue. Gandhiji saw this as an opportunity to bring Muslims under the umbrella of a unified national movement. At the Calcutta session of the Congress in September 1920, he convinced other leaders of the need to start a non-cooperation movement in support of Khilafat as well as for swaraj.

### Non-cooperation Movement

In his famous book *Hind Swaraj* (1909) Mahatma Gandhi declared that British rule was established in India with the cooperation of Indians, and had survived only because of this cooperation. If Indians refused to cooperate, British rule in India would collapse within a year, and swaraj would come.

Gandhiji proposed that the movement should unfold in stages. It should begin with the surrender of titles that the government awarded, and a boycott of civil services, army, police, courts and legislative councils, schools, and foreign goods. Then, in case the government used repression, a full civil disobedience campaign would be launched. Through the summer of 1920 Mahatma Gandhi and Shaukat Ali toured extensively, mobilising popular support for the movement. Many within the Congress were, however, concerned about the proposals. They were reluctant to boycott the council elections scheduled for November 1920, and they feared that the movement might lead to popular violence. In the months between September and December there was an intense tussle within the Congress. For a while there seemed no meeting point between the supporters and the opponents of the movement. Finally, at the Congress session at Nagpur in December 1920, a compromise was worked out and the Non-Cooperation programme was adopted.

**Differing Strands within the Movement:** The Non-Cooperation-Khilafat Movement began in January 1921. Various social groups participated in this movement, each with its own specific aspiration. All of them responded to the call of Swaraj, but the term meant different things to different people.

**The Movement in the Towns:** The movement started with middle-class participation in the cities. Thousands of students left government-controlled schools and colleges, headmasters and teachers resigned, and lawyers gave up their legal practices. The council elections were boycotted in most provinces except Madras, where the Justice Party, the party of the non-Brahmans, felt that entering the council was one way of gaining some power – something that usually only Brahmans had access to. The effects of non-cooperation on the economic front were more dramatic. Foreign goods were boycotted, liquor shops picketed, and foreign cloth burnt in huge bonfires. The import of foreign cloth halved between 1921 and 1922, its value dropping from Rs 102 crore to Rs 57 crore. In many places merchants and traders refused to trade in foreign goods or finance foreign trade. As the boycott movement spread, and people began discarding imported clothes and wearing only Indian ones, production of Indian textile mills and handlooms went up.

**Reasons for Slowdown of Movement:** But this movement in the cities gradually slowed down for a variety of reasons. Khadi cloth was often more expensive than mass-produced mill cloth and poor people could not afford to buy it. How then could they boycott mill cloth for too long? Similarly the boycott of British institutions posed a problem. For the movement to be successful, alternative Indian institutions had to be set up so that they could be used in place of the British ones. These were slow to come up. So students and teachers began trickling back to government schools and lawyers joined back work in government courts.

**Rebellion in the Countryside:** From the cities, the Non-Cooperation Movement spread to the countryside. It drew into its fold the struggles of peasants and tribals which were developing in different parts of India in the years after the war.

### **Awadh**

In Awadh, peasants were led by Baba Ramchandra – a sanyasi who had earlier been to Fiji as an indentured labourer. The movement here was against talukdars and landlords who demanded from peasants exorbitantly high rents and a variety of other cesses. Peasants had to do begar and work at landlords' farms without any payment. As tenants they had no security of tenure, being regularly evicted so that they could acquire no right over the leased land. The peasant movement demanded reduction of revenue, abolition of begar, and social boycott of oppressive landlords. In many places nai – dhobi bandhs were organised by panchayats to deprive landlords of the services of even barbers and washermen. In June 1920, Jawaharlal Nehru began going around the villages in Awadh, talking to the villagers, and trying to understand their grievances. By October, the Oudh Kisan Sabha was set up headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Baba Ramchandra and a few others. Within a month, over 300 branches had been set up in the villages around the region. So when the Non-Cooperation Movement began the following year, the effort of the Congress was to integrate the Awadh peasant struggle into the wider struggle. The peasant movement, however, developed in forms that the Congress leadership was unhappy with. As the movement spread in 1921, the houses of talukdars and merchants were attacked, bazaars were looted, and grain hoards were taken over. In many places local leaders told peasants that Gandhiji had declared that no taxes were to be paid and land was to be redistributed among the poor. The name of the Mahatma was being invoked to sanction all action and aspirations.

### **Tribal Peasants**

Tribal peasants interpreted the message of Mahatma Gandhi and the idea of swaraj in yet another way. In the Gudem Hills of Andhra Pradesh, for instance, a militant guerrilla movement spread in the early 1920s – not a form of struggle that the Congress could approve. Here, as in other forest regions, the colonial government had closed large forest areas, preventing people from entering the forests to graze their cattle, or to collect fuelwood and fruits. This enraged the hill people. Not only were their livelihoods affected but they felt that their traditional rights were being denied. When the government began forcing them to contribute beggar for road building, the hill people revolted. The person who came to lead them was an interesting figure. Alluri Sitaram Raju claimed that he had a variety of special powers: he could make correct astrological predictions and heal people, and he could survive even bullet shots. Captivated by Raju, the rebels proclaimed that he was an incarnation of God. Raju talked of the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi, said he was inspired by the Non-Cooperation Movement, and persuaded people to wear khadi and give up drinking. But at the same time he asserted that India could be liberated only by the use of force, not non-violence. The Gudem rebels attacked police stations, attempted to kill British officials and carried on guerrilla warfare for achieving swaraj. Raju was captured and executed in 1924, and over time became a folk hero.

### **Swaraj in the Plantations**

Workers too had their own understanding of Mahatma Gandhi and the notion of swaraj. For plantation workers in Assam, freedom meant the right to move freely in and out of the confined space in which they were enclosed, and it meant retaining a link with the village from which they had come. Under the Inland Emigration Act of 1859, plantation workers were not permitted to leave the tea gardens without permission, and in fact they were rarely given such permission. When they heard of the Non-Cooperation Movement, thousands of workers defied the authorities, left the plantations and headed home. They believed that Gandhi Raj was coming and everyone would be given land in their own villages. They, however, never reached their destination. Stranded on the way by a railway and steamer strike, they were caught by the police and brutally beaten up.

The visions of these movements were not defined by the Congress programme. They interpreted the term swaraj in their own ways, imagining it to be a time when all suffering and all troubles would be over. Yet, when the tribals chanted Gandhiji's name and raised slogans demanding 'Swatantra Bharat', they were also emotionally relating to an all-India agitation. When they acted in the name of Mahatma Gandhi, or linked their movement to that of the Congress, they were identifying with a movement which went beyond the limits of their immediate locality.

### **Civil Disobedience Movement**

In February 1922, Mahatma Gandhi decided to withdraw the Non-Cooperation Movement. He felt the movement was turning violent in many places and satyagrahis needed to be properly trained before they would be ready for mass struggles. Within the Congress, some leaders were by now tired of mass struggles and wanted to participate in elections to the provincial councils that had been set up by the Government of India Act of 1919. They felt that it was important to oppose British policies within the councils, argue for reform and also demonstrate that these councils were not truly democratic. C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party within the Congress to argue for a return to council politics. But younger leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose pressed for more radical mass agitation and for full independence. In such a situation of internal debate and dissension two factors again shaped Indian politics towards the late 1920s. The first was the effect of the worldwide economic depression. Agricultural prices began to fall from 1926 and collapsed after 1930. As the demand for agricultural goods fell and exports declined, peasants found it difficult to sell their harvests and pay their revenue. By 1930, the countryside was in turmoil.

## Simon Commission

Against this background the new Tory government in Britain constituted a Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon. Set up in response to the nationalist movement, the commission was to look into the functioning of the constitutional system in India and suggest changes. The problem was that the commission did not have a single Indian member. They were all British.

When the Simon Commission arrived in India in 1928, it was greeted with the slogan 'Go back Simon'. All parties, including the Congress and the Muslim League, participated in the demonstrations. In an effort to win them over, the viceroy, Lord Irwin, announced in October 1929, a vague offer of 'dominion status' for India in an unspecified future, and a Round Table Conference to discuss a future constitution.

This did not satisfy the Congress leaders. The radicals within the Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, became more assertive. The liberals and moderates, who were proposing a constitutional system within the framework of British dominion, gradually lost their influence. In December 1929, under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Lahore Congress formalised the demand of 'Purna Swaraj' or full independence for India. It was declared that 26 January 1930, would be celebrated as the Independence Day when people were to take a pledge to struggle for complete independence. But the celebrations attracted very little attention. So Mahatma Gandhi had to find a way to relate this abstract idea of freedom to more concrete issues of everyday life.

## Salt March

Mahatma Gandhi found in salt a powerful symbol that could unite the nation. On 31 January 1930, he sent a letter to Viceroy Irwin stating eleven demands. Some of these were of general interest; others were specific demands of different classes, from industrialists to peasants. The idea was to make the demands wide-ranging, so that all classes within Indian society could identify with them and everyone could be brought together in a united campaign. The most stirring of all was the demand to abolish the salt tax. Salt was something consumed by the rich and the poor alike, and it was one of the most essential items of food. The tax on salt and the government monopoly over its production, Mahatma Gandhi declared, revealed the most oppressive face of British rule.

Mahatma Gandhi's letter was, in a way, an ultimatum. If the demands were not fulfilled by 11 March, the letter stated, the Congress would launch a civil disobedience campaign. Irwin was unwilling to negotiate. So Mahatma Gandhi started his famous salt march accompanied by 78 of his trusted volunteers. The march was over 240 miles, from Gandhiji's ashram in Sabarmati to the Gujarati coastal town of Dandi. The volunteers walked for 24 days, about 10 miles a day. Thousands came to hear Mahatma Gandhi wherever he stopped, and he told them what he meant by swaraj and urged them to peacefully defy the British. On 6 April he reached Dandi, and ceremonially violated the law, manufacturing salt by boiling sea water.

This marked the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement. This was altogether different from the Non-cooperation Movement. People were now asked not only to refuse cooperation with the British, as they had done in 1921-22, but also to break colonial laws. Thousands in different parts of the country broke the salt law, manufactured salt and demonstrated in front of government salt factories. As the movement spread, foreign cloth was boycotted, and liquor shops were picketed. Peasants refused to pay revenue and chaukidari taxes, village officials resigned, and in many places forest people violated forest laws – going into Reserved Forests to collect wood and graze cattle.

## Response of British Rulers

Worried by the developments, the colonial government began arresting the Congress leaders one by one. This led to violent clashes in many places. When Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a devout disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, was arrested in April 1930, angry crowds demonstrated in the streets of Peshawar, facing armoured cars and police firing. Many were killed. A month later, when Mahatma Gandhi himself was arrested, industrial workers in Sholapur attacked police posts, municipal buildings, lawcourts and railway stations – all structures that symbolised British rule. A frightened government responded with a policy of brutal repression. Peaceful satyagrahis were attacked, women and children were beaten, and about 100,000 people were arrested.

## Round Table Conference

In such a situation, Mahatma Gandhi once again decided to call off the movement and entered into a pact with Irwin on 5 March 1931. By this Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Gandhiji consented to participate in a Round Table Conference (the Congress had boycotted the first Round Table Conference) in London and the government agreed to release the political prisoners. In December 1931, Gandhiji went to London for the conference, but the negotiations broke down and he returned disappointed. Back in India, he discovered that the government had begun a new cycle of repression. Ghaffar Khan and Jawaharlal Nehru were both in jail, the Congress had been declared illegal, and a series of measures had been imposed to prevent meetings, demonstrations and boycotts. With great apprehension, Mahatma Gandhi relaunched the Civil Disobedience Movement. For over a year, the movement continued, but by 1934 it lost its momentum.

## People's Perception of the Movement

### Farmers

In the countryside, rich peasant communities – like the Patidars of Gujarat and the Jats of Uttar Pradesh – were active in the movement. Being producers of commercial crops, they were very hard hit by the trade depression and falling prices. As their cash income disappeared, they found it impossible to pay the government's revenue demand. And the refusal of the government to reduce the revenue demand led to widespread resentment. These rich peasants became enthusiastic supporters of the Civil Disobedience Movement, organising their communities, and at times forcing reluctant members, to participate in the boycott programmes. For them the fight for swaraj was a struggle against high revenues. But they were deeply disappointed when the movement was called off in 1931 without the revenue rates being revised. So when the movement was restarted in 1932, many of them refused to participate. The poorer peasantry were not just interested in the lowering of the revenue demand. Many of them were small tenants cultivating land they had rented from landlords. As the Depression continued and cash incomes dwindled, the small tenants found it difficult to pay their rent. They wanted the unpaid rent to the landlord to be remitted. They joined a variety of radical movements, often led by Socialists and Communists. Apprehensive of raising issues that might upset the rich peasants and landlords, the Congress was unwilling to support 'no rent' campaigns in most places. So the relationship between the poor peasants and the Congress remained uncertain.

### Businessmen

During the First World War, Indian merchants and industrialists had made huge profits and become powerful (see Chapter 5). Keen on expanding their business, they now reacted against colonial policies that restricted business activities. They wanted protection against imports of foreign goods,

and a rupee-sterling foreign exchange ratio that would discourage imports. To organise business interests, they formed the Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress in 1920 and the Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) in 1927. Led by prominent industrialists like Purshottamdas Thakurdas and G. D. Birla, the industrialists attacked colonial control over the Indian economy, and supported the Civil Disobedience Movement when it was first launched. They gave financial assistance and refused to buy or sell imported goods. Most businessmen came to see swaraj as a time when colonial restrictions on business would no longer exist and trade and industry would flourish without constraints. But after the failure of the Round Table Conference, business groups were no longer uniformly enthusiastic. They were apprehensive of the spread of militant activities, and worried about prolonged disruption of business, as well as of the growing influence of socialism amongst the younger members of the Congress.

## **Industrial Workers**

The industrial working classes did not participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement in large numbers, except in the Nagpur region. As the industrialists came closer to the Congress, workers stayed aloof. But in spite of that, some workers did participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement, selectively adopting some of the ideas of the Gandhian programme, like boycott of foreign goods, as part of their own movements against low wages and poor working conditions. There were strikes by railway workers in 1930 and dockworkers in 1932. In 1930 thousands of workers in Chotanagpur tin mines wore Gandhi caps and participated in protest rallies and boycott campaigns. But the Congress was reluctant to include workers' demands as part of its programme of struggle. It felt that this would alienate industrialists and divide the anti-imperial forces.

## **Women's Participation**

Another important feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the large-scale participation of women. During Gandhiji's salt march, thousands of women came out of their homes to listen to him. They participated in protest marches, manufactured salt, and picketed foreign cloth and liquor shops. Many went to jail. In urban areas these women were from high-caste families; in rural areas they came from rich peasant households. Moved by Gandhiji's call, they began to see service to the nation as a sacred duty of women. Yet, this increased public role did not necessarily mean any radical change in the way the position of women was visualised. Gandhiji was convinced that it was the duty of women to look after home and hearth, be good mothers and good wives. And for a long time the Congress was reluctant to allow women to hold any position of authority within the organisation. It was keen only on their symbolic presence.

## **The Limits of Civil Disobedience**

### **Participation of Dalits**

Not all social groups were moved by the abstract concept of swaraj. One such group was the nation's 'untouchables', who from around the 1930s had begun to call themselves dalit or oppressed. For long the Congress had ignored the dalits, for fear of offending the sanatanis, the conservative high-caste Hindus. But Mahatma Gandhi declared that swaraj would not come for a hundred years if untouchability was not eliminated. He called the 'untouchables' harijan, or the children of God, organised satyagraha to secure them entry into temples, and access to public wells, tanks, roads and schools. He himself cleaned toilets to dignify the work of the bhangi (the sweepers), and persuaded upper castes to change their heart and give up 'the sin of untouchability'. But many dalit leaders were keen on a different political solution to the problems of the community.

They began organising themselves, demanding reserved seats in educational institutions, and a separate electorate that would choose dalit members for legislative councils. Political empowerment, they believed, would resolve the problems of their social disabilities. Dalit participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement was therefore limited, particularly in the Maharashtra and Nagpur region where their organisation was quite strong.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar, who organised the dalits into the Depressed Classes Association in 1930, clashed with Mahatma Gandhi at the second Round Table Conference by demanding separate electorates for dalits. When the British government conceded Ambedkar's demand, Gandhiji began a fast unto death. He believed that separate electorates for dalits would slow down the process of their integration into society. Ambedkar ultimately accepted Gandhiji's position and the result was the Poona Pact of September 1932. It gave the Depressed Classes (later to be known as the Schedule Castes) reserved seats in provincial and central legislative councils, but they were to be voted in by the general electorate. The dalit movement, however, continued to be apprehensive of the Congress-led national movement.

### **Participation of Muslims**

Some of the Muslim political organisations in India were also lukewarm in their response to the Civil Disobedience Movement. After the decline of the Non-Cooperation-Khilafat movement, a large section of Muslims felt alienated from the Congress. From the mid-1920s the Congress came to be more visibly associated with openly Hindu religious nationalist groups like the Hindu Mahasabha. As relations between Hindus and Muslims worsened, each community organised religious processions with militant fervour, provoking Hindu-Muslim communal clashes and riots in various cities. Every riot deepened the distance between the two communities.

The Congress and the Muslim League made efforts to renegotiate an alliance, and in 1927 it appeared that such a unity could be forged. The important differences were over the question of representation in the future assemblies that were to be elected. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, one of the leaders of the Muslim League, was willing to give up the demand for separate electorates, if Muslims were assured reserved seats in the Central Assembly and representation in proportion to population in the Muslim-dominated provinces (Bengal and Punjab). Negotiations over the question of representation continued but all hope of resolving the issue at the All Parties Conference in 1928 disappeared when M.R. Jayakar of the Hindu Mahasabha strongly opposed efforts at compromise. When the Civil Disobedience Movement started there was thus an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust between communities.

### **The Sense of Collective Belonging**

Nationalism spreads when people begin to believe that they are all part of the same nation, when they discover some unity that binds them together. This sense of collective belonging came partly through the experience of united struggles. But there were also a variety of cultural processes through which nationalism captured people's imagination. History and fiction, folklore and songs, popular prints and symbols, all played a part in the making of nationalism.

### **Nation Depicted in Images**

The identity of the nation is most often symbolised in a figure or image. This helps create an image with which people can identify the nation. It was in the twentieth century, with the growth of nationalism, that the identity of India came to be visually associated with the image of Bharat Mata. The image was first created by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. In the 1870s he wrote 'Vande



Mataram' as a hymn to the motherland. Later it was included in his novel Anandamath and widely sung during the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. Moved by the Swadeshi movement, Abanindranath Tagore painted his famous image of Bharat Mata. In this painting Bharat Mata is portrayed as an ascetic figure; she is calm, composed, divine and spiritual. In subsequent years, the image of Bharat Mata acquired many different forms, as it circulated in popular prints, and was painted by different artists. Devotion to this mother figure came to be seen as evidence of one's nationalism.

## **Folklores**

Ideas of nationalism also developed through a movement to revive Indian folklore. In late-nineteenth-century India, nationalists began recording folk tales sung by bards and they toured villages to gather folk songs and legends. These tales, they believed, gave a true picture of traditional culture that had been corrupted and damaged by outside forces. It was essential to preserve this folk tradition in order to discover one's national identity and restore a sense of pride in one's past. In Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore himself began collecting ballads, nursery rhymes and myths, and led the movement for folk revival. In Madras, Natesa Sastri published a massive four-volume collection of Tamil folk tales, The Folklore of Southern India. He believed that folklore was national literature; it was 'the most trustworthy manifestation of people's real thoughts and characteristics'

## **National Flag**

As the national movement developed, nationalist leaders became more and more aware of such icons and symbols in unifying people and inspiring in them a feeling of nationalism. During the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, a tricolour flag (red, green and yellow) was designed. It had eight lotuses representing eight provinces of British India, and a crescent moon, representing Hindus and Muslims. By 1921, Gandhiji had designed the Swaraj flag. It was again a tricolour (red, green and white) and had a spinning wheel in the centre, representing the Gandhian ideal of self-help. Carrying the flag, holding it aloft, during marches became a symbol of defiance.

## **Reinterpretation of History**

Another means of creating a feeling of nationalism was through reinterpretation of history. By the end of the nineteenth century many Indians began feeling that to instill a sense of pride in the nation, Indian history had to be thought about differently. The British saw Indians as backward and primitive, incapable of governing themselves. In response, Indians began looking into the past to discover India's great achievements. They wrote about the glorious developments in ancient times when art and architecture, science and mathematics, religion and culture, law and philosophy, crafts and trade had flourished. This glorious time, in their view, was followed by a history of decline, when India was colonised. These nationalist histories urged the readers to take pride in India's great achievements in the past and struggle to change the miserable conditions of life under British rule.

These efforts to unify people were not without problems. When the past being glorified was Hindu, when the images celebrated were drawn from Hindu iconography, then people of other communities felt left out.