

A.R. Desai (1915-1994)

A.R. Desai or Akshay Ramanlal Desai (1915-1994) was born on April 16, 1915 at Nadiad, central Gujarat, into a Nagar Brahmin family. Like the Kayastha of North India, the Nagar is a writer-professional caste whose members are largely administrators in public and private sectors, self employed professionals and intellectuals. Kailashben, his mother, died when he was very young. His father, 'Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai, was a renowned litterateur, whose novels motivated Gujarati youth in the thirties to undertake rural development work for social transformation. As an officer in the Baroda State, he was required to travel extensively to meet people from various strata. This turned out to be an advantage not only to Ramanlal in writing his novels, but also for his son who was sensitive and keen on learning about his own society.

A.R. Desai learned the lessons of Fabian socialism from his father in his formative years. He actively participated in student movements in Baroda, Surat and Bombay, where he pursued his college education. In fact, he was suspended from Baroda college for organizing a strike. He graduated with economics and politics from the University of Bombay. Later, he earned a law degree and Ph.D. in sociology under Professor G.S. Ghurye from the same university in 1946. Desai's studies did not deter him from taking part in political activities. He got involved in the labour front and organized a trade union of Bombay Electricity Supply and Transport workers, dock workers, glass workers in Bombay. During this period he came in contact with student activist Neera Desai. They married in 1947. Neera Desai, sociologist in her own right, has done pioneering work in developing feminist studies. Both of them have influenced each other in their political and academic life.

C.G. Shah, "the most learned Marxist in Bombay" during the thirties and forties, and one of the ideologues of the communist movement, influenced Desai the most. Desai had become a member of the Communist Party of India in 1934, but the inner bureaucratic structure of the Party suffocated him. Along with Shah, he opposed the change in the stand of the party towards supporting the British war effort in India when the Soviet Union was attacked by German Nazi forces. He resigned from the party in 1939. During this period, Leon Trotsky's writings, particularly *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1932) and *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937), and other works, along with the works of Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, Kautsky, Bukharin, Maurice Dobb, influenced his thinking. He became a Trotskyist and got involved with the Fourth International.

The Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) attracted him and he became a member of that Party in 1953. He regularly contributed to *The Call*, the party's

journal, and tried to expound Trotskyist ideas in the context of the Indian situation. But slowly, his writings were ‘censored’ by the editor when they were inconvenient to the Party leadership. Having realized that the RSP had abjured its ‘revolutionary’ perspective and was pursuing ‘reformist parliamentary’ politics, and that it was difficult for him to pursue a Trotskyist line within the Party, he resigned from the Party in 1981.

While working in the student and trade union movements in the thirties, Desai realized a need not only for studying the Indian situation but also for writing in a widely known regional language to influence the masses. His first pamphlet was on agrarian indebtedness, published in 1938. And he had been editing and publishing booklets regularly, both in English and Gujarati, for which he taps his own meagre financial resources. He had written or edited and published more than two dozen booklets under the auspices of the C.G. Shah Memorial Trust. Along with C.G. Shah, he launched the journal *Red Star* in the late thirties, which continued for a year or so. Later he edited single handedly the Gujarati bi-monthly journal *Padkar*, meaning ‘Challenge.

Desai began his academic career as a lecturer in sociology at Siddharth College in Bombay in 1946 and officially joined the Department of Sociology of Bombay University as a lecturer in 1951 when the influence of the Bombay school of sociology under G.S. Ghurye was declining. By the time he became a Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology in the University of Bombay in 1969, the centre of academic power had shifted from Bombay to Delhi, as the subject became institutionalized in the context of post independence developments in higher education. He retired from the University in 1976. He was appointed as a Senior Fellow and a National Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi from 1973 to 1975 and from 1981 to 1985, respectively. He was the president of the Indian Sociological Society (1980-1981) and the Gujarat Sociological Society (1988-90). He died on November 12, 1994 at Baroda in Gujarat.

Desai has an extensive bibliography and his work and his ideas are accessible in a variety of publications that range from books and edited works to pamphlets available also in regional languages. In these publications, he explores the relationship between nationalism and the growth of classes in India; the nature of the post independence Indian state and its role in fashioning capitalism; changes in agrarian society during colonialism and the post independence period; the nature and growth of the workers’ movement; new forms of urbanisation with special reference to slums; new developments in Indian politics including the political use of caste and religion by communalism; and lastly, the growth of the Rights

movement in India - in effect an entire range of issues and questions dealing with the transition from feudalism to capitalism in India.

A. R. Desai was first and foremost a Marxist and then a sociologist and a teacher. It was his interpretation of Marxism as a perspective that understands and explains the specific Indian context in relation to a general Marxist theory of classes that defined the contours of his sociology and his pedagogic practices. In his magnum opus *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Desai was concerned with understanding feudal production relations, their role and transformation, emergence of capitalist relationships and nationalist forces. The questions how and why nationalism developed in India led him to write this volume. [Please note that initially *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* was submitted as a doctoral thesis in 1946 and was first published in 1948 by the Bombay University Press as part of the Sociology Series under the general editorship of G.S. Ghurye.]

Before proceeding further, I would like to recapitulate Karl Marx's concept of historical materialism as explained by Friedrich Engels. According to Friedrich Engels, historical materialism "designates that view of the course of history, which seeks the ultimate causes and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, with the consequent division of society into distinct classes and the struggles of these classes."

Historical materialism is thus both, a perspective as well as the methodology. As a perspective, it looks for the causes of development and change in human society in the material conditions or the economic structure of society. As a methodology, it seeks to examine the social structure and explain social change in terms of the dialectical movement of forces of production and relations of production in the mode of production of a given society.

Desai applied historical materialism approach to understand the emergence of nationalism in Indian society. In his historical materialistic interpretation of Indian society Desai examines the nature of feudal production relations in the pre-British Indian economy and their consequent change and transformation resulting from the colonial policies after the British conquest of India. He further argues that the political unification and capitalistic transformation of the predominantly rural and self-sufficient economy led to the emergence of new classes in Indian society whose interests were at variance and mutually opposed to the interests of British imperialism. This conflict of interests manifested itself in the freedom struggle of Indians against the British which got ultimately resolved with India gaining independence.

According to Desai, nationalism is a historical category. Its development has to be understood in the context of the social and cultural history of the respective country. Desai argues that nationalism emerged in the social world at a certain stage of evolution of the life of the community when certain socio-historical conditions, both objective and subjective, matured. Before national communities, national societies, national states, and national cultures came into existence, communities in various parts of the world generally lived through tribal, slave, and feudal phases of social existence. At a certain stage of social, economic, and cultural development, nations came into being. They were generally distinguished from non-national communities of previous periods of social existence by certain specific characteristics such as an organic welding of the members of the nation, living in a distinct territory within a single economy, so that they felt conscious of common economic existence; generally one common language used by them; and further, a similar psychological structure among its members and a common culture evolved by it. Though an ideal nation possessing all these traits in a state of fullest development remained an abstraction (since the elements of the past always survived, in varying degrees, in the economy, social structure, psychological habits, and culture, of any nation), still, from the sixteenth century onward, national communities, in different stages of national consolidation, have appeared in the amphitheatre of human history.

Indian nationalism, a modern phenomenon, is the product of a number of objective and subjective forces which have evolved since the beginning of the nineteenth century. It has emerged amidst social and religious diversities, territorial vastness and powerful traditions and institutions. The central thesis of his book is that British rule destroyed the pre-capitalist forms of production relations and introduced modern capitalist property relationships, which paved the way for the rise of nationalism. But Indian nationalism emerged, Desai argues,

“under conditions of political subjection of the Indian people by the British. The advanced British nation, for its own purpose, radically changed the economic structure of the Indian society, established a centralized state, and introduced modern education, modern means of communications, and other institutions. This resulted in the growth of new social classes and the unleashing of new social forces, unique in themselves. These social forces by their very nature came into conflict with British Imperialism and became the basis of and provided motive power for the rise and development of Indian nationalism.”

A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*

According to Desai, the history of the rise of national sentiment in India is closely bound up with the growth of a unified national economy. This unification took place as a result of the destruction of former pre-capitalist forms of production prevailing in India and the substitution, in their place, of the modern capitalist

economic forms. Thus Desai begins with elaborating the characteristic features of the pre-British, feudal and agrarian Indian economy.

Desai argues that a self-sufficient village, based on agriculture carried on with the primitive plough and bullock-power and handicrafts by means of simple instruments, was a basic feature of pre-British Indian society. The self-sufficient village as the basic economic unit had existed for centuries in India and, except for some minor modifications, had survived till the advent of the British rule, in spite of all political convulsions, religious upheavals and devastating wars. It stood impregnable in face of all foreign invasions, dynastic changes, all violent territorial shiftings in inter-state struggles. Kingdoms rose and collapsed but the self-sufficient village survived.

“The village communities are little republics having nearly everything that they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last within themselves where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mogul, Maratha, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same.”

-Sir Charles Metcalfe

The village population was mainly composed of peasants. The village committee, representing the village community which was the *de facto* owner of the village land, distributed this land among the peasant families in the form of holdings. Each holding was cultivated by the peasant family by means of the collective labour of its members and with the aid of the primitive plough and bullocks. The peasant family enjoyed a traditional hereditary right to possess and cultivate its holding from generation to generation.

Desai, here, highlights a key distinguishing feature between Indian and European feudalism. Indian feudalism was distinguished from European feudalism by the fact that, under it, no private property in land existed. “In the Hindu period, the land belonged to the village community, and was never regarded as the property of the king.” The king or his intermediary claimed only a part of the produce of the land, a claim which was met by the village committee as the representative of the village community. “The state had merely a right to a share always paid in kind. Under the Moslems, the existing tenures and tax system were adopted with some modifications.” Since neither the king, nor the intermediaries were owners of the land, all conflicts which took place among rulers, or between them and the intermediaries or the village community; were only over the magnitude of the share of the village produce. Conforming to the traditional concept and practice, neither the king nor the intermediary expropriated the village community of the possession and control of the village land and established their

property rights over it or concerned themselves with the methods of cultivation. They were conflicts for the right or power to get a payment from the peasant, not to seize his land.

European history, on the contrary, reveals a conflict between the peasantry and the manorial lords because the latter not only demanded a share of the produce, but desired to retain a particular method of cultivation—by forced labour—or to introduce new methods of cultivation (enclosure, large-scale farming). The Indian conflict was one between lords who were concerned not at all with methods of cultivation, but to draw an income from the peasantry. The issue was always between different claimants of the sword, the village and the peasantry remaining throughout the passive subject of conflict, the booty over which the rival powers fought each other. No emperor or his viceroy ever challenged the ultimate customary right over the village land by the village community.

Further, village agriculture produced for the needs of the village and, excepting a share of this produce which the village had to surrender to the lord of the moment—may be the *suba* of the Delhi Emperor, or the *sardar* of the Poona Peshwa—the entire produce was almost locally consumed by the peasant and non-peasant village population. Besides the peasant families, the village population also included industrial workers (artisans and handicraftsmen) —such as a smith, a carpenter, a potter, a weaver, a cobbler, a washerman, an oilman, a barber, and others. They all worked almost exclusively for satisfying the needs of the village population. Thus the rural village economy was marked by low stage of division of labour based on insufficient differentiation of agriculture and industry and the absence of the phenomenon of a market.

Thus, economically, the village was predominantly autarchic. Local produce prepared mainly by means of local labour and resources was almost locally consumed. There was very little exchange between the village and the outside world. Whatever little trade existed, was carried on, generally, on a specific day of the week, at the market in a big village where a variety of goods from a number of centres was sold.

Desai then proceeds to explain the nature of urban economy in pre-British India. Amidst an ocean of tiny, autarchic villages, a few towns had sprung up and existed. These towns were of three kinds, those of political importance, those of religious significance and others of commercial value. Towns of political importance were capitals of kingdoms and empires. They were seats of governments, headquarters of princes or emperors with their courts of noblemen and satellites, army chiefs and state officials of various grades. They were also chief cantonments since the bulk of the army was stationed in capitals. There was another group of towns like Benares, Mathura, Puri, Nasik and others which were

centres of religious worship and places of pilgrimage. Then there were towns which had commercial importance because they were situated on sea coasts or on the banks of navigable rivers or at the confluence of strategic trade routes. Handicraft industries, complex and diversified, flourished in these towns. As Calverton writes:

“The industries of India, far more advanced than those of the West, were the product of clever brains, fine abilities creative genius...In Hindustan the manufacture of textiles was the leading industry, and the goods produced which included diverse cloths, cotton, and silks, were internationally admired and craved. In addition, thirteenth, fourteenth-and fifteenth-century Hindustan had metalwork, stonework, sugar, indigo, and paper industries. In other parts of India, woodwork, pottery, and leather industries flourished... Dyeing was the leading industry in many parts of India, and, in a number of centres, gold threadwork and different forms of embroidery were developed to a high point of perfection....”

It is worth noting here that in contrast to the artisan industry which had to supply the limited needs of a small village group, it was the urban industry which produced luxury articles for the aristocratic and wealthy merchant strata of the society; which produced equipment for the army, forged weapons of war and undertook the construction of military forts; which erected magnificent palaces, imposing temples and even such monuments of rare art or engineering as the world-celebrated Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar. It was the urban industry which undertook to construct canals.

However, Desai argues that the most striking feature of the urban industries was the extremely limited character of their market. This was due to the fact that they did not produce articles of daily use for the common people but functioned to meet the specific needs of the social strata and institutions mentioned above. Further, the requirements of the vast mass of the population living in autarchic villages were met by the local artisan industry of the villages themselves, thereby narrowing down the market of urban industries to extremely restricted zones.

Though there existed in pre-British India some of the pre-requisites for the capitalistic transformation of Indian economy, namely, commercial capital and urban industry, but these prerequisites could not mature so as to lead to such a transformation due to the extremely peculiar political and economic structure of pre-British Indian society. Among the obstacles to such consummation, the self sufficient village was perhaps the most formidable. Because each village being a closed system with very little social, economic or intellectual exchange with the outside world, remained cramped, did not grow. The almost complete absence of any appreciably developed economic exchange between the village and the outside world, together with the very weak means of transport which did not grow beyond

the bullock-cart, isolated the village population, reducing it to a single small unit mainly living its life exclusively in the village. Since the economic life was constrained and exchange almost limited to the village, there was no necessity for travelling, except on a marriage occasion or a pilgrimage once in many years. There was, therefore, no stimulus for the development of means of transport. The bullock-cart was the chief means of transport in pre-British India.

Within the village, the economic life based on primitive agriculture and artisan industry was on a low and almost stationary level. For ages, the same primitive plough driven by the bullock, added to the elementary instruments of the artisan, constituted the sole productive forces of the village humanity. The productivity of labour being low as a result of this low level of technique of production, there hardly survived for the mass of people, either surplus of products (after satisfying the needs of self-preservation and the land-revenue claims of the often rapacious government) or time for organizing a high standard of material and cultural life.

The caste-stratified social organization of the village population was also not conducive to any development of individual initiative, adventure or striking out of new paths. The unit was not the individual but the family which regulated the relations of its members *inter se*. The inter-relations of different families were governed by the village community and the caste. All three, the family, the caste, and the village community, maintained ideological control over the individual who was bound to conform to their standards. As a result it smothered the mental initiative, experimenting impulse, investigating urge of the villagers for ages. The village population thus continued to live for centuries, the same sterile, superstitious, narrow, stereotyped social and intellectual existence. Desai argues that such autonomous, self-sufficient and self-absorbed villages over a period of time became the citadels of economic stagnation, social reaction and cultural blindness.

There could not, therefore, evolve any national consciousness among the people since the growth of this consciousness presupposes, as its material reason and prerequisite, unified and common political and economic life. Such an economic life comes into being only when productive forces have reached a high level of development, the division of labour has become universal and all embracing, and, as a result, there is an all-round economic exchange. The growth of means of transport and communications, arising out of the needs of such highly advanced economic life, further consolidates this economic life, and facilitates the mass movement and mass social and intellectual exchange among the people, thereby strengthening the feeling of solidarity among them.

In the epoch of the autarchic village, common economic life did not exist among the people as a whole, and hence there could not emerge any consciousness of a common economic existence. There did not exist, then, consciousness of a common political existence either, since the state did not exercise any fundamental influence on the social, ideological, economic and even administrative life of the village group. The political and administrative unity of the territory, achieved spasmodically by able and victorious monarchs, was surface unity. It did not penetrate and affect the anatomy of the social and economic structure of village life. Not only did the self-sufficient economy of the village remain unaffected by such political changes but also the social and legal processes of village life continued as before, being governed by ancient caste and village (panchayat) committees and codes.

Thus, the objective and subjective prerequisites (such as a common economic, social and state existence, and the consciousness of such existence) for the emergence of a national culture did not exist in pre-British India. A national culture implies the welding of a community into a nation, which is consummated when, as a result of economic development (the growth of sufficient productive forces and division of labour so as to enmesh the community into a single system of exchange relations, the development of a well-ramified and rapid system of transport), it becomes economically and, in course of time socially and politically more or less integrated. The exigencies of a common economic life tend to accelerate the growth of a common language, which is a further instrument of consolidating the community into a well-knit nation. The nation, in different stages of its consolidation, evolves the consciousness of a single economic, and the urge for an independent state existence.

However, with the British conquest, the pre-British feudal economy of India underwent a drastic transformation and it was transformed into a capitalist economy. Desai remarks that the destruction of the economic disunity of India based on self-sufficient independent village economy and the transformation of India into a single economic unit by the introduction of capitalist forms were historically progressive results of British rule over India. However, to the extent that this transformation was subjected to the economic requirements of British trading, industrial and banking interests, the independent and untrammelled economic development of Indian society was impeded. Thus the British impact both helped as well as hindered the historical progress of Indian society.

Thus, the capitalistic transformation of feudal Indian economy destroyed the village self-sufficient economy and made village economy an integral part of a single unified Indian economy. It was this economic unification of India which became the objective material basis for the steady amalgamation of the disunited

Indian people into a unified nation, for the growth of national sentiment and consciousness among them and for the rise and development of an all-India national movement for their political freedom, and social and cultural progress.

Let me now explain this process of capitalistic transformation of Indian economy which was the result of the British conquest of India, the political and economic policies adopted by the British government and the economic penetration of India chiefly by British capitalism in its three phases of development—trading, industrial, and financial.

As stated earlier, there did not exist in pre-British India any form of private ownership of land. However, the British conquest of India led to a revolution in the existing land system. The new revenue system introduced by the British in India superseded the traditional right of the village community over the village land and created two forms of property in land; landlordism in some parts of the country and the individual peasant proprietorship in others. It was Lord Cornwallis who, during his term of office, created the first group of landlords in India by introducing the Permanent Land Settlement for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1793. These landlords were created out of the tax farmers in the provinces who had been appointed by the political predecessors of the British rulers to collect revenue from these provinces on a commission basis. The Permanent Land Settlement converted these revenue collectors into so many landlords. Under the terms of the settlement, they had henceforth to make a fixed payment to the government of the East India Company. This was the first breach effected by the British conquest of India in her old land system based on village right over land.

Three principal reasons prompted a group of British administrators to introduce the landlord system in India. First, the East India Company in India adopted British juridico-economic conceptions for land settlements. The economic past of England was fundamentally different from that of India. The English landlord system was conceived and carried out in the spirit of the tradition of private property in land, in the past feudal period. In India, however, the creation of the landlord system had no precedent, in her economic history. Secondly, from the standpoint of administration, in earlier stages of British rule, it was found easier and more economical to gather land revenue from a few thousand landlords than from a legion of small peasant proprietors. Thirdly, for political-strategic reason, the young British Raj in India needed a social support in the country to maintain itself. It was expected that the new class of landlords, which owed its existence to the British rule, would naturally support it. This expectation of the East India Company was borne out by subsequent events. The British rule in India always found in landlord classes its staunch supporters.

The Permanent Zamindari Settlements prevailed in Bengal, Bihar and sections of North Madras and enveloped about twenty per cent of British India. While the British rule created large scale landed ownership in some parts of the country, in other parts, it created individual peasant proprietorship. The latter was known as the Ryotwari. Under the Ryotwari, the individual cultivator was transformed into the owner of the land he tilled. It was Sir Thomas Munro who initiated it in 1820, when he was the Governor of Madras, in the major part of that province. The Ryotwari was subsequently extended to a number of other provinces.

Thus private property in land came into being in India for the first time in its history. Land became private property, a commodity in the market, which could be mortgaged, purchased or sold. Thus the British conquest of India brought about an agrarian revolution. It created the prerequisite for the capitalist development of agriculture by introducing individual ownership of land, namely, peasant ownership and large-scale landlord ownership. This, together with the commercial and other new economic forces which invaded and penetrated the village, undermined both the agrarian economy and the autarchic village of India of the pre-British period. This transformation of the land relations was the most vital link in the chain of causes which transformed the whole pre-capitalist feudal economy of India into the existing capitalist economy.

Till the village ownership of land existed, the village was the unit of assessment. It was the village community which, through the headman or panchayat, paid the state or the intermediary a specific proportion of the annual agricultural produce as revenue. This proportion may have varied under different regimes, but it was, except in rare cases, the village which was the unit of assessment and the payer of revenue. The new land system eliminated the village as the unit of land assessment and revenue payment. By creating individual holders of land, it introduced the system of individual land assessment and revenue payment. Secondly, a new method of fixing the land revenue and its payment was introduced. Previously the revenue due to the state or its intermediary to whom the monarch had 'farmed' out the village, was a specified portion of the year's actual produce which varied from year to year. This was now replaced by the system of fixed money payments, assessed on land, regularly due in cash irrespective of the year's production, in good or bad harvests, and whether more or less of the land was cultivated or not, and in the overwhelming majority of settlements fixed on individual landholders, whether directly cultivators or landlords appointed by the state. In other words, under the new system, the land revenue was assessed on the basis of land, not on the proportion of the actual produce.

This new method and form of the land revenue assessment and payment had a far-reaching result. When previously a part of the actual annual produce constituted the revenue due to the state, the village possession of land was never in danger. If during any year the harvest failed, the land revenue automatically lapsed that year since it was dependent upon and was measured in terms of a portion of the actually realized harvest. The nonpayment of the revenue by the village however did not jeopardize its possession of land. But when, under the new system, fixed money payments assessed on land and not on the annual produce were introduced, the landlord or the peasant proprietor had to meet this revenue claim of the state irrespective of the failure of crop. The practice of the new land and revenue system logically and inevitably brought in its wake the phenomena of the mortgage, the sale and the purchase of land. When a landholder could not pay the land revenue due to the state out of the returns of his harvest or his resources, he was constrained to mortgage or sell his land. Thus, insecurity of possession and ownership of land—a phenomenon unknown to the pre-British agrarian society—came into existence. The new land system disastrously affected the communal character of the village, its self-sufficient economy and communal social life.

One of the consequences of the introduction of the system of new land relations and revenue payment in the form of fixed money payment was that the old objective of village agriculture, namely production for village use, was replaced by that for market. The production and produce were now determined by the new objective, that of sale, and, hence, changed their character. Under the new system, the peasant produced mainly for the market, which, with the steady improvement of means of transport and expanding operations of trading capital under the British rule, became available to him. He did so with a view to realizing maximum cash, primarily to pay the land revenue to the state which was fixed fairly high and, in course of time, to meet the claim of the moneylender in whose hands he progressively fell due to numerous causes. This led to the emergence of the phenomenon of what is known as the commercialization of agriculture. This also led to the practice of growing specialized crops by the peasants. The commercialization of agriculture, broadly speaking, might be described as a change from cultivation for home consumption to cultivation for the market.

With the rise of modern industries in England, the necessity of raw materials for these industries grew. The British government in India pursued economic policies which expanded the area of growth of such raw materials as needed by the British industries. It thereby accelerated the commercialization and specialization of Indian agriculture.

These developments also disrupted the ancient unity of agriculture and industry in the traditional Indian village. In addition to the two reasons which

prompted the farmer to produce for market, namely, to realize maximum cash for the payment of the land revenue and meet the debt claim of the moneylender in whose hands he subsequently and generally fell, there was a third reason also why he produced for sale. The progressive improvement of the means of transport by the government made it possible for him to purchase the manufactured cloth and other necessary articles from the market organized at a village or district fair. Formerly, as a rule, he produced his own cloth and the village artisans met his other needs in return for a part of the annual produce. Now, he bought most of these things from the market. This was also one of the principal causes of the decline of village artisan and other village industries. The commercialization of village agriculture together with the decay of village industries due to the influx of the manufactured and later, cheap machine-made goods of Britain and subsequently of other countries and even of Indian industries, seriously affected the balanced village economy. Thus, the unity of village agriculture and industry, the basic pillar of the self-sufficient village economy, was disrupted. Competitive economic relations resulting out of private property and market replaced former cooperative socio-economic relations.

However Desai argues that from the standpoint of the growth of a single national Indian or world economy, this was a step forward in spite of the annihilation of self-sufficient village communities and economic misery consequent on this destruction through the capitalist transformation of the Indian economy. It contributed towards building the material foundation, namely, the economic welding together of India and of India with the world, for the national consolidation of the Indian people and the international economic unification of the world.

According to Desai, historically speaking, the destruction of the self-sufficient village was a progressive event though it involved much tragic destruction such as that of collective life among the village population, of tender human relations between them and of economic security among its members unless a war or a famine intervened. History moves dialectically. Progress is achieved not through the quantitative extension of the good aspects of the old but its qualitative transformation. Higher forms of co-operation and social existence emerge not through the quantitative expansion of old forms but by their dissolution. It is true that the capitalist transformation of the village economy was brought about by the destruction of village cooperation but its historical progressive role lies in the fact that it broke the self-sufficiency of the village economic life and made the village economy a part of the unified national economy. It was a historically necessary step towards integrating the Indian people economically. It simultaneously broke the physical, social and cultural isolation of the village people by creating the

possibility of large-scale social exchange through the establishment of such means of mass transport as railways and automobiles.

How could a united nation evolve out of a people who are living an isolated existence in numerous centres, who are physically divided and between whom there is very little social and economic exchange? How can the consciousness of a people be elevated to a national plane when they live independent isolated lives in small groups? Like Marx, Desai concludes that the conditions of material existence determine the nature of consciousness.

Thus the capitalist unification of India based on the destruction of the village autarchy and co-operation on the narrow village scale paved the way for higher forms of economy and social collaboration. It paved the way for a national economy and nation-scale collaboration among the Indian people. It became the material premise for the emergence of the Indian nation out of the amorphous mass of the Indian people which, before this unification were scattered in numerous villages between which there was very little exchange, social or economic, and hence, which had hardly any positive common interests. However tragic, the destruction of the autarchic village and the collective life of the people living in it, it was historically necessary for the economic, social and political unification of the Indian people.

With the establishment of new land relations based on private property in land and the right of the individual landowner freely to dispose of his property in land, the agrarian economy of India entered a new and hitherto historically unknown stage of development and the agrarian population a new phase of social and economic existence. A national agriculture, as an integral dependent part of the total national Indian economy came into existence. The problems of Indian agriculture, consequently, acquired a national character. Under the British rule, Indian agriculture rose to the level of a national agriculture but it did not grow into a prosperous agriculture. In fact, the history of Indian agriculture, in spite of its becoming national in character, under the British rule was a history of its 'continuous and increasing disorganization'. It was also the history of the progressive impoverishment of the agricultural population, of the steady growth of their indebtedness, of the increasing expropriation of the peasants of their land and their transformation into paupers or the agricultural proletariat.

One of the most alarming and ruinous features of Indian agriculture was the extreme subdivision of land and its fragmentation. The amount of land available to each cultivator declined or, in other words, the holdings progressively became more and more uneconomic. There were a number of factors which brought about this state of things. The introduction of capitalist relations in agriculture in the

European countries was paralleled by the creation of compact farms as units of cultivation. In India, on the other hand, no such reorganization of land was accomplished by the British. From the standpoint of ownership and individual cultivation, the land remained intermixed.

However, the most decisive factor which accelerated the process of subdivision of land and its fragmentation was overpressure on agriculture brought about by the economic ruination of millions of urban and village handicraftsmen and artisans. This phenomenon was known as 'de-industrialization' of India, i.e. the destruction of the old handicraft industry without the proportional growth of modern industry. The result was increasing overcrowding on land. The overcrowding on land accelerated the process of subdivision and fragmentation of land.

Excessive land revenue, in the conditions of the growth of uneconomic holdings due to the subdivision of and overcrowding on land, was the prime cause of the impoverishment of the Indian agriculturist in the earlier stages of the British rule. The progressive inability of the agriculturist to meet the increasing revenue claims of the state from his declining income brought about his subsequent indebtedness.

There was another factor which adversely affected the agriculturist. It was the factor of the commercialization of agriculture under the British rule. The agriculturist now produced for the Indian and the world market. He became thereby subject to all the vicissitudes of the ever erratic market. He had to compete with formidable international rivals like the big agrarian trusts of America, Europe, and Australia, which produced on a mass scale and by means of tractors and other modern agricultural machinery while he himself cultivated his miserable strip of land by means of the labour power of a couple of famished bullocks and the primitive plough. Further, the commercialization made the agriculturist dependent, for sale of his product, on the middlemen, the merchants. The merchant, by his superior economic position, took full advantage of the poverty of the peasant. The poor peasant, having no economic reserves and confronted by the revenue claims of the government and increasingly also by the claim of the usurer, had to sell his product to the middleman at the harvest time. This transaction originating in sheer necessity brought a less amount to the peasant than it would have if he could have waited. The middleman thus appropriated a very large share of profit.

There were other factors which also contributed to the growth of poverty among the agriculturists. In addition to such economic earthquakes as the periodically occurring agrarian crises, there were such non-social causes as drought, or devastating rains which also brought economic misery to the

agriculturists. The Indian peasant hardly had any economic reserves to fall back upon in bad times. A large proportion of Indian peasants got into debt due to their inability to pay land revenue as a result of bad monsoons. Famines were a feature of the economic existence of the Indian people.

It was a vicious circle. Arising out of his poverty, the indebtedness of the agriculturist became, as it grew, the main cause of accentuating his poverty. Unable to pay his debt and even interest on it, the agriculturist not only lost his crops to the moneylenders but rapidly lost his land to him. This process of expropriation of the land of the agriculturists advanced during the present century at an accelerated rate.

As a result the number of cultivating owners and tenants steadily diminished while that of the non-cultivating landlords grew. This was the new type of absentee and non-cultivating landlord class which emerged in addition to the class of zamindars created and confirmed in permanent proprietary rights by the British government, such as the class of zamindars in Bengal, Bihar, Madras and other parts of the country.

Both these landlord classes, old and new, evinced no live interest in agriculture beyond that of gathering rent from their tenants. In a country like India where there were limited industrial avenues of capital investment and where there was excessive demand for land, investment in land was found more profitable. Agriculture was alien to this new non-agriculturist type of landlord, the merchant, the moneylender, or the wealthy city dweller. As a rule, he did not feel any urge to organize and look after agricultural production on his land, to improve its methods and technique. Since he had no vital interest in agriculture, he had purchased or secured land from the peasant debtor in a haphazard way, and not in a compact mass. Since land hunger was acute in the countryside, he leased out his land to tenants on the basis of heavy rent. Another feature of the zamindari agriculture was that, as a rule, there developed a host of intermediaries between the cultivating tenant and the zamindars, due to the widespread practice of renting and subrenting of land.

The practice of renting and sub-renting of land steadily grew also in the Ryotwari area with the land passing from the hands of the cultivating peasant proprietor to the non-cultivating owner. Thus the phenomenon of rackrenting, which was formerly confined to the zamindari areas, appeared with the growth of absentee landlordism in the Ryotwari areas also. The problem of rackrenting, like the problems of sub-division and fragmentation of land, of overpressure on agriculture, of the declining productivity and technical backwardness of agriculture, of the heavy growth of peasant indebtedness and of the general

pauperization and proletarianization of the Indian agriculturists, became, by its very universality and by its being the effect of the same causes which brought about the other results, a national problem.

The passing of the land from the hands of the peasant proprietors into the hands of non-cultivating landlords brought about, increasing polarization of classes in agrarian areas. At one pole of the agrarian population the class of non-cultivating landlords grew increasingly; at the other, the rapidly swelling class of agricultural proletariat as well as of the poorest peasants and sub-tenants who were hardly distinguishable from land labourers.

Since the Indian people were not politically independent they could not formulate and put into action independent economic policies such as would aid the free development of Indian economy, its industry commerce and agriculture. The development of Indian agriculture was adjusted to be economic necessities of British capitalism which required India primarily as an agrarian colony for the production of raw materials for British industries. This prevented the independent development of Indian agriculture, fulfilling the economic requirements of the Indian people. Indian agriculture remained, therefore, distorted in its development—'lop-sided'.

In spite of this, it must be recognized that, by bringing the village agricultural production within the sphere of Indian and world markets, by making agriculture an organic part of Indian economy, the British rule over India elevated Indian agriculture to the status of a national agriculture. Desai considers this as a progressive aspect of the British conquest.

Since the problems of Indian agriculture became national and were conditioned by the same causes, these problems served as focal points for the mobilization of the people and its different sections on a national scale. Thus national agriculture built up by the British conquest and rule in India brought about a common material interest in agriculture among the Indian people. This paved way for the growth of a national sentiment among them to strive for a prosperous national agriculture.

British rule also marked the decline of old handicrafts. The conquest of India by the East India Company resulted in the disappearance of native rulers in rapid succession. This disappearance and decline of states had a direct and immediate effect on the town handicrafts of India. As observed, the states were the biggest customers of the town handicraft products. The disappearance of the states also affected the industries which supplied the goods needed for the military and other purposes of these states. To take an instance, the production of military weapons

like swords, spears, daggers, shields and other varieties of arms made of iron and steel, and the accompanying artistic industries like enamelling and damascening work had reached a high state of development in pre-British India. The disappearance of the states had a very ruinous effect on these industries.

Please note that in England and other capitalist European countries also, handicraft industries began to lose ground with the rise of modern manufacture and machine-based industry. But, in England and other European countries, the ruined mass of handicraftsmen was, on the whole, absorbed in the new indigenous modern industries. In India, the decline and decay of native handicrafts was not accomplished by any rise of indigenous manufacture or machine industry. The destruction of urban handicrafts, without the parallel growth of substitute modern industries, led to the disequilibrium of industry and agriculture in India. It brought about an overpressure on agriculture which was both disastrous for the economic condition of those living on the land as also for the efficiency of agriculture. The general economic policy of Britain, while it accomplished the destruction of the old handicrafts of India, did not aid the free development of modern industries in the country lest these industries should menace the British industries in the market. This mainly brought about the lack of balance between the agricultural and industrial parts of Indian economy. The second reason why Britain desired and strove to keep India predominantly agrarian was that it required the cheap agricultural raw materials of India for her industries. This made India, mainly, a colonial agrarian appendage of Britain.

Thus the class of Indian handicraftsmen, a class based on medieval handicrafts, steadily dissolved itself into and increased the class of the modern proletariat, of tenants and land labourers. They became integral parts of the new classes in India which arose on the basis of the new capitalist economic relations which developed in India during the British rule.

The establishment of modern machine-based industries in India during the period of the British rule played a significant role in the consolidation of the national economy of the country. It also generated social forces which gave impetus to the growth of Indian nationalism and the nationalist movement. It is true that the industrial development of India was insufficient and lopsided due to a number of reasons. Still, this industrial development created powerful social forces which helped national advance. To mention only the most important among them, the growth of modern industries brought into existence modern industrial cities which became the theatres of intense social, political, and cultural life and prime sources from which all progressive movements generally emanated. Further, the growth of modern industries led to the emergence of such new social groups as the

class of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat, two basic classes whose specific weight in the movement of contemporary society was found great, even decisive. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the basic classes of the modern capitalist society. As capitalist economy based on competition and commodity production develops, the intermediate classes of small producers such as artisans, and others, being unable to compete with powerful industrial rivals in the market, are ruined and increasingly fall into the ranks of the workers. In the countryside, too, the intermediate stratum of peasant proprietors, due to progressive impoverishment in the circumstances of capital economic environment, increasingly lose land to usurers and merchants and other capitalists and a good proportion of them become landless labourers or agricultural proletariat.

Desai argues that the establishment of railways in India, during the middle of the nineteenth century, created a condition for the growth of modern industries in India. The construction of railways in India was primarily undertaken to meet the raw material and market requirements of the British industries. Their construction also gave scope for the investment of British capital and sale of the products of the growing engineering industry of Britain in India. The establishment of railways and the accumulation of sufficient savings in the hands of the Indian merchant class to serve as basic capital, made possible the creation of the Indian-owned modern industries in India.

The Swadeshi movement which was started principally by the Indian National Congress in 1905 gave a momentum to the expansion of the Indian industries. In spite of this steady advance, the level of Indian industrial development remained low. Progress was achieved primarily in the cotton and the jute industries only. Heavy industries were absent. Engineering was only represented by repair workshops, chiefly for the railways; the barest beginning with iron and steel was just being made on the eve of the 1914 war; there was no production of machinery.

There were a number of reasons why the industrial development of India did not proceed at a greater rate. Young Indian industries required, for rapid growth, protection, aiding them thereby to compete successfully with the powerful, well established industries of countries like Britain, Germany and others. The Indian government did not grant such protection. Neither did it concretely help the Indian industries. Another handicap to rapid industrial development was insufficient cadres of technicians. The provision for technical education was meagre.

During the war of 1914-18, due to a considerable decline in the import of foreign goods and, further, due to war requirements, Indian industries developed further. However, the rapid industrial development of a country requires as a

premise the presence of the basic heavy (metallurgical and machine-producing) industry in that country. The practical absence of such an industry in India set a limit to its industrial expansion in war-time. The absence of basic engineering and heavy chemical industries was the weakest spot in India's industrial system.

Desai argues that one of the characteristics of a colonial economy which makes it subservient to the interests of imperialist economy is that it does not possess, to a large extent, heavy industries. These industries are a vital precondition for free, balanced, and rapid industrial development of a modern society. "The real change comes in any country when the iron and steel industries begin to be successful... The development of the metallurgical industries means the real industrial revolution. England, Germany and the United States of America all started their iron and steel industries before they started their textile factories." The iron and steel industry founded by J. N. Tata in 1911 only partially met the requirements of the Indian industries.

The Second World War which broke out in 1939 gave a momentum to Indian industrial development. There was hardly any appreciable advance in shipping, aircraft and such other industries. "The progress registered even during the war has been almost all in the consumers' goods industries to the sad and striking neglect of production of capital goods industries. Cotton, sugar, paper, cement and even leather have all expanded, while the basic industries for the production of machine tools, automobiles, railway engines, ships and aeroplanes have been left out."

Since large masses of capital are necessary for starting the modern type of industries and as it is not possible to mobilize large sums from small investors, the aid of banks and big financial firms becomes indispensable. This resulted in the control of Indian industry by finance capital. India here exhibited the general feature of the economic life of all capitalist countries today, namely, the control of finance capital over almost all branches of economy. Finance capital, both British and Indian, operated through various agencies including the system of banks. The Reserve Bank of India was the strongest banking institution in the country. It had wide powers and was controlled by the Government through the right of appointment of its principal officials such as the Governor, Deputy Governors and a number of Directors of the Bank. A number of Indian nationalist economists and politicians declared that the substantial British domination of Indian banking was one of the decisive obstacles to the rapid as well as free industrial development of India. In the matter of financing the Indian-owned industries, both the British-controlled banks and the government pursued policies which were primarily determined from the standpoint of British economic interests and not those of Indian industrial expansion.

Another obstacle to the growth of Indian industries was the immense poverty of the agricultural population which constituted about four-fifths of the Indian people and who represented a formidable potential market for industrial goods. Further, Indian industries had entered the phase of concentration and monopoly. The disadvantages of the monopoly form of organization to industrial expansion were, therefore, inherent in the industrial situation in India.

The basic economic policy of the Indian government, though modified by the pressure of popular opinion, was moulded neither by the Indian people, nor by the Indian-owned monopolies but by the interests of British finance capital. India possessed the prerequisites, both human and material, for evolving powerful and prosperous industries which would have made the Indian people rich and an independent industrial national. Still, due to these handicaps, she remained predominantly a poor and agrarian community with insufficient industries. Industrialization of India was recognized as the main remedy for relieving the overpressure on agriculture which was one of the reasons of the impoverishment of the agriculturists. In such a situation, a programme of planned national economy, covering every branch of economic life, could have alone brought about an assured, rapid and symmetrical development of industries. Such a programme would have included the transformation of the poor and primitive agriculture into a prosperous modernized agriculture; modernization and extension of industries; development of metallurgical, chemical, electrical, machine producing and such other industries; extension of railway, bus and other means of transport; raising of technical and engineering cadres; training of agronomists on a mass scale and other vital items.

In spite of its insufficient and unbalanced character, industrialization played almost a revolutionary role in the life of the Indian people. It led to the consolidation of the unified national economy which evolved in India as a result of the introduction of capitalist economic forms in agriculture by the British government, penetration of India by the commercial forces of the world and spread of modern transport during the British rule. Industrialization made the Indian economy more unified, cohesive and organic. It raised the tone of the economic life of India. Further, it brought into existence modern cities which became the centres of modern culture and increasing democratic social life and from which all progressive movements, social, political, and cultural, emanated.

Desai further argues that the modern means of transport, the establishment and spread of railways and motor buses, appreciably contributed to the forging of the Indian people into a nation. In the first half of the nineteenth century, as a result of the unprecedented technological advance, together with the accumulation of

capital from the trade during the previous period, powerful machine-based industries sprang into existence in England. The English industrialists were faced with the problem of rapid disposal of the products of these new and steadily expanding industries and securing raw materials for them from India and other parts of the world. The interests of the British industries urged the government of the East India Company to establish railways and construct roads in India. Lord Dalhousie, who initiated a programme of wide railway construction in India, in his famous Minute on Railways unambiguously defined the economic reason behind this construction.

Further, British capitalism was being steadily confronted with the accumulation of surplus capital which could not always be employed profitably in Britain. An outlet was needed for this surplus capital. If the Indian government were to adopt a programme of railway construction, it would require capital. A part of the surplus capital accumulated in Britain could be loaned to the Indian government and thus find an outlet. In addition to these economic reasons, there were political-administrative and military-strategic reasons for establishing railways in India. The British regime established in India had to be defended both against internal rebellion and from external invasion. For a rapid mobilization and transfer of troops at the required key strategic points, it was necessary to lay down adequate railway lines and construct modern metalled roads. Thus the military defence need of Britain also led to railway construction and, in general, to the extension of modern means of communications.

Railways and buses made mass migration of people from one part of the country to another possible. Railways also proved effective dissolvents of orthodox social habits regarding food, physical contact, and others. Railways and buses made it possible to spread progressive social and scientific ideas among the people. In the absence of the modern means of transport, scientific and progressive literature (books, magazines, papers), could not have been quickly distributed throughout the country. The intermixture of people made possible by the large-scale facilities of travel provided by modern means of transport, had profound results. This paved the way for the growth of a wider national consciousness and co-operation on a national basis.

Further, with regard to modern education, Desai argues that in spite of the various defects, the introduction of modern education in India was a progressive act of the British rule. It was secular in character, liberal in essence, open to all, irrespective of caste or creed, unlike the education in the pre-British period. But above all, it was the key which opened the great treasures of rationalist and democratic thought of the modern West to the Indians. It was not a mere accident

that the pioneers and all subsequent leaders of Indian nationalism came from the educated classes of the Indian society.

However, Desai challenged that the view of a number of British statesmen and writers who claimed that Indian nationalism was the product of the modern education which the Britishers introduced in India. They asserted that the urge for national freedom grew among the Indian people because modern education helped them to study and imbibe the doctrines of liberation propounded by western authors. While Desai recognizes the progressive role played by the introduction of modern education in India, but he argues that it would be incorrect to conclude that Indian nationalism was the child of this education.

According to Desai, Indian nationalism was, in fact, the outcome of the new social material conditions created in India and the new social forces which emerged within the Indian society, as a result of the British conquest. It was the outcome of the objective conflict of interests, the interests of Britain to keep India politically and economically subjected to her and the interests of the Indian people for a free political, economic, and cultural evolution of the Indian society unhindered by the British rule. Indian nationalism crystallized as a national movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By that time, educated classes grew in the country and, with the rise of Indian industries, the industrial bourgeoisie came into existence. These classes were the organizers of the national movement, which inscribed on its banner such demands as Indianization of Services, Protection for Indian Industries, Fiscal Autonomy. The movement arose out of the conflict of British and Indian interests in the economic and other spheres. This conflict of interests is the genetic cause of the Indian national movement.

Desai argues that different classes had their specific grievances against Britain. The industrialists desired freedom for unobstructed industrialization of India and protection for the native industries. The educated classes demanded the Indianization of Services, since the higher posts were mainly the preserve of the British. The agriculturists demanded reduction of the land tax. The workers demanded better conditions of work and a living wage. The nation as a whole demanded the freedom of association and press, assembly, elected legislatures, representative institutions, dominion status, home rule and finally complete Independence. It was out of these contradictions of interests of Britain and India that Indian nationalism grew.

It must however be recognized that the assimilation of modern democratic ideas of the west by many nationalist leaders, with the help of modern education prompted them to give the national movement democratic forms and aim. Under their leadership, the nationalist movement did not aim, after securing Swaraj, at the

rehabilitation of the monarchic forms of rule and authoritarian social systems which prevailed in pre-British India. The nationalist movement organized itself, on the whole, on modern liberal principles such as elections, democratic committees, decisions reached by a majority vote etc. It also visualized for a free India, representative institutions based on democratic principles. Thus, modern education, indirectly if not directly gave a democratic direction to Indian nationalism.

According to Desai, the emergence of the social classes in India was the direct consequence of the establishment of a new social economy, a new type of state system and a state administrative machinery, and the spread of new education during the British rule. These classes were unknown to past Indian society, since they were primarily the offspring of the new capitalist economic structure which developed in India as a result of the British conquest and the impact on her of the British and world economy. The Indian people were reshuffled into new social groupings, new classes, as a result of the basic capitalist economic transformation of Indian society. The process of the rise of new social classes in different parts of the country and among various communities was, however, an uneven one. This was due to the fact that the new social economy spread, both in time and tempo, unevenly, since this spread depended on the growth of political power of Britain in India.

For example, in agrarian areas, these new classes were principally (1) zamindars created by the British government; (2) absentee landlords; (3) tenants under zamindars and absentee landlords; (4) the class of peasant proprietors divided into upper, middle and lower strata; (5) agricultural labourers; (6) the modern class of merchants and (7) the modern class of money-lenders.

As stated earlier, the introduction of private property in land in the form of Zamindari and Ryotwari by the British government brought into being the new classes of large estate owners, the zamindars, and peasant proprietors. Further, the creation of the right to lease land brought into being such classes as tenants and sub-tenants; the creation of the right to purchase and sell land together with the right to hire and employ labour on land, created conditions for the growth of the class of absentee landlords and that of the agricultural proletariat. The creation of Zamindari simultaneously engendered the class of tenants in India. The tenants were rackrented, impoverished and suffered from oppression at the hands of the zamindars.

In the urban areas, these new classes were principally (1) the modern class of capitalists, industrial, commercial and financial; (2) the modern working class engaged in industrial, transport, mining, and such other enterprises; (3) the class of the petty traders and shopkeepers bound up with modern capitalist economy; (4)

the professional classes such as technicians, doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists, managers, clerks and others, comprising the intelligentsia and the educated middle class.

Thus with the growth of modern industries in India, the new classes of the modern bourgeoisie and the working class came into existence. Indian industries were established and developed at a rapid rate only in the later decades of the nineteenth century and thereafter. The industrial bourgeoisie and the working class grew in number, in proportion as these industries developed. The professional classes comprising modern lawyers, doctors, teachers and professors associated with modern educational institutions, managers and clerks working in modern commercial and other enterprises, officials functioning in state administrative machinery, engineers, chemists, technologists, agronomists, journalists and others, formed another new social group which evolved in Indian society during the British period.

The main grievances of the Indian merchants was what they described as preferential treatment shown to European business by the British government in the sphere of trade and undue restrictions put on Indian trade with non-British countries. Further, the class of industrialists desired freedom for unobstructed industrialization of India and protection for the native industries.

Further, the growth of modern education in India was not paralleled by a proportional economic development of the country. As a result of this disparity, by the end of the nineteenth century, unemployment among the educated class had already assumed serious proportions. As a result, the educated classes demanded the Indianization of Services, since the higher posts were mainly the preserve of the British.

Please note that from 1880 onward, modern industries steadily developed in India and the industrial bourgeoisie grew in strength. The nationalist intelligentsia had already pioneered the nationalist movement in India and had set up the premier national political organization, the Indian National Congress, in 1885. The rising industrialist class had become sufficiently strong and conscious by 1905. From that time, it began to support the professional classes, who were already fighting for breaking the monopoly of the British in the services and professions. The industrial bourgeoisie entered the orbit of the Indian nationalist movement with their own slogans of protection, favourable exchange ratio, subsidies for the growing industries. The industrial capitalists began to enter the orbit of the nationalist movement during the first decade of the twentieth century. This class began to gravitate to the Indian National Congress during this period and enthusiastically supported the programme of Swadeshi and boycott of English goods, since it also

served its own class interest. The Swadeshi Movement which was successful for some time, gave an impetus to the growth of Indian industries, especially the textile industry. The nationalist movement which was hitherto mainly restricted to the intelligentsia, sections of the commercial bourgeoisie and educated middle class, secured a broader social basis from 1905 as a result of the entry of large sections of the middle class and politically conscious industrialists.

The modern working class or the Indian proletariat was the offspring of the modern industries, transport, and plantations, established in India during the British period. It was a class which grew in proportion as plantations, modern factories, mining industry, and transport developed in India. The Indian proletariat was formed predominantly out of the pauperized peasants and ruined artisans, who became wage earners. A large proportion of the workers had fallen into indebtedness due to their inability to maintain themselves and their families on the basis of the low wages they got. They demanded higher wages and better working conditions.

Thus, on one hand we had agrarian classes (peasants, tenants, landless agricultural labourers) and industrial classes (indigenous capitalist class, educated middle class, working class) whose interests broadly converged. Further, the pan-Indian organisation in the form of Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhi was able to accommodate the interest of these aggrieved classes in the national movement for independence at different stages of its development through various measures such as organisation of kisan sabhas, All-India Kisan Congress, Swadeshi movement, Non-Cooperation movement, All-India Trade Union Congress, etc.

On the other hand, we had British government with its own vested interests, zamindars and some Indian princes whose survival was contingent upon the British rule in India. As seen before, the class of zamindars had been largely the creation of the British government. The zamindars with whom the Permanent Settlement was made, were an aristocracy manufactured by Lord Cornwallis. They were entirely the creatures of the state. Due to such genesis, the zamindars, on the whole, always supported the British government. The class of Indian princes, petty and big, ruling over about one-third of the Indian territory, was another class perpetuated by the British government for political reasons.

Thus, we can see that the how these new classes emerged and how their economic interest clashed with that of British. This mutually opposed economic interest manifested itself in the form of freedom struggle for independence and got finally resolved with India attaining independence in 1947 and emerging as a nation.

This is how A.R. Desai applied the Marxian methodology to explain the rise of nationalism in India.

Desai further summarized the rise of Indian nationalism in five stages. As stated earlier, according to Desai, Indian nationalism was the product of the action and interaction of the numerous objective and subjective social forces and factors which evolved in the historical process during the British period. He explained why the emotion of nationalism did not and could not evolve among the Indian people in the economic environs and cultural climate of pre-British India. He also delineated the fundamental economic transformation of Indian society during the British period, which was one of the most important material prerequisites for welding the disunited Indian people into a single nation. He also assessed the specific weight and described the role of other factors like modern transport, new education, press, and others, in contributing towards the unification of the Indian people and in engendering a nationalist consciousness among them.

According to Desai, Indian nationalism passed through various phases of development. As it advanced from one phase to another its social basis broadened, its objective became more clearly defined and bold, and its forms of expression more varied. As a result of the impact of forces of Indian and world development, increasing strata of the Indian people evolved a national consciousness and outlook and were drawn into the orbit of the nationalist movement. This national awakening found expression in varied spheres of national life, social, political, cultural. Further, we have seen how the nationalist movement grew and gathered strength as new classes, offsprings of the new economic structure and living under the same state regime, finding their free and full development thwarted under the extant social and political conditions, increasingly organized themselves on a national scale and started various movements to remove the obstacles impeding their growth.

In its first phase, Indian nationalism had a very narrow social basis. The intelligentsia were the product of the modern education imparted in the new educational institutions, established by the British in India in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and had studied western culture and greatly assimilated its democratic and nationalist ideas. They formed the first stratum of the Indian society to develop a national consciousness and aspirations. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his group of enlightened Indians were the pioneers of Indian nationalism. They were the exponents of the concept of the Indian nation which they propagated among the people. They initiated socio-reform and religio-reform movements which represented endeavours to remould the Indian society and religion in the spirit of the new principles of democracy, rationalism, and nationalism. In fact,

these movements were the expression of the rising national democratic consciousness among a section of the Indian people. These founders and first fighters of Indian nationalism stood up for democratic rights, such as the freedom of the Press, and put forth demands like the right of the nation to have a voice in the administration of the country. The first phase extended till 1885 and culminated in the rise of the Indian National Congress in that year.

The second phase roughly covered the period from 1885 to 1905. The Liberal intelligentsia who were at the helm of the Congress were the leaders of the Indian nationalist movement during the second phase. Their ideology and methods determined the programme and forms of the movement which reflected the interests of the development of the new bourgeois society in India. The social basis of the movement was extended during this period to the educated middle class which, by the end of nineteenth century, had appreciably grown as a result of the expansion of modern education, and to a section of the merchant class which had developed during this period as a result of the growth of Indian and international trade. Modern industries also grew steadily during this period as a result of which the class of industrialists emerged and began to gain strength. They started orienting towards the Congress which adopted the programme of industrialization of the country and in 1905 actively organized the Swadeshi campaign.

The Indian National Congress, under the leadership of the Liberals, mainly voiced the demands of the educated classes and the trading bourgeoisie such as the Indianization of Services, the association of the Indians with the administrative machinery of the state, the stoppage of economic drain, and others formulated in the resolutions of the Indian National Congress. It also set forth such democratic demands as those of representative institutions and civil liberties. Its methods of struggle dominated by Liberal conceptions were principally constitutional agitation, effective argument, and fervent appeal to the democratic conscience and traditions of the British people.

Since the British government did not satisfy the most vital demands of the Indian nationalist movement, disillusionment set in among a section of the nationalists regarding the ideology and methods of the Liberals. A group, with a new philosophy, political ideology and conception of the methods of struggle crystallized within the Congress. Increasing unemployment among the educated middle class youths due to the inability of the social and state apparatus to incorporate them, and further, economic misery among the people due to devastating epidemics and famines at the close of the nineteenth century, created favourable conditions for the growth of the influence of the new group, the Extremists.

The third phase in the development of the nationalist movement extended from 1905 to 1918. During this phase, the Liberals were supplanted by the Extremists as the leaders of the nationalist movement. In spite of the strong government repression, the nationalist movement registered an advance. The political propaganda of the Extremists instilled a feeling of national self-respect and self-confidence among the people who, instead of looking to the British for political freedom as counselled by the Liberals, began to rely on their own strength for achieving it. The movement, however, suffered from the defect that its leaders attempted to base it on a resurrected Hindu philosophy. This, to some extent, mystified the movement and weakened its secular character. It was also one of the reasons why it could not appeal to the Muslims.

During the third phase, the Indian nationalist movement became militant and challenging and acquired a wider social basis by the inclusion of sections of the lower-middle class. The agitation for Home Rule during wartime further strengthened the political consciousness of the people. It was during this phase that sections of upper class Muslims developed political consciousness and founded their all-India political organization in 1906, the Muslim League. Due to a number of reasons, the rising political consciousness of the Muslim upper and educated middle classes took a communal form, and resulted in the formation of their organization on a communal basis.

The fourth phase in the evolution of the Indian nationalist movement commenced from 1918 and extended roughly up to the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-4. One striking development during this phase was that the nationalist movement gained a broad mass basis and added to its arsenal, the weapon of direct mass action. The nationalist movement, which was hitherto restricted mainly to upper and middle classes, further extended, during this phase, to sections of the Indian masses. Gandhi's doctrine of class harmony and social peace and his support to the Swadeshi resolution at the Calcutta Congress in 1919 made sections of the Indian bourgeoisie support Gandhi, the Congress, and the nationalist movements organized by the Congress under Gandhi's leadership from this time onward. It was from 1918 that the Indian industrial bourgeoisie began to exert a powerful influence in determining the programme, policies, strategies, tactics and forms of struggle of the Indian nationalist movement led by the Congress of which Gandhi was the leader. Mass participation was witnessed in the Non-Cooperation movement and the Civil Disobedience Movement during this phase.

Another development during this phase was the growth of socialist and communist groups in the country. By 1928, these groups succeeded in initiating independent political and trade union movements of the working class based on the

doctrine of class struggle. They further stood for a socialist state of India declaring it as the objective of the Indian national movement.

Further, it was during this period that the Congress defined its political objective from the nebulous term Swaraj to that of Independence. Various Youth and Independence Leagues which sprang up in the country also adopted Independence as their political goal.

Parallel to these developments, reactionary communal forces also began to organize themselves during this period. The period witnessed a number of communal riots.

The principal gains to the Indian nationalist movement during this phase were the acquisition of a mass basis, the definition of its goal as Independence, the entry of a section of the working class into the movement as an independent political force, the growth of various Youth and Independence Leagues, and the wider participation of peasants in the movement.

The fifth phase covers the period from 1934 to 1939, the year of the outbreak of World War II. There were a number of new developments during this period. A section of Congressmen lost their confidence in the ideology, programmes and methods of Gandhi and formed the Congress Socialist Party which stood for the organization of the workers and peasants on class lines, and made them the motive force of the nationalist movement. The party, however, remained heterogeneous, being composed of groups who broke from Gandhism in varying degrees and having a petty-bourgeois social basis. There also grew up other dissident tendencies from Gandhism like the Forward Bloc led by Subhas Chandra Bose.

Another development was the steady growth of the movements of the depressed classes. The Muslim League also, organizationally and politically, grew stronger in the final years of this period. Further, a number of other Muslim organizations, both of nationalist and communal political hues, also sprang up. The rapid growth of the Communist Party increasingly spreading its influence among students, workers, and kisans, also was another significant development. The rapid growth of the peasant movement was one of the striking developments during this period. Larger and larger sections of peasantry developed national and class consciousness.

However, Desai argues that the rise of an independent kisan movement, the growth of socialist forces, and other developments, however, still represented only minority tendencies within the nationalist movement. The national movement still

remained essentially determined and dominated by the Gandhian outlook and Gandhi's political philosophy and leadership. It still, in the main, reflected the interests of the capitalists and others upper classes.

Desai concludes with the assertion that the influx of new social forces with increasingly growing consciousness in the nationalist movement and their pressure on the leadership, however, did not weaken the movement. It brought more dynamic energy to the movement.

