

UNIT 4 EMERGENCE OF NEW CLASSES

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the rise of new classes which emerged during the colonial period. After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the reasons for the rise of new classes;
- Understand conditions of the old classes; and
- Establish a link between these classes and the following units in rest of the blocks.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Indian society witnessed the emergence of many new classes after the advent of the British rule. There emerged classes of Zamindars, tenants, peasant-proprietors, moneylenders, agricultural laborers, etc. in rural areas; in the urban areas the classes of capitalists, workers, small traders, etc., appeared. There also emerged an educated middle class. Gradually these classes acquired national character, which manifested in the formation of all India organisation by them. The capitalist class formed the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The workers built All India Trade Union Congress. The peasant-proprietors, tenants and agricultural laborers built All India Kisan Sabha. The creation of a national economy and state system out of almost unconnected local economies and congeries of state by the British provided the impulse among the new classes to organise and struggle on an all India basis. The pre-British India was marked with the absence of an all India economy and a unified administrative system. That is why there were no all India classes. These new classes started struggling for the promotion of their sectional interests. The enlightened sections of these classes started understanding the true nature of British rule, they could see the clash of interests of the Indian people with British interests

in India. They also realised that the general prosperity of India society would create better conditions even for promotion of their sectional interests. They also realised this general prosperity could only come with freedom. This realisation galvanised the progressive classes to join the united nationalist freedom struggle.

The emergence of new classes did not follow any uniform pattern everywhere and among all the communities. The new economy causing the rise of new classes was introduced in the areas, which came under the British control. The conquest of India was not achieved in one stroke. It was done in bits and pieces. The part of country coming under British control early witnessed the early rise of the new classes. Bengal was the first to usher in the two new classes the Zamindars and the tenants because British conquest started from Bengal and it was in Bengal where for the first time the permanent settlement, which gave birth to the zamindars and the tenants, was introduced. Even the industrial enterprises which gave rise to the class of industrialists and workers were first set up in Bengal and Bombay areas. The professional and the educated middle class also came into being in these areas much ahead of the other areas. It was because of the introduction of a new administrative apparatus and the modern educational system. Gradually the whole country came under the British control. So the economic system, the administrative set up and the modern education system introduced by the British enveloped the whole of country. This is how the emergence of the new classes became a countrywide phenomenon.

Even among the different communities the emergence of new social classes was not uniform. Baniyas and Parsis were first to be drawn to the commerce and banking so they blossomed into capitalist class. Similarly the Brahmins were first to take the modern education introduced by the British. That is why they largely constituted the class of professionals and the intelligentsia. The Muslims witnessed late emergence of the new classes because they stayed away from the trade and commerce and looked at the modern system of education with suspicion and they lived in northern India, which came under the British subjugation at a much later stage. Bengal had a very large Muslim population.

4.2 FACTORS LEADING TO EMERGENCE OF NEW CLASSES

The altering of the economic arrangement like introduction of new land relation, opening of Indian society for commercial exploitation by the capitalists world, introduction of a new administrative arrangement, a modern education system and the establishment of modern industries were the factors largely responsible for the emergence of the new social classes. The creation of private property in land by the permanent and Ryotwari settlements gave birth to the new classes in the form of large estate owners, the zamindars and peasant proprietors. The class of tenants and sub-tenants were born with the creation of the right to lease land. The right to private property in land and the right to employ labourers to work on land created classes like absentee landlords and agricultural labour. There also emerged a class of moneylenders.

classes. Under the British rule the production, both industrial and agricultural became for the market. This created opportunity for people whose role was to import and export goods from and into India. These people came to be known as merchants. Even in Pre-British India there existed the class of merchants because both internal and foreign trade had existed but it was very small in scale and volume. This class did not carry enough weight in society. The accumulation of profit in hands of the trading class, a section of zamindar and the wealth among the professional classes formed the capital for the rise of textiles, mining and other industries owned by Indians. This led to the emergence of the native capitalist class. Thus completely new classes appeared; one, the industrial capitalist who owned the mills, mines and other capitalist enterprises; two, workers who worked in factories, mines, railways and on plantations.

The new social, economic and state system introduced by the British needed a class of Indians having acquired modern education in professional fields like law, technologies, medicines, economics, etc. The introduction of modern education system all over the country was done with this objective in mind. This ever-expanding class of professionals was the creation of the new socio-economic and administrative arrangement. This professional class was absent in the pre-British India. These professional classes had acquired modern knowledge in the fields of science and arts. The legal system introduced by the British provided opportunities to those who studied law. Those who studied medicine were absorbed in government hospitals and medical colleges.

4.3 OLD CLASSES IN A NEW MILIEU

India had undergone a transformation on the capitalist line under the British rule but this transformation was not as thorough as it was in France, England or the United States of America. This meant stunted industrial development. Consequently some of the old classes continued to survive. The classes of village artisans and urban handicraftsmen were such classes. But the context within which they were functioning had changed because of the development of capitalist economy. Now village artisans unlike in the past were no more servants of the village community. They started sending goods manufactured by them to the market. The urban handicraftsmen who had earlier worked for nobles, princes or wealthy merchants now started selling their products in the market. Another important class for the pre-British period, which managed to survive, was that of the princes they ruled over nearly one third of Indian Territory. They survived because after 1857 the British had abandoned the policy of annexation because by and large the princes had remained loyal to the British during the revolt of 1857. But for the survival the princes had to accept the British paramountcy. All the vital powers of these states were surrendered to the paramount British power. Through Residents the British started interfering in the internal affairs of these states. The condition of the general people was miserable in these princely states. Democratic liberties were almost non-existent. The land revenue and taxation were very high and most of the revenue raised was spent on luxurious life styles of the princes. The introduction of the new economy gave opportunity to the princes to invest in commercial, industrial and financial ventures at times even outside the territory of their princedoms. From the nobles of the medieval times they had transformed into capitalists bound with national capitalist economy.

4.4 THE NEW CLASSES

4.4.1 Zamindars

The permanent settlement of 1793 made by Lord Cornwallis in Bengal and Bihar created the class of zamindars, an aristocratic class, at the top of the agrarian hierarchy. By creating this class the British aimed at creating support base for their rule in India. This was a political necessity for the stability of the British rule. As the zamindars owed their very existence to the British rule, they became their loyal supporters. In return the British gave them representation in various constitutional schemes introduced by the government and other favours. Another motive behind the creation of this class was the stability of income. The company was faced with perpetual financial crisis. The land revenue raised from Bengal had to finance the expansionist wars of the company; it had to meet the establishment costs of the company in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. From this money the company also had to pay for Indian commodities bought for exports. The problem faced by the company was that the revenue collection was erratic and was not enough to meet its needs. The permanent settlement of 1793 had answer to both these problems. It guaranteed stable income and also maximised company's income from land revenue. The permanent settlement also made the task of revenue collection easier. Earlier the company had to directly deal with lakhs of peasants. Now they dealt with the zamindars who became the intermediaries between the Government and peasants.

These zamindars were the agents of the British. In exchange of their commitment to pay a fixed amount of revenue to the government they got the right of collecting as much rent as they could from the defenceless, economically emaciated tenants. If the tenants could not pay revenue on time they were evicted from their land. In case of any dispute the zamindars had the courts and the machinery of government on their side. As a result the condition of the tenants deteriorated immensely in zamindari areas. The agriculture also suffered because the tenants had hardly any surplus left to spend on seeds or manures. The zamindars did not do any thing for improvement of agriculture. The zamindars formed their political organisation, i.e., the British Indian Association. It was a conservative body. This class was always anti-democratic. When Indian National Congress was fighting for democratic rights, administrative reforms or swaraj and organised struggles for these things the zamindars were always on the side of the government. This class was afraid of democratic struggles because the success of such struggles posed threat not only to their interest but also to their very existence. The British used the zamindars as a counter-weight against the rising tide of nationalism.

4.4.2 Tenants

The permanent settlement did not give birth to the class of zamindars alone. It also created a class of tenants in the countryside. They were subjected to exorbitantly high rent. Those who failed to pay rent even due to reasons beyond their control faced ejection. The zamindari arrangement resulted in general impoverishment of the tenants. The Bengal tenancy acts of 1859 and 1885, which aimed at the improvement in the condition of the tenants, could not deliver much and their condition continued to deteriorate. In course of time the tenants became politically conscious which manifested in the

formation tenants unions in U.P., Bihar, Bengal and other areas. The tenants also came under the influence of the Kisan Sabha started by N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand. In UP these were mobilised Baba Ram Chand. These were not only critical of the British rule they were also critical of the Indian National Congress for showing leniency towards the interest of zamindars. Their main demands included reduction of rent, abolition of illegal dues collected by the zamindars. The kisan sabha opposed the zamindars and the zamindari system.

4.4.3 Peasant-Proprietors

In south and south central India where the Ryotwari settlement was introduced, there emerged a class of peasant proprietors. In these areas the cultivators were recognized as the owners of their plots in return to their payment of land revenue. The general condition of this class worsened mainly because of excessive land tax, fragmentation of the size of holding and heavy indebtedness. The condition of some of the peasant proprietors improved and they joined the ranks of rich peasants but most of them fared miserably and joined the rank of poor peasants and tenants of the absentee landlords. Some of them even joined the class of land laborers. The peasant-proprietors became politically conscious much ahead of the tenants. It was because they were in direct contact with the foreign ruler while in Zamindari areas the Zamindars mediated between the government and the tenants. The peasant proprietors did not have difficulty in recognizing their enemy, the British rule. The tenants saw the Zamindars as their enemy not the British rule. The consciousness of the tenants was also blunted because of the Gandhian approach of class harmony. Gandhi emphasized the need of unity between the Zamindars and the tenants for the achievement of Swaraj. The leaders of kisan sabha like N.G. Ranga and sahjanand pressurized the Indian national congress to formulate a programme of the demands for the tenants. They also held that the congress was aligning with Zamindars against the interest of tenants in some areas.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Identify the factors which gave rise to the new classes.

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2) Why did the British create a class of Zamindars?

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3) How were the tenants exploited by the Zamindars?

4.4.4 The Kisan Movement, Main Landmarks

The formation of the U.P. Kisan Sabha in February 1918 marked a watershed development in the history of peasant movements in India. Around this time the kisans started exhibiting political consciousness. They began taking part in nationalist struggles. Their organizations emerged under their own leadership for the achievement of their programmes and objectives. It does not mean that before 1918 there were no peasant movements. In fact there were many. But these movements had narrow and local aims and were devoid of any proper understanding of colonialism or any conception of an alternative society. A conception that could unite people in a common struggle on an all India basis and sustain any long term political movement was absent.

Among the major peasant movements of the nineteenth century was the Indigo Revolt of 1859-60. Indigo was used as a dye for the cotton clothes manufactured by factories in England. Almost all the indigo planters were Europeans and they forced the peasants to grow indigo on the best part of their land. Most of the magistrates were also Europeans and in case of any dispute they used to side with the planters. The indigo revolts enveloped all the indigo-growing districts of Bengal by 1860. The peasants joined together to raise funds to fight court cases filed against them. The planters succumbed to combined pressure and closed their factories. The role of intelligentsia in the indigo revolt was to have a lasting impact on the nationalist intellectuals. Din Bandhu Mitra's play *Neel Darpan* became famous for its vivid description of the exploitation by the planters.

Between 1870 to 1880 large part of East Bengal witnessed agrarian unrest caused by efforts of zamindars to enhance rent beyond legal limits. This they were doing to prevent the tenants from acquiring occupancy rights under Act X of 1859. To achieve this objective they used coercive methods like forced eviction and seizure of crops. In May 1873 an agrarian league was formed in Pabna district to resist the demands of the zamindars. The tenants refused payment of enhanced rent and raised funds to challenge the zamindars in courts. Many of the disputes were settled partly due to government pressure and partly due to zamindar's fear of being dragged into long drawn legal battle by the united peasantry. The 1885 Bengal tenancy act was an attempt to address the worst aspects of the zamindari system.

Poona and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra became theatres of major agrarian unrest in 1875. In these areas cotton prices had gone up in 1860s due to American civil war. When the civil war ended cotton prices crashed. A fifty percent increase in rent by the government and a series of bad harvests further compounded the woes of the peasants. The peasants had no option but to go to the moneylenders. The moneylenders used this opportunity to tighten their grips on the peasants and their lands. The peasants organized a complete social boycott of the moneylenders. They attacked the houses of the moneylenders and also burnt the debt records. In response to this unrest the government brought the Deccan Agriculturists

Relief Act in 1879. Among other important peasant movements in other parts of the country in the nineteenth century were the Mappila outbreak in the Malabar region and the Kuka revolt of Punjab.

Peasant movements in the twentieth century were distinct from those of nineteenth century. Now both the peasant movements and the freedom struggle started influencing each other. Three major movements emerged in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. The kisan sabha and Eka movement in the Avadh area of U.P., the Mappila rebellion in the Malabar region and the famous Bardoli Satyagraha in Gujarat. In U.P. the peasants were faced with the problems of exorbitant rent, illegal levies, begar [unpaid labour] bedakhli [ejectment]. The hefty increase in the prices of essential commodities after the war had further added to their problems. The U.P. kisan sabha was formed in 1918 and by June 1919 it had set up 450 branches in the province. An alternative Oudh kisan sabha was set up in 1920, which succeeded in integrating all the grassroots kisan sabhas of Avadh. This Avadh kisan sabha appealed to the kisans to refuse to till bedakhli land and not to do begar. The Avadh rent act of 1921 attempted to address to some of these demands. Towards the end of 1921 another movement grew in some areas of Avadh under the name of Eka [unity] movement. The main cause of discontent was that the rent in these areas of Avadh was 50% higher than recorded rent. Severe repression by the government brought this movement to an end. The Malabar area of Kerala, which had witnessed disturbance even in the nineteenth century in August 1921, witnessed rebellion by Mappila [Muslim] tenants. Nambudri Brahmins landlords exploited the Mappila tenants. This rebellion had started as an anti-government anti-landlords affair but acquired communal colours. It was crushed ruthlessly by the government. Another important struggle of the peasantry broke out in 1928-29. A thirty percent increase in rent was recommended in the Bardoli taluka of the Surat district in 1926. The peasantry fought under the able leadership of Sardar Patel the peasants fought and forced the government to withdraw the increase in rent.

The 1930s witnessed a countrywide awakening of Indian peasants. The economic depression of 1929-30 and consequent drastic fall in prices of agricultural commodities had badly hit the income of the peasants. But the government and the Zamindars refused to bring down tax and rent. There was a spurt in peasant movements in U.P., Andhra and Bihar. The left ideology propagated by J.L. Nehru, Subhash Bose and the communists was gaining in influence. The leftists underlined the need of an independent class organization of peasants. The All India Kisan Sabha was formed in 1936 with Sahjanand, the founder of Bihar Kisan Sabha as president and N.G. Ranga, the founder of Andhra kisan movement as secretary. The birth of an all India organization representing the aspirations and common demands of peasants from all over the country was a development of great significance.

The Indian national congress shied away from raising the issues concerning the peasants more particularly the tenants living in the zamindari areas. According to Bipan Chandra Congress did not want to weaken Indian nationalism, by dividing our people in political groups based on different economic interests. In 1930 the eleven-points submitted to the British government by Gandhi did not include the main demands of the peasants like reduction of rents and redemption of agricultural indebtedness. The

formation of the Congress ministries in a majority of the provinces raised the expectations of the peasants. These ministries brought many legislations aiming at debt relief, restoration of land lost during depression and security of tenures to the tenants. These steps did not affect the conditions of peasants belonging to lower strata. Many kisan leaders were arrested and their meetings banned. The congress was accused of being anti-peasant. The radical elements within the kisan sabha accused the congress of siding with the capitalists and zamindars.

After the end of world war second when independence appeared imminent the peasants started asserting their rights. The demand of zamindari abolition was raised with a great sense of urgency. In Telangna the peasants organized themselves to resist the landlord's oppression and played an important role in the anti Nizam struggle. In 1946 the Bengal provincial Kisan Sabha led the movement of the share croppers who wanted to pay only one third and not half share of their crop any more to the jotedars. This movement came to be known as Tebhaga movement.

4.4.5 Rise of Modern Indian Intelligentsia

In the early decades of the nineteenth century the number of the educated persons were very small. The spread of modern education was largely the work of the British government. But the Christian missionaries and a large number of enlightened Indians had also established schools and colleges all over the country. Around the middle of the nineteenth century there emerged a large section of intelligentsia. They assimilated western democratic culture and understood the complex problems of the incipient Indian nationhood. They led many social and religious reforms movements to integrate Indian people into a modern nation. The intelligentsia was the first to acquire national consciousness. The people who led the nationalist movement during its different phases may have believed in different ideologies but they all belonged to the same class, the intelligentsia.

Leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and others led the moderate phase of the nationalist movement. In the militant phase the trio of Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and B.C. Pal together with Aurobindo Ghose were main leaders. When the freedom struggle acquired a mass base after the non-cooperation movement of 1919 its leadership passed into the hands of leaders such as M.K. Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Ballabh Bhai Patel, J.L. Nehru, S.C. Bose and intellectuals with socialist and communist leanings. All of them were products of the modern education system. This class was fired with a modern rational, secular, democratic and nationalist vision they were imbued with ideas of democracy, equality, liberty and justice. They fully realized the negative impacts of the British rule and could grasp the contradiction between British interest in India and the Indian interest according to Bipan Chandra it would be wrong to think that the nationalist movement was a product of modern education system launched during the British rule. In fact Indian nationalism was born out of and sustained by conflict of interests between India and Britain. The modern education system helped to understand the nature of conflict in a better way. This class, which included scientists, poets, historians, economists and philosophers, had a dream of a modern, strong, prosperous and united India. Most of the progressive social, religious and political movements were organized by them during the British rule. Their role was crucial because

they had to spread consciousness among illiterate, ignorant, superstitious masses.

The middle class, which comprised of lawyers, doctors, professors, journalists, government employees, students and others, was the product of modern education system. In the second half of the nineteenth century their number swelled because of the expansion in the number of schools and colleges. But the growth in the numbers of educated Indians was not matched with corresponding increase in number of jobs. The economic policies followed by the government failed to create adequate number of jobs that could absorb the educated persons produced by the academic institutions. The discontent among the educated unemployed was the main factor behind the rise and growth of militant nationalism led by Lala Lajpat Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipan Chandra Pal and Aurobindo. This was true also about the growth of revolutionary terrorist movements.

4.5.6 The Capitalist Class

The emergence of the capitalist class was the result of the opening up of the Indian economy to the world capitalist system, the process of industrialisation and the growth of the banking sector. Thus the mercantile, industrial and financial capitalists were born. The accumulation of sufficient savings in the hands of Indian merchants, princes, zamindars and moneylenders provided the basis for the emergence of the Indian industries. The industrialisation of the country started with the setting up of cotton textiles, jute and coal mining industries in 1850s. But most of these industries were owned by the British capitalists because investment in India offered them the prospect of high return due to availability of raw material and labour at cheap rate. Besides, they could count on an oblong colonial government and bureaucracy. But the Indian capitalists had to suffer hostile trade, tariff, taxation and transport policies of the government. In its infancy Indian industries needed protection for rapid growth. All other industrialised countries had protected their infant industries by imposing heavy customs duties on imports from foreign countries. A policy of free trade was imposed upon India to suit the interest of British industries because India was not a free country.

From the beginning most of the cotton textiles industry was owned by the Indians. The Swadeshi and Boycott movement launched by the Indian National Congress in 1905 gave a fillip to the expansion of the Indian industries. The period of the first world war [1914-1918] proved to be a boon for the Indian industries. The diversion of shipping to the war needs had made imports difficult. Therefore, to cater to the war needs many industries were established. Between 1914 to 1947 the Indian capitalist class grew at a faster pace and encroached upon areas of European domination. Towards independence Indian capitalist class owned around seventy percent of the market and eighty per cent of deposits in the organized banking sector.

The rising capitalist class had become quite powerful and conscious by 1905. This class supported the Swadeshi and Boycott movement launched by the Indian National Congress because the objective of the movement suited their class interest. After the First World War and more particularly after 1919-20 the influence of this class started increasing in the nationalist movement and the Indian national congress. According to Bipan Chandra it is true that the congress accepted funds from the capitalist class but inspite



of this the congress maintained its independent position on policy and ideological matters. According to A.R. Desai the capitalist class was attracted towards congress because of Gandhi's leadership, his theory of social harmony, his opposition to the idea of class struggle and his concept of trusteeship.

The capitalist class was aware of the contradiction the interest of the colonial government and their own independent growth. They realized that a national government would provide better atmosphere for their growth. The Indian capitalists were making efforts since 1920s towards forming a national level organization of Indian commercial, industrial and financial interests. These efforts culminated in the formation the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 1927. The F.I.C.C.I. was very soon recognized as national guardian of trade commerce and industry. It pledged its support to the Indian freedom struggle since its inception.

During the 1930s the congress was getting increasingly radicalized under the leadership of Nehru and the socialists. The fear of radicalization did not push the capitalist class to align with the imperialists. The Post War Economic Development Committee set up by the capitalists in 1942 drafted the Bombay Plan, which attempted to accommodate socialist demands like equitable distribution of property, partial nationalization and land reforms without capitalism surrendering its basic features.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Comment of the role of education in rise of modern Indian intelligentsia.

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2) What was the nature of relationship between the Indian National Congress and the Indian capitalists?

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4.4.7 Rise of the Working Class

The modern working class made its appearance in India in the second half of the nineteenth century with the growth of modern industries, railways, post and telegraph network, plantation and mining. In the beginning the Indian working class was formed out of popularised peasants and ruined artisans. The peasants were pauperized because of high land tax, fragmentation of holdings and growing indebtedness. The artisans were forced to join the rank of workers because their products could not compete with the cheaper machine made goods from England. The workers were living in inhuman and degrading condition without any trace of even the minimum duties performed

by the authorities towards them. S.V. Parulekar, who was the Indian delegate at the International Labour Conference held at Geneva in 1938 described the situation of the Indian workers in these words- in India the vast majority of workers get a wage which is not enough to provide them with the meanest necessities of life. According to R.P. Dutt under the enlightened protection of the civilized British Raj filth ridden conditions, limitless exploitation and servitude of the Indian workers were zealously maintained.

The labour movements started in an organised way only after the end of the First World War. Before the war there were strikes and agitations mostly sporadic, spontaneous, lacking long term objectives, devoid of class consciousness, and based on local and immediate grievances. The worsening economic condition of the workers due to the economic crisis that followed the war, the socialist revolution in Russia, the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movement in the country formed the background in which All India Trade Union Congress [A.I.T.U.C.] was borne in 1920 mainly due to the efforts of leaders like N.M. Joshi, Lala Lajpat Roy and Joseph Baptista. Its stated objective was to coordinate activities of all organizations in all the provinces of India to further the interests of Indian labour in economic, social and political matters. The Indian National Congress at its Gaya session in 1922 welcomed the formation of the A.I.T.U.C. and formed a committee of prominent congressmen to assist in its works. According to Bipan Chandra early nationalists paid relatively little attention to the question of labour despite their wretched condition because taking up the issues of labour versus indigenous employer would have weakened the common struggle against imperialism. Another reason for not taking up the issues of worker was the belief of the early nationalists that industrialisation could solve the problems of poverty.

In the second half of the 1920s there was a consolidation of left ideological forces in the country. There developed a left wing leadership even with the trade union movement. In 1928 the left wing including the communists succeeded in acquiring dominant position inside the A.I.T.U.C. The old leadership represented by the Joshi group became in minority. This led to a split in A.I.T.U.C. The workers participated in large numbers in strikes and demonstrations all over the country under the influence of the communists and the radical nationalists. They also participated in Simon boycott demonstration. The government implicated almost the entire radical leadership in the Meerut conspiracy case.

Before the elections for the provincial government in 1937 the Congress had promised to take steps for settling the labour disputes and securing rights to form union and go on strike. The civil liberties had increased under the Congress government. It reflected in the phenomenal rise in the trade unions. There were some charges of undemocratic and pro-capitalistic legislations like Bombay Trade Dispute Act and there were cases of banning labour meetings and imprisonment of labour leaders. When the Second World War started in 1939 the working class of Bombay was amongst the first in the world to hold anti-war strike in which 90,000 workers participated. With the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 the communists argued that the character of the war had changed from imperialist war to people's war. They were of the view that the working class should now support the allied powers and dissociate themselves from the Quit India Movement of 1942.



Inspite of the indifference of the communists towards it, the Quit India Movement had its impact on the workers. After the arrest of Gandhi and other leaders there were strikes all over the country. There were strikes between 1945-47 in support of the I.N.A. prisoners in Calcutta when their trial began. There were strikes by Bombay workers in solidarity with mutiny of the Naval Ratings in 1946.

The emergence of the new classes in India proved to be an event having far-reaching implications. Generally the enlightened sections of these classes strengthened the freedom struggle but there were reactionary trends also. The reactionary section of the intelligentsia spread distrust among different communities, which manifested in growth of communalism. The abolition of zamindari was essential for the improvement in the condition of the rural masses. The Indian capitalist class never supported this demand. Another important fact was that while these classes combined together to win independence their vision of post-Independence India, and the form of state the socio-economic structure were divergent.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What was the attitude of the working class towards the Simon Commission?

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2) What was the attitude of the provincial governments led by the Congress towards the working class?

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

During the colonial period several new classes emerged in India. These included Zamindars, tenants, peasant-proprietors, moneylenders and agricultural labourers in the rural areas, and the capitalists, modern intelligentsia and working class in the cities. They were borne out of the development of capitalist system, new administrative structure and education system. These classes played roles in the national movement depending on their class positions and interests.

4.6 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Desai, A.R., *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1976.

Dutt, R.P. *India Today*, Calcutta 1970.

Misra, B.B., *The Indian Middle Class*, London, 1961.

Chandra, Bipan, et. al. *Colonialism, Freedom Struggle and Nationalism in India*, Delhi.

4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Introduction of capitalist system, new administrative structure and a modern education system.
- 2) To protect their interests by creating a loyal class, which could provide them revenue and other kinds of support to dominate India.
- 3) By extracting rent, eviction from the land and physical torture.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) It inculcated the ideas of rationalism, equality, democracy.
- 2) The Indian capitalist class funded the Congress, they supported the national movement led by the Congress.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) They opposed it.
- 2) The Congress governments took steps in settling the labour disputes, and securing the rights of the working class. However, in provinces like Bombay it took anti-working class measures.