Anil Seal in his work entitled, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge, 1968) has primarily focused his attention on the role of Indian middle-class in bringing about national resurgence, culminating in emancipation from alien rule. Seal’s firm belief is that the most crucial institutional factor in the political change was the English educated youth. This new class of young Indians was offered social-benefits by the British Indian-government. Thus, he regarded this educated middle-class as a tool of the British in leading the political movement of India.

The preface of the book delivers a valuable information. It is interesting to note that to establish the background of the early Indian politics, Anil Seal has mainly consulted the official publications, but in his own words he frankly admits, “As for 1880’ as for 1940’ the best sources of Indian politics are the private papers of the Indians.” Thus the complete dependency of Anil Seal on official papers and consequently misrepresentation of such information in order to justify every action of the Indian government did mould Anil Seal’s impartial attitude into an inevitably biased mind.

Regarding the pre-1885 political organisation, Seal points out that the sole reason for the existence of such institutions was to better the lot of their members. Firstly, this conclusion seems to be

ambiguous, secondly if so, than one can simply ignore this argument because of the fact that most of the Freedom Struggles of the world i.e. U.S.A. and Russia initially began with the local political demands and protests and spearheaded by small groups and communities. Therefore the Indian Freedom Struggle is just a repetition of any country's struggle against the foreign yoke in the initial stages.

Explaining his perceptions further, Seal states that but for the many educated youth, collaboration was likely to be a conditional bargain so long as working with the government seemed to benefit their regional, caste or communal aspirations, but once the benefits lessened, so did their pliancy. This is hard to believe that there existed any casteism, communism or regionalism. It was simply a struggle for the survival of the Indian youth under the British Raj that was working as a juggernaauth from above. This fact is verified by Iftikhar-ul-anwal of Dacca University who says that a host of causes both subjective and objective were responsible for the unemployed problem. Under the objective causes may be placed the factors which could frequently be termed as economic, i.e. the state of Bengal's trade, commerce, industry, agriculture and the development programmes of the government which directly affected the unemployment situation within the province. The subjective causes on the other hand may be classified as education and social i.e. the education and social framework which resulted in swelling the ranks of unemployed. In addition to this, the repressive measures of 1870's had began to push the educated Indians towards politics, the importance of Ripon's good intentions could only drive them further along that path. These educated Indians were termed as elites by Anil Seal and he emphatically argued that

49 Seal, Anil; op. cit., p.11.

50 The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.XIX, No.1 (New Delhi, 1982.) p.31.

51 Seal, Anil; op. cit., p.170.
there were keen internal rivalries between caste and caste and between community and community. However the term elite can not be classified as it involves almost all the rural and urban classes and communities. Secondly, it seems that Anil Seal has overemphasized the caste factor in order to prove the justification of the policy of divide and rule, as the Indian masters did, sometimes becoming pro-Hindus or on other occasion siding with the Muslims as per their administrative convenience. Seal further remarked that in its earlier days, the Raj had been able to shed its more primitive collaborators as simply as the changing walking-sticks, but the Western educated could not be discarded so easily. Once they took to the technique of secular association, they started possessing a type of organisation which could be generalised to anIndia level, while they were precisely the sections of the population whose interests most plausibly be unified at this level. It is noteworthy to say that the Western educated class did not exploit the poor masses and its sole aim was to win the subsistence according to their qualifications in the British-oriented fierce competition.

In the work entitled: Locality, Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics, 1870-1940 jointly edited by Gallagher, Johnson and Seal (Cambridge,1973.), Anil Seal went to the extent of describing the presence of vertical alliances in the pattern-client relationship. Another viewpoint expressed by Seal is that by shifting its internal alliances from time to time, the Raj emphasized the rivalries which furrowed the empire. That the analyses of the origin of the Congress suggest that transcending the ties of family, caste, religion and locality and surviving their random beginnings, these provincial organisations were the first overt sign of a social and political revolution in the sub-continent. Continuing his seething attack, Anil Seal points out that the impact of a Western

52 Seal, Anil ,op. cit., p.341.
53 Ibid., p.344-45.
government at some places upset the traditional rankings of hierarchy and dominance in local society, thus increasing competitiveness between different communities and castes. Charging the early Congress, Seal says that the moderate attitude was designed to reassure the British that it was vital not to damage their (Congress) credit in London, and since it was also vital not to split the fragile alliance among the all India elite, the Movement had to remain not only ill-organised but highly restrained. Seal has termed the Congress a ramshackle coalition, throughout its long carrier, with its unity as a mere figment. A careful observation of Seal's work reveals that he has overstressed Indian self-seeking and factionalism (mostly driven from official sources) and ignored the growth of new cementing bounds. There is no denial of the fact that Seal has shut his eyes to the growth of an all-India ideology and common anti-imperialist sentiment. Turning on the Extremists, Seal propounded the theory that the most conspicuous form of extremism was an all-India coalition of dissidents who having been out-maneuved in their own provinces, tried to reverse at the top, the defects which they had suffered in the localities.

Seal has attempted to project the differences between the Moderates and the Extremists in terms of competition for position and jobs. He has endorsed the cause of various castes and the demands of regional language based parties but at the same time ignored the backwardness of these communities. These communities when became aware of their political rights and as there were very limited opportunities of their economic and social upliftment because of the faulty government policies, then in sheer desperation they turned to the upper castes in order to survive for their very existence. For example, beneficiaries of the government's Education policy were mainly the upper classes of the

54 Anil Seal, op. cit., p.25.
55 Ibid., p.295.
56 Ibid., p.297.
society. So the transformation that came with the English education was very limited in nature.

Broadening his attack on the Congress, Seal states that the decision to exclude the question of social reforms out of the Congress was carefully calculated since it was above all kind of issues, likely to divide the Indians\textsuperscript{57}. However, this was not a proper time for raising such a delicate issue, which was directly connected with Indian religious life and have landed the newly formed Congress into an untimely controversy. Interesting enough, Seal observes that during the years from 1870-1887, so vital for the growth of Indian polity, the critics of the Raj were calling for social reforms and economic expansion, the government was too poor to meet their demands\textsuperscript{58}. This claim of Anil Seal can not be endorsed, that the Indian government lacked funds for the welfare activities, keeping in view the massive drain of wealth from India to England.

Analysing the communal problem in India, Seal remarked that the constitutional set up in India had deep impact on communal politics. The introduction of representative system with its emphasis on majority led to communal polarization in a society fragmented into religious communities. However Seal shows signs of failure in understanding the Indian Nationalism from a historical perspective. How did the various castes and communities lived harmoniously during the past twenty five hundred years? Seal further opines that India was so shapeless, so jumbled a bundle of societies, there were not two nations, there was not one nation. What was India? A graveyard of old nationalities struggling to be born\textsuperscript{59}. Seal has rightly observed that the Hindus had formulated the main strata of the working class in the

\textsuperscript{57} Anil Seal \textit{op. cit.}, p.295.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p.8.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p.332.
government jobs and not the Muslims. However everyone was given a free hand to get education and than compete for the jobs under the so-called democratic set up. That for the great majority of educated and professional men, education had become the means of survival. As far as the jobs and salaries are concerned, Seal is silent over the wide disparities existed between an English clerk and his Indian counterpart.

Analysing the Indian National Congress, Seal declares that the Annual Session of the Congress was already becoming the high point of the political year as well as a social event. This point of Seal brings out the message that the polarisation of the educated class or largely the middle-class, if not the whole masses, was perhaps the greatest achievement of the early Congress. In the same tone, B.B. Misra echoes his viewpoint by stating that the middle-class representatives began to dominate the Indian National Congress after 1890's and had become a formidable force in the National Movement. Moreover, Seal seems allergic to Indian Nationalism when he says that what ensured Hume's dominance over the early Congress was the feeble nature of its organisation. That the Congress remained shapeless and as flaccid as ever until it agreed on a constitution in 1899. Seal raises another controversy by stating that it was due to the uneven development of the country which resulted in a considerable disparity in political sophistication between the various

60 Seal Anil, *op. cit.*, p.60.
61 Ibid., p. 57.
63 Ibid., p. 288.
64 Ibid., p. 290.
regions of India which the Congress claimed to represent. Seal has cleverly eluded the question as to who is primarily responsible for this disparity? What moral responsibility does Raj owe to it?

Justifying the government policy on privatising the primary education, Seal overlooks the financial position of the majority of the Indian families, which would be unable to educate their children in such costly schools. Seal is absolutely right when he says that wide disparities regarding the various levels of educational standard still exist in independent India i.e. government and public schools, rural and urban youths. However such divide is a worldwide phenomenon. For example, wide disparities exist between the American Public School system and the Private School system, the similar kind of gap could be witnessed in the Canadian system of School education system. Summing up Hume's role in education, Seal points out that the former looked towards education as to reconcile India to British rule.

Evaluating England's role in other colonies of the world, Seal states that India became a linchpin in linking the Middle-East, South-East Asia and the Far-East. This statement proves that it is since Eighteenth Century that Great Britain is indebted to India for using it as a launching pad for its imperial interests. That the technique of decentralizing the empire through the responsible government which the mid-Victorians have applied to the colonies of the White settlement, did not apply to India. The inference one can draw out from above information is

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66 Ibid., p.269.
67 Ibid., p.2.
68 Ibid., p.6.
that British masters had a prejudiced attitude against India and its people. In addition to it, there is another interesting information that is, with the exception of Mr. Lawrence, all Vicerays in India were aristocrats and with the exception of Lord Curzon, all these aristocrats came to India with a sketchy knowledge about the Indian Peninsula.

Last but not the least, Seal has charged the intellectuals of Calcutta for calling the British-Indian government as oppressor. On the other hand, the Bengali intellectuals argued that the peasants faced with mounting debts and sinking fields, marched not against the foreigners but against the land-owners and the money-landers. That this class was given a free hand and legal shelter by the British-Indian government to crush any protest made by the hapless peasants. This fact is also verified by Binay Bhushan Chaudhary's observation, that the circumstances which caused most of the sales of peasants' holdings were mostly due to permanent background of their indebtedness. The state of this indebtedness was not necessarily related to the occurrence of famines but certain developments during the British rule also considerably altered the rural credit scene. Moreover Sir Walter Lawrence's statement finds accuracy, when he points out that the local administration was actually in the hands of Indian officials. Thus a kind of dual-government was working in the Indian villages where local officials used to oppress the peasants on the complaints of money-lenders and land-owners, so it was obvious that peasants' resentment and grievances were against these three communities.

69 Seal Anil, op. cit., p.3.
70 Ibid., p. 12-13.
71 Indian History Review; Vol.2, No.1, (New Delhi, 1975) p.106.
But the actual oppressor was the British because they created the circumstances for the village peasantry’s exploitation by the local hands.

Thus to conclude, Anil Seal’s complete work is an attempt to make an all out effort in order to prove the British Raj as the most benevolent one. The so called educated elites become so because they have understood the exploitative nature of the British-Indian government and consequently they protested against this imperialist design. It becomes crystal clear that the various theories were propounded in due course, i.e. Whiteman’s burden theory, to exalt the custodians of the Raj as Messiah. On the other hand Indians were branded as uncivilized, barbarians and full of superstitions. Anil Seal, evitably or inevitably, becomes a party to such distortions of the history of Indian Freedom Struggle.