INTRODUCTION
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Prison has been defined as a place properly arranged and equipped for the reception of persons who by legal process are committed to it for safe custody while awaiting trial or punishment.

Prison goes back ultimately to Latin prae hendere ‘seize’ from this was derived the noun prae hensio ‘seizure’ later contracted to ‘prensio’, which passed into old French as ‘prisun’. By now it is specially used for ‘imprisonment’, and from this it moved on in due course to the concrete place of ‘imprisonment’- both senses which entered English from old French in the Twelfth century. ‘Jail’ etymologically, a jail is a ‘little cage’. The word comes ultimately from raw Latin gaviola, which was an alteration of an earlier caviola, a diminutive form of Latin cavea ‘cage’ (source of English cage). It passed into English in two distinct versions: jail came via old French jaiole; but the Old Northern French form of the word was gaiole and this produced English gaol. Until the 17th century gaol was pronounced with a hard/g sound, but then it gradually fell into line phonetically with jail. There has been a tendency for British English to use the spelling gaol, while Americans prefer jail.1

Prisons are an integral part of the Criminal Justice System and function as custodians of prisoners. While the purpose and justification of imprisonment is to protect the society against crime, retribution and punitive methods of treatment of prisoners alone are neither relevant nor desirable to achieve the goal of reformation and rehabilitation of prison inmates. The concept of Correction, Reformation and Rehabilitation has come to the
foreground and the prison administrations are also now expected to also function as curative and correctional centers.

Prisons have always been spaces of constraint, especially for writers. That freedom, coercion, imagination, and resistance are viscerally evoked in texts concerned with incarceration ranging from the eleventh to the twenty-first century, and Russian, Italian, Persian, and countless other languages suggest that there is a coherent genre of prison writing extending across world literature, albeit largely pertaining to the modern period.

The inmates of prisons suffer various deprivations. One of the most obvious deprivations is the loss of their civilian possessions; poverty is an inevitable part of prison policy. Another deprivation is in the sexual sphere; the prisoner is usually denied any heterosexual contact. The great mass of a prison's regulations deprive the inmate of much of his autonomy as an individual. Finally, living in close association with other criminals creates an atmosphere of personal insecurity that even the most hardened criminals find inherently stressful.

Long and lonely terms of exile and prison are hard to bear, and the mind of many a brave person has given way and the body breaks down under the strain. To live cut off from the rest of the world and far away from one's own relatives, friends and companions and those who share one's hope and lighten one's burden, one must have tremendous strength of mind, and inner depths which are calm and steady, and the courage to endure endless suffering. Hundreds of personalities whole heartedly accepted the sentences.

The prison is a place populated by heroes as well as plagued by demons. In the colonial context, prison exemplifies the callous brutality of the colonial regime as well as the defiant suffering of India's imprisoned
youth, but it also a place of ambiguity, in which the dividing line between the prisoner and the jailor is not always as absolute as might appear at first.

Prison was also a place of instruction, conducive to self-purification and moral regeneration. Nehru described the hardships of jail life as “mostly imaginary” and encouraged Indians to think of prison as “a holy and happy place”, a “palace”, and even a “paradise” Citing Bunyan and Tilak as examples, he presented prison as a place where “conscientious men” had “achieved great things”.

Further Nehru puts provides some more details:

Prison narratives were written to inspire as well as inform. Prison elicited many life histories that would not otherwise have been written. It could provide the time as well as the incentive for autobiographical writing, though it should be noted that conditions in jail were not always so conductive for middle-class prisoners, some of whom (like M.N.Roy) were deliberately denied ink, pen and paper as well as access to books and newspapers. For others, it was only following their release that writing became emotionally as well as physically possible. After a long and gruelling period of confinement, writing about jail experiences might be a kind of necessary self-purging answering a therapeutic need to “imprison” the ordeal of incarceration on paper and so to come to terms with the humiliation and suffering involved.

Though the inmates of the British jail have scribbled their feelings in their leisure hours, they provide us the picture of the age in making, the turmoil, and the social, political and social upheavals of those days.
Desire to seem clever, to be talked about, to be remembered after death and desire to share an experience which one feels is valuable and ought not to be missed.

Rare persons can produce great works in the prison cells, because those works are the result of great concentration and peace of mind. The best of such individuals is reflected in their writings, but not always. Sometimes the solitary cell can be nerve-racking and devastating. It all depends upon the person and attitude of the political authorities and their intentions. Many noble-hearted souls have perished in such inhuman, dangerous prisons, unknown to the world and unwept.

During the British colonial regime, India was a vast prison house and people went to prison willingly. In pre-independence India, prison played a significant role in shaping the personalities of political leaders involved in the fight against British colonial rule. Going to prison was a matter of honour then—a sacrifice in the service of the nation. For the sake of the nation they were ready to sacrifice everything. Some of them were arrested without reasons. Several of them were deported in order to curb the militant activities of others. The notable personalities jailed during the freedom movement are Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), Surendra Nath Banerjee (-1925), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920), Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932), Shyam Sundar Chakraborty (1869-1932), Ullaskar Dutta (1885-1965), Aurobondo (1872-1950), Barindra Kumar Ghose (1880-1959), Khudiram Bose (1899-1908), Prafulla Chaki (1888-1908), Jatindranath Mukherjee (1879-1915), Bhagat Singh (1907-1931), Udham Singh (1899-1940), Ram Prasad Bismil (1897-1927), Chandra Shekhar Azad (1906-1931), Ashafullah Khan (1900-1927), Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915), Motilal Nehru (1861-1931), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861-1946), Maulana Abul

The young turks who risked their life and with their protests and militancy laid down their life in sacrifice are Bhagat Singh, Prafulla Chaki, Khudiram Bose, Benoy Krishna Basu, Ashafullah Khan, Chandra Shekhar Azad, and Ram Prasad Bismil. It is notable that the lawyers by profession not only fought to release the captives, but also they entered the prison and spent there the prime days of their life span.

Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Bannerjee, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Madan Mohan Malviya, Motilal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Asaf Ali, and B.R. Ambedkar were lawyers. They would
have lived a happy life, but they sacrificed everything to provide freedom to the nation.

One of the important facets of India's freedom movement was the growing participation of women. Women played an especially crucial role in the economic boycott campaigns and often participated in the non-cooperation movement with as much enthusiasm or even greater enthusiasm than their husbands or male relatives. In rallies organized by the Congress, women attended in large numbers often with little children in tow. Nehru in his *Discovery of India* puts it thus:

Most of us men folk were in prison. And then a remarkable thing happened. Our women came to the front and took charge of the struggle. Women have always been there of course, but now there was an avalanche of them, which took not only the British government but their own men folk by surprise. Here were these women, women of the upper or middle classes leading sheltered lives in their homes-peasant women working class women, rich women—pouring out in their tens of thousands in defiance of government order and police lathi. It was not only that display of courage and daring, but what was even more surprising was the organisational power they showed.4


Was there a necessity for these persons to forgo their worldly pleasures and enter the inhuman, unhygienic death cells of the period? The cellular jail of Andaman, The Jails of Yerawda, Alipore, Lahore, Mandalay, Culcutta, Bombay, Vellore, Dehradun, Naini and the forts of Ahmednagar were the Hotels of King Edward to entertain these stalwarts of India. They had that noble cause to fight for the rights of common man and his aspirations. They left their vocations, spent from their earnings, sacrificing family happiness, and tasting the lathi blows even lethal.

Prison literature is a literary genre characterized by literature that is written while the author is confined in a location against his will, such as prison, jail or house arrest. The literature can be about prison, informed by it, or simply coincidentally written while in prison. It could be a memoir, a nonfiction, or a fiction.

Prison narratives were written to inspire as well as to inform. Prison elicited many life histories that would not otherwise have been written. It could provide the time as well as the incentive for autobiographical writing, though it should be noted that conditions in jail were not always so conductive for middle-class prisoners. Writing about the experience of being
in prison, whether during one’s imprisonment or afterwards, presents unusual challenges to the writer. While the memoir or account may be an opportunity to record personal and individual suffering, many prison writers convert their experiences into narratives of broad social, historical, and philosophical importance.

The writings from prison are wide ranging and have been written in almost all languages of the world. Celebrated works are listed here. They are Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (524 AD) which has been described as by far the most interesting example of prison literature the world has ever seen. Hugo Grotius wrote his *Commentaries* while in prison. Sir Thomas Malory, imprisoned during the 1450s, perhaps for rape as well as theft, wrote *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Miguel de Cervantes was jailed two or three times, and he claims in his prologue to *Don Quixote* that his great mock-romance was "begotten in a prison". Confined to a cell, the author's imagination wanders with his crack-brained knight over the dusty roads of Spain. Thomas Paine’s *Age of Reason*, Pierre Jean de Berenger's *Le Roi d'Yvetot*, Denis Diderot’s *Philosophique*, Victor Hugo’s *L'Evenement*, Jean Paul Sartre’s *The Flies*, Emile Zola’s *Nana  L'accuse*, are products of Jail.

Sir Walter Raleigh compiled his *History of the World, Volume I*, in a prison chamber in the Tower of London, but he was only able to complete Volume –I, before he was executed. Francis Bacon wrote *Essays* from detention. John Bunyan's allegory, Pilgrim's Progress, narrating Christian's journey to the holy city, was written while he was incarcerated in Bedford jail for 12 years. He was imprisoned for refusing to cease public preaching. Oscar Wilde wrote *De Profundis* in Reading jail, where he spent two years after being found guilty of "gross indecency". Wilde penned his apologia for his life and conduct. Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German while held at Wartburg Castle. John Cleland wrote *Memoirs of a*
Woman of Pleasure, while confined for a year in the Fleet Debtors' prison in the 1740s. He composed this peculiarly literary work of pornography, which is full of sex but has no rude words. Jean Genet's Our Lady of the Flowers largely autobiographical novel was written in secret while its author was in prison for theft. Richard Lovelace, the Cavalier poet was jailed during the conflict between the Parliament and Charles-I after he had led a march from Kent in support of the royalist cause. During his seven weeks in the Fleet prison he wrote To Althea, from Prison. Deprived of his books and his freedom, Ezra Pound produced the most admired and accessible section of his magnumopus, Cantos LXXIV to LXXXIV while interned by the American army in a camp near Pisa. Adolf Hitler wrote his autobiographical and political ideology book Mein Kampf while he was imprisoned after the Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923. Antonio Gramsci while imprisoned wrote his posthumously published prison writings, Lettere del carcere, which presents his theory of hegemony. My Life in Prison (1912), by Donald Lowrie gives the early accounts of prison life. Nelson Algren's short story El Presidente de Mejico, explored his experience in a Texas jail. O. Henry (William Sidney Porter) wrote 14 stories while in prison for embezzlement, and it was during this time that his pseudonym “O. Henry” stuck to him. E. E. Cummings's autobiographical novel The Enormous Room was written while imprisoned by the French during World War-I on the charges of expressing anti-war sentiments in private letters home. Nigerian author Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed while in prison, and wrote Sozaboy, about a young naïve imprisoned soldier. Nigerian author Chris Abani's book of poetry Kalakuta Republic is based on his experiences in prison. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's prison diary titled Detained: A Prisoner's Diary was published in 1981. Wole Soyinka’s prison diary was published in 1972 as The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka. It is a fragmented account of his experience, disorderly and wildly various in tone. Etheridge Knight’s
(1931–1991) first volume of verse, which he called *Poems from Prison*, and hailed Knight as one of the major poets of the Black Arts Movement. Nelson Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom* from Robben Island gives a vivid picture of his twenty seven years imprisonment.

It tells the extraordinary story of his life, an epic of struggle, setback, renewed hope, and ultimate triumph. I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.5

In pre-independence India, prison played a significant role in shaping the personalities of political leaders involved in the fight against British colonial rule.

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Though the inmates of the British jail have scribbled their feelings in their leisure hours, they provide us the picture of the age in making, the turmoil, and the social, political and social upheavals of those days.

Nehru puts it thus;

> Prison-life has its advantages; it brings both leisure and a measure of detachment. But the disadvantages are obvious. There are no libraries or reference books at the command of the prisoner, and under these conditions, to write on any subject and specially history is a foolhardy undertaking. A number of books came to me, but they could not be kept. They came and went. Twelve years ago, however, when, in common with large numbers of my countrymen and countrywomen, I started my pilgrimages to prison, I developed the habit of making notes of the books I read.⁶

Gandhiji used to call prison a mandir (temple). To him it was a temple of liberty, spiritual as well as political. Indians whose life was caught between the socio-political subjugation by the British gave impetus to this
kind of writing. Prison writing almost became an essential component of great leaders and great souls of India.

In the works of Gandhiji;

Prison was also a place of instruction, conducive to self-purification and moral regeneration. He described the hardships of jail life as “mostly imaginary” and encouraged Indians to think of prison as “a holy and happy place”, a “palace”, and even a “paradise”.

Most people think of prison as an environment designed to stifle creativity, but some of society’s most important literary and political works have come from behind bars. The isolation allows inmates ample time to reflect, and putting their ideas on paper is a powerful tool of outreach and expression—both hard to come by in prison.

During the struggle for independence, most of our national leaders went through repeated periods of incarceration. Prison became a part of our saga of struggle for national independence. Prison, though an isolated place secluded from the normal public life, inspired great people when they were behind the bars to give vent to their flow of thoughts in an enforced tranquility has thus enormously urged them to record their experiences in that tranquility provided for them much against their will every literature is a product of its age and it thus necessarily breathes the spirit of its age. Indian literature is not an exception to it.

Lala Lajapat Rai, Wrote about his life from 9th May 1907 to 18th Nov. 1907 In the story of my Deportation, in 1908 from Mandalay Jail, Syam Sundar Chakravarty’s Through Solitude and Sorrows (1910), Barindra Kumar Ghose’s The Tale of my Exile (1922), Ullaskar Dutt’s Twelve Years of My Prison Life (1924), B.K.Sinha’s In Andamans: The Indian Bastille

After independence, we get a few incarcerations, that too from the communists and Trade Union Leaders. Some of the books of pre-independence era were published in this period. Leaders like S. A. Dange, E.M.S. Namboodaripad were sent to jail on various charges. The literature produced behind bars is very limited compared to the pre-independence era. The notable works are S.A.Dange’s *From Primitive Communism to Slavery* (1949), Gulab Singh’s *Thorns and Thistles: Autobiography of a Revolutionary* (1948), Mahadev Desai’s *Day to Day with Gandhi in nine volumes* (1953), Kakasaheb Kalelkar’s *Even Behind the Bars* (1961), Badashah Khan’s *My Life and Struggle* (1969) and A.S.R.Chari’s *My sojourn in prison* (), Gudleppa Hallikeri’s *Diary*()

In India, there were at least four major occasions in the recent past of prison being used as an ideological instrument for suppressing dissent or generating consent for the ruling class, ideology or group.

The First was the pre-1947 anti colonial struggle, the second the communist uprising of the 1950’s the third being the Maoist uprising of the late sixties and the seventies and the fourth Emergency. All these were occasions when the establishment was challenged and the status quo sought to be subverted from different points of views with varying ideological biases. Each of these periods had produced an interesting collection of prison writings of all genres, like autobiographies, memoirs, letters, poems, stories and documentary writings. While studying Indian Prison writings in English the contemporary socio political ambience need to be focused from fresh socio political perspectives to know about its origin, motif and sustainity.

Prison literature especially namely novels, short stories, poems or plays, that delves into the horrid conditions and experiences in prison, has increased immensely. It is a global phenomenon whose importance in examining the struggles in the society cannot be ignored.Hence the study of these prison writings and their socio-political perspectives was felt as the worthwhile academic exercise to ponder over.

The present study is prominently confined only to the selected works of the writers of pre-Independence and Emergency period.

In the Introduction the scope of Indian Prison writings in English is discussed elaboratively.
The first Chapter is devoted to the study of social background for the development of Indian prison writings in English, which helps us to form socio-political perspectives in Indian prison writings in English.

The second chapter aims at evaluating the motif behind writing of Indian prison writings in English, thereby focusing on the socio-political perspectives which emerge out of it.

The third chapter would deal with the Prison Literature in Indian Context and the brief survey is taken up for all the literature produced behind the bars.

The fourth chapter aims at dealing with the critical analysis of the prominent works cited, referred and analysed.

The fifth chapter is dealt with the conclusion drawn upon after a thorough critical analysis and observation from an analytical perspective which is followed by an exhaustive bibliography and necessary appendices.

Since, there are very scanty studies available to explore the plethora of Indian prison writings in English. The present study is taken up as worthwhile attempt to throw light upon the neglected genre of Indian prison writings in English; hence it aims at studying these prison writings to explore socio-political perspectives in the Indian context with special emphasis on the Indian prison writings in English.
REFERENCES

1. Bloomsbury dictionary of word origins.


3. Ibid -177

4. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, P.79


7. Ibid. 170.
CHAPTER I
SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

After the revolt of 1857, India saw a radical change in the political and social scene. The establishment of universities in presidency towns and the first products of higher education began to sprout vigorously.

The vast railway network, the growth of the native press in bigger cities and acquisition of a common language, that is, English, soon brought the new Indian intelligentsia closer. They had, according to Percival Spear:

a common aspiration for self government based on a common language, territory or racial strain.¹

The Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, and the Arya Samaj contributed their share in educating and awakening the people and tried to eradicate social evils. Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Swamy Vivekanand and others instilled a new spirit of confidence in the minds of the people. Syed Ahmed Khan and others tried to disseminate Western ideas and education among the Muslims.

The new reformist zeal was accompanied by a political awakening. People were aware of the day-to-day happenings in the country. Agitations against lowering the age limit for civil service examinations, the Arms Act, the Vernacular Press Act and the Ilbert Bill accelerated the tempo of Indian political activities.

With the introduction of English education in the early nineteenth century, a favourable climate for higher studies was created. The new system of education, in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru...

...... opened the doors and windows of the mind to new ideas and dynamic thoughts.²
The elite encouraged their sons to study English and also sent them abroad. Even the European education stirred a liberalised new wave of thinking.

1. PRE-GANDHIAN YEARS (1885-1915)

With the establishment of the Indian National Congress, an opposition party for the government was formed. The intelligentsia of the Indian society could come together, with A.O.Hume and Annie Besant getting initial approval of Viceroy Dufferin. Its early proceedings began with declarations of loyalty and gratitude for the blessings of British rule. But this harmony between the INC and the British Govt did not last long. It started mildly criticising the Government and demanding changes in the administrative set up and legislative machinery. It was the first organised expression of Indian nationalism on the all-India scale. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru:

......with the coming-of-age of National Congress a new type of leadership appeared, more aggressive and defiant and representing the much larger numbers of the lower middle classes as well as students and young men. The powerful agitation against the partition of Bengal had thrown up many able and aggressive leaders.³

Surendranath Bannerji was the first to go to jail for performing of his duty as a journalist, on the charges of sedition and contempt of court. He was convicted and sentenced to two months imprisonment.

The man who is most frequently associated with the struggle for the freedom of press during the nationalist movement is Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He initiated no-tax campaign in Maharashtra in 1896-97. Tilak with his terse and forceful Marathi writings and speeches infused the patriotic zeal among the public. He was arrested on July 27, 1897, on charges of exciting
disaffection among Indians towards the Government. It was a rare coincidence of murdering of Rand and Ayerst by Chapekar brothers, for the rash behaviour of Rand as a Plague Commissioner. Tilak, though not connected to the incident, could get a rigorous imprisonment sentence for Eighteen months. He was sent to Bombay Jail and then shifted to Yeravada Jail.

Tilak passed full one year in jail. During that time he was the subject of discussion in India and abroad. The discussion was focussed on the condition of India. Ram Gopal puts it down thus:

the British methods of suppressing the Press and muzzling free expression, and the seeming subordination of the judiciary to the executive. 4

Tilak was released six months early on the request petition of Max Muller and others, with a condition that he should not get engaged in such activities again.

Risings and breakouts in the North West frontier against British rule in 1897, the famine and the epidemic of bubonic plague which have ravaged India around 1900, an earthquake killing more than 10,000 people in Lahore area in 1905, – Hindu – Muslim riots in Calcutta and Bombay in 1905, Lord Curzon’s partition of Bengal - all these aroused nationalistic feelings in Indians against the inactive govt. policies, and subsequently, created an unprecedented upsurge in the masses. Partition of the province of Bengal intended improvements in administrative efficiency in that huge and populous region, where the Bengali Hindu intelligentsia exerted considerable influence on local and national politics. The partition outraged Bengalis. Not only had the government failed to consult Indian public opinion, but the action appeared to reflect the British resolve to divide and rule. Widespread
agitation ensued in the streets and in the press, and the congress advocated boycotting of British products under the banner of *swadeshi*.

The *Swadeshi* Movement from 1903-08 encouraged women, students, and a large section of the urban and rural population of Bengal and other parts of India to become actively involved in politics for the first time. The militant nationalists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajapat Rai and Aurobindo Ghosh were in favour of extending the movement to the rest of the India and carrying it beyond the programme of just *Swadeshi* and boycott to a full pledged political mass struggle.

There were differences of opinion between the Moderates and Extremists, regarding the pace of the movement and the techniques of struggle to be adopted in Swadeshi Movement. There was a split in the Congress, which while weakening the Congress, strengthened the hands of the government. With Tilak's arrest, all hopes for an Indian offensive were stalled. The Congress lost credit with the people. A Muslim deputation met with the Viceroy, Minto seeking concessions from the impending constitutional reforms, including special considerations in government service and electorates. The British recognised some of Muslim League's petitions by increasing the number of elective offices reserved for Muslims in the Government of India Act 1909. The Muslim League insisted on its separateness from the Hindu-dominated Congress, as the voice of a "nation within a nation."

The British government tried to suppress the movement by arresting and deporting the leaders. Between 1907 and 1908 nine major leaders, including Ashwani Kumar Dutta, Krishna Kumar Mitra were deported. Tilak was given a sentence of six years imprisonment. Ajit Singh, Lala Lajapat Rai and Shyam Sundar Chakravarty were deported. Chidambaram Pillai and
Hari Sarvottam Rao from Madras and Andhra were arrested. Aurobindo Ghose was sent to Alipore jail. C.F. Andrews and Girija Mookerjee are of the opinion that—

Imprisonment and deportation become, during these years, a hard road of suffering which many were called upon to tread who loved their country and fearlessly condemned the Government when it departed from its liberal policy.5

In July 1908, Tilak was Convicted and transported to Mandalay [Burma] for six years. A few days before his arrest, a friendly police officer warned him of the coming event and asked Tilak to take precautionary steps. Tilak laughed and said,

‘The Government has converted the entire nation into a prison and we are all prisoners. Going to prison only means that from a big cell one is confined to a smaller one’.6

The people once again became angry and frustrated. This frustration led the youth to take to the path of Individual terrorism. There were several cases of bomb attacks on officials. Two young Bengali boys Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki threw a bomb on a carriage at Muzzaffarpur, on Kingsford, the district judge. It was a revenge for his imposing heavy sentences on the local news papers. Instead of killing the judge, the bomb killed the wife and daughter of Pringle Kennedy. The two bomb throwers were arrested, Chaki shot himself dead on being arrested and Khudiram Bose was sentenced to death and hanged. BarindraKumar, Ullaskar Dutt and Upendranath Bannerjea were transported.

Savarkar, with two life sentences, was kept in Dongri jail and afterwards taken to Byculla jail in January 1911. After four months he was shifted to Cellular jail of Andaman.
It is worth taking a look at the effects of colonial exploitation of the Indian peasants. Colonial economic policies, the new land revenue system, the colonial administrative and judicial systems, and ruin of handicrafts leading to the overcrowding of land, transformed the agrarian structure and impoverished the peasantry.

World War I began with an unprecedented outpouring of loyalty and goodwill towards the United Kingdom from within the mainstream political leadership, contrary to initial British fears of an Indian revolt. India contributed massively to the British war efforts by providing men and resources. About 1.3 million Indian soldiers and labourers served in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

In the aftermath of the World War I high casualty rates, soaring inflation compounded by heavy taxation, a widespread influenza epidemic, and the disruption of trade during the war escalated human suffering in India. The era of revolutionary terrorism came to an end. The social condition of the people was not encouraging. The industrial revolution, and the Britain’s policy of supporting Lancashire goods in India marred the chances of Indian handloom industry and the plagues, hartals, earthquakes, famines also had their shares in making the life of the common people miserable.

2. THE GANDHIAN AGE  [1915-1947]

The first half of the twentieth century, that is, the period between the two world wars was rightly called the Gandhian age. The Gandhian age witnessed a great deal of turmoil, unrest, persecution, and prosecution, repression and suppression resulting in the nationwide awakening to put forth their demand of ‘Swaraj’ in the right perspective, through non-violence and passive resistance.
Virtually, entire India was a vast prison. The Indian national movement developed into one of the greatest mass movements in the world history. It derived its entire strength, especially after 1918, from the militancy and self sacrificing spirit of the masses. Satyagraha as a form of struggle was based on the active participation of the people and on the sympathy and support of the non-participating millions.

After his apprenticeship in South Africa from 1893 to 1914 for a period of 21 years, Gandhi came to India in 1915. Then Gokhale made him promise:

...for one year I am to do nothing. I should travel in India for gaining experience, and express no opinion on public questions until I have finished the period of probation. Even after the year is over, I will be in no hurry to speak and pronounce opinions.\(^7\)

He spent one year travelling around the country in the ordinary compartment of railways, mixing and mingling with public, and tried to understand the prevailing conditions of the masses. He continued to maintain distance from political affairs, including the Home Rule movement.

The Home Rule movement did not yield any results. The promised constitutional reforms and Indianisation of services were mere farce. The situation after the World War-I is succinctly summed up by Jawaharlal Nehru:

World War I ended at last, and the peace, instead of bringing us relief and progress, brought us repressive legislation and martial law in the Punjab. A bitter sense of humiliation and a passionate anger filled our people. All the unending talk of constitutional reform and Indianisation of services was a mockery and an insult when the manhood of our country was
being crushed and the inexorable and continuous process of exploitation was deepening our poverty and sapping our vitality. We had become a derelict nation.⁸

In 1917 and 1918, Gandhi was involved in three significant struggles

1. Champaran in Bihar, 2. Kheda and Ahemadabad in Gujarat. Champaran and Kheda were peasant’s movements, whereas Ahemadabad struggle was mill workers agitation.

1. In Champaran, Gandhi could, with great difficulty, solve a thirty year old problem between cultivators and planters over payments.

2. Whereas in Kheda the peasants’ extreme distress was due to the failure of crops. Their appeals for remission of land revenue were being ignored by the Government Gandhi and Patel toured the complete district, urging the peasants to stand firm in the face of increasing Government’s repression which included, the seizing of cattle and household goods. The cultivators were asked to take a solemn pledge that they would not pay. The rich also were convinced and dissuaded from paying tax in the better interest of the poor farmers.

3. In Ahemadabad, the dispute between workers and the owners of the mill over the demand of increase in wages and breach of agreement was solved by Gandhi with his unfailing weapons: Satyagraha and fasting.

Champaran, Kheda and Ahemadabad were, indeed, dress rehearsals of the long battle that was waiting to be waged under Gandhi’s leadership. They served as practical demonstrations of Gandhi’s style and method of politics to the country at large. Gandhi tried to experiment on the Indian soil what he had tested earlier in South Africa. It was based on the principle of
collective defiance of authority. The young followers were impressed by his identification with the problem of ordinary Indians and his willingness to take up their cause. Jawaharlal Nehru describes Gandhi’s arrival on Indian political scene thus:

He was like a powerful current of fresh air, that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people’s mind.  

The essence of Gandhi’s teaching was fearlessness and truth, always keeping the welfare the masses in view. The peasants and ordinary people had fear in their mind. Gandhi tried to help them overcome this evil. The sociological study of the society of the 1920s as depicted by Nehru is as follows...

the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear- pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear: fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service; fear of the official class; fear of the laws meant to suppress and of prison; fear of the landlord’s agent, fear of the money lender; fear of unemployment and starvation ... .

Gandhi as an apostle of truth and non-violence could remove the fear from the mind of the masses. There was a psychological reaction from the public. People were fed up with the alien rule, degradation and humiliation.

In February 1919, the Rowlett bills aimed at severely curtailing the civil liberties of the Indians in the name of curbing terrorist violence. Gandhi opposed these bills and gave a call for nationwide protest against unpopular legislation, which the British were threatening to introduce.
The Rowlett bills raised moral issues of trust and self respect and should be met with a moral response. So instead of public meetings he proposed a *hartal*, a traditional Indian method of cessation of all activity for a day.  

The citizens of Banaras, High court pleaders of Calcutta and the public of Bombay and Madras protested against the Rowlett Bills. Amidst these protests on March 18, the bill was approved as law. Gandhi gave a call to observe April 6th as a day of humiliation. Satyagraha demonstrations were held all over the country. On April 10th, Gandhi was served with an order not to enter Punjab or Delhi. On his refusal to obey the order, he was arrested and sent back to Bombay from way-side railway station, by a special train. In Amritsar, Bombay, Ahemdabad, Lahore, Gujaranwala, Kasur, Viramgram, Nadiad and Calcutta the public burnt government offices, damaged railway stations and telegraph offices and demonstrators clashed with the police.

Amidst this, the brutality of Jallianwala Bagh massacre stunned the entire nation. Gen.Dyer ordered his troops to open fire upon an unarmed crowd. They fired 1650 rounds. Their bullets killed some and wounded some, in all 1516 people. This was the turning point in Anglo-Indian relations, more decisive even than the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Chaman Lal, a journalist opines thus:

> It was this firing that converted Gandhi from a loyal British subject into a rebel, and gave him immense strength to lead the nation.\(^\text{12}\)

The repressive martial law in the Punjab made the mass turn violent. The Hunter Committee appointed by the government to enquire the Punjab disturbances was simply an eye wash.
The Muslims of India were very much worried about the situation in Turkey. Gandhi anticipated that:

The Khilafat question had created an unprecedented awakening among Indian Muslims, an awakening which they were prepared to channel into nationalist directions and into a struggle which would eventually develop as a freedom movement. The obvious aim of any practical politician would be to establish Hindu-Muslim unity, which India had not known since the revolt of 1857.\(^\text{13}\)

Gandhi’s support to Khilafat movement won the Muslim community back to the national movement. A large number of Moulvis and Muslim religious leaders took prominent part in the political struggle.

The visit of the Prince of Wales began from 17\(^\text{th}\) November 1921, and the day on which the Prince landed in Bombay was observed as a day of *hartal* all over the country. The Prince was greeted with empty streets and downed shutters wherever he went. Bombay witnessed a great riot; there was clash between two groups, resulting in the death of 59 persons. Gandhi fasted for three days to bring the city’s condition under control.

In Allahabad, the city seemed to be dead on the arrival of the Prince. Jawaharlal Nehru and several congress leaders were arrested. Nehru records the event in his *Autobiography* thus:

During the months of December 1921 and 1922 it is estimated that about thirty thousand persons were sentenced to imprisonment in connection with the non-cooperation movement. But though most of the prominent men and workers were in prison, the leader of the whole struggle, Mahatma Gandhi, was still out, issuing from day to day messages and
directions which inspired people, as well as checking many an undesirable activity.  

The Government was afraid of arresting Gandhi, for they feared the dreadful consequences. Instead of arresting Gandhi, they struck hard at his followers. Thirty thousand people were arrested, meetings and parades were broken up by force, and congress offices were ransacked. Gandhi courteously wrote to the Viceroy to inform him that he was going to intensify his action. Non-cooperation was to be escalated to civil disobedience. He counselled the peasants to refuse to pay taxes, the city dwellers to ignore British laws and the soldiers to stop serving the crown. It was Gandhi’s declaration of non-violent war on India’s colonial government. Thousands of Indians obeyed his call and thousands more courting arrest went to jail.

No tax movement of Midnapur of Bengal, Chirala-Pirala of Guntur (Andhra), Kisan movements of Avadh in U.P., Moplah movements in Malbar coast of Kerala, Assam tea labourer’s strike, Akalis movements in Punjab and many more ran parallel to the Freedom Movement. The Non-cooperation movement was perhaps the first of the campaigns the scope of which extended into the whole of the Indian nation in geographical, social and economic sense of the term. The core principle of economic self assertion—swadeshi—remained central to the campaign. The campaign against foreign goods, clothes in particular, spread to all parts of the country with added vigour after the advent of Gandhi. The spirit of unrest and defiance of authority engendered by the non-cooperation movement contributed to the rise of many local movements in different parts of the country.

On the 5th of February 1922, the Congress and Khilafat members took out a procession in Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district of U.P., irritated by
the behaviour of some policemen; a section of the crowd attacked them. The police opened fire. The entire procession attacked the police, and the latter hid inside the police station. The public set fire to the building. Policemen, who tried to escape were hacked to pieces and thrown into the fire.22 policemen were put to death. The mass of angry peasants at Chauri Chaura burnt up a police chowki as a hated symbol of foreign rule and some policemen lost their lives. Gandhiji was upset, when he realised that the mass movement was getting out of his control. What he wanted was a mass movement like a fierce but obedient hound that would growl and bark when asked and walk silently along when ordered. Mass movements can never be like that. So Gandhi called off the movement. He called it a Himalayan blunder. But Jallianwalla Bagh with its merciless massacre of innocence was still in everybody's mind. Gandhi called off the non co-operation movement, because he felt his followers did not yet fully understood non-violence. Gandhi intending to do penance for the Chauri Chaura tragedy, went on a five day fast. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his *India Wins Freedom* observes that:

Gandhiji then went on to suspend the non-cooperation movement on account of the Chauri Chaura incident this caused a severe political reaction in political circles and demoralised the country. The government took full advantage of the situation and arrested Gandhiji. He was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and the non-cooperation movement slowly petered out.15

Gandhi was arrested on March 10, 1922 on the charges of writing three seditious articles in *Young India*. 1. Tampering with Loyalty 2. A puzzle and its solution and 3. *Shaking the Manes*. Tried on 19th March at Ahemdabad, He was sentenced to six year’s imprisonment at Yeravada.
This era saw the emergence of new generation of Indians from within the Congress party, including C.Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose and others—who would later on come to form the prominent voices of the Indian independence movement.

It was at Yeravada jail that Gandhi undertook to write his autobiography. He was released from prison early in 1924 after a major operation at Sassoon hospital, Pune.

Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested for the second time for threatening in a public speech the dealers in foreign cloth in Allahabad to injure their trade by picketing their shops, and was sentenced to 18 months’ simple imprisonment.

The boycott of Simon Commission was endorsed by the Liberal Federation led by Tej Bahadur Sapru, by the Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress and by Hindu Mahasabha. On the 3rd of February 1928, Simon and his friends landed at Bombay. All the major cities and towns observed total hartal, and people were out on the streets, participating in mass rallies, processions and black flag demonstrations. Bipin Chandra in his _India’s Struggle for Independence_, portrays it thus:

In Lucknow, Jawaharlal and Govinda Vallabha Pant were beaten up by the police. But the worst incident happened in Lahore, where Lala Lajapat Rai, the hero of extremist days and most revered leader of Punjab, was hit on the chest by lathis on 30th October and succumbed to the injuries on 17th November 1928. It was his death that Bhagat Singh and his comrades were seeking to avenge when they killed the white police official, Saunders in December 1928.16
The Simon boycott movement provided the first taste of political action to a new generation of youth. They gave the movement militant flavour. In Lahore conspiracy Case, the tribunal awarded death sentence for three, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhadev and life transportation to seven. Bhagat Singh’s written statement read by Asaf Ali his lawyer reads thus:

The bomb was necessary to awaken England from her dreams.
We dropped the bomb on the floor of Assembly to register our protest.17

Following the rejection of the recommendations of the Simon Commission by Indians, an all party conference was held at Bombay in May 1928. This was meant to instil a sense of resistance among people. The conference appointed a drafting committee under Motilal Nehru to draw up a constitution for India. The Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress asked the British government to accord dominion status to India by December 1929, or a country wide civil disobedience movement would be launched. By 1929, however, in the midst of rising political discontent and increasingly violent regional movements, the call for complete independence from Britain began to find increasing grounds within the Congress leadership. Under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru at its historic Lahore session in December 1929, the Indian National Congress adopted a resolution calling complete independence from the British. It authorised the working committee to launch the civil disobedience movement throughout the country. It was decided that 26 January 1930 should be observed all over India as the Purna Swaraj (complete independence) Day. Many Indian Political parties and Indian revolutionaries of a wide spectrum united to observe the day with honour and pride. Purna Swaraj has been asked by Bhagat Singh at the time of “Bomb blast in Parliament to oppose Simon
Commision in Supreme Court in 1928. Till that time Indian Congress was asking for Dominion state.

In March 1930, Gandhi began his 241 mile march from Ahmedabad to Dandi, leading a batch of 71 Satyagrahis—by picking salt, the salt law would be publicly broken. Salt is a necessity of life as air or water. It is also a free gift of nature. No government, therefore, has any right to tax. The Mahatma’s call to his companions was: ‘Salt in the hands of Satyagrahis, holders of the truth, represents the honour of the nation. It cannot be yielded up except to force that will break the hand to pieces.

With Dandi march and the arrest of Gandhiji the whole movement burst its bounds.

News of arrest spread throughout the country quickly, and the people poured into the streets to protest, until they were taken to jail themselves. Before the year ended, 60,000 satyagrahis would be arrested and jailed, causing every cell in India full. From his own cell, Gandhi tried to convince Viceroy Irwin that 300 million people of India would no longer be held hostage. Yet words alone would not suffice. The violence of the nonviolent movement would intensify.18

The whole nation was agitated. The salt Satyagraha, the Forest Satyagraha, the No Rent, No Tax Campaign, strikes and hartals, refusal by the Garhwal Infantry to fire on the Pathans at Peshwar, Sholapur in the hands of rebellious people, such were the inspiring events.

The most remarkable feature of the Civil Disobedient Movement was the flood of middle class women who swept away everything that stood in the way. Never before in our history had such a thing been seen. Nehru in his Discovery of India puts it thus:

32
"Most of us men folk were in prison. And then a remarkable thing happened. Our women came to the front and took charge of the struggle. Women have always been there of course, but now there was a avalanche of them, which took not only the British government but their own men folk by surprise. Here were these women, women of the upper or middle classes leading sheltered lives in their homes-peasant women working class women, rich women—pouring out in their tens of thousands in defiance of government order and police lathi. It was not only that display of courage and daring, but what was even more surprising was the organisational power they showed."

In every town they were out in the streets, singing songs of freedom or declaiming in their shrill voices the slogans of defiance. It was almost as if the shackles of famine subjection and dull domesticity had suddenly fallen asunder.

While Gandhi was in jail, the First Round Table Conference was held in London in November 1930, without representation from the Indian National Congress. The ban upon the Congress was removed because of economic hardships caused by the satyagraha. Gandhi, along with other members, of the Congress Working Committee, were released from prison in January 1931.

In March of 1931, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed, and the government agreed to set all political prisoners free (Although, some of the key revolutionaries were not set free and the death sentence for Bhagat Singh and his two comrades was not taken back which further intensified the agitation against Congress not only outside it but within the Congress itself).
In return, Gandhi agreed to discontinue the civil disobedience movement and participate as the sole representative of the Congress in the second Round Table Conference, which was held in London in September 1931. However, the conference ended in failure in December 1931. Gandhi returned to India and decided to resume the civil disobedience movement in January 1932.

For the next few years, the Congress and the government were locked in conflict and negotiations until the Government of India Act of 1935 could be hammered out. By then, the rift between the Congress and the Muslim League had become unbridgeable as each pointed the finger at the other acrimoniously. The Muslim League disputed the claim of the Congress to represent all people of India, while the Congress disputed the Muslim League's claim to voice the aspirations of all Muslims.

The Government of India Act 1935, the voluminous and final constitutional effort at governing British India, articulated three major goals: establishing a loose federal structure, achieving provincial autonomy, and safeguarding minority interests through separate electorates. The federal provisions, intended to unite princely states and British India at the centre, were not implemented because of ambiguities in safeguarding the existing privileges of princes. In February 1937, however, provincial autonomy became a reality when elections were held; the Congress emerged as the dominant party with a clear majority in five provinces and held an upper hand in two, while the Muslim League performed poorly.

At the outbreak of war, the Congress Party had during the Wardha meeting of the working-committee in September 1939, passed a resolution conditionally supporting the fight against fascism, but was rebuffed when they asked for independence in return. To force the Raj to meet its demands
and to obtain definitive word on total independence, the Congress decided to launch the Quit India Movement.

In 1939, the Viceroy Linlithgow declared India's entrance into World War II without consulting provincial governments. In protest, the Congress asked all of its elected representatives to resign from the government. Jinnah, the president of the Muslim League, persuaded participants at the annual Muslim League session at Lahore in 1940 to adopt what later came to be known as the Lahore Resolution, demanding the division of India into two separate sovereign states, one Muslim, the other Hindu; sometimes referred to as Two Nation Theory. Although the idea of Pakistan had been introduced as early as 1930, very few had responded to it. However, the volatile political climate and hostilities between the Hindus and Muslims transformed the idea of Pakistan into a stronger demand.

Indians throughout the country were divided over World War II, as Linlithgow, without consulting the Indian representatives had unilaterally declared India a belligerent on the side of the allies. In opposition to Linlithgow's action, the entire Congress leadership resigned from the local government councils. However, many wanted to support the British war effort, and, indeed the British Indian Army was one of the largest volunteer forces during the war. Especially during the Battle of Britain, Gandhi resisted calls for massive civil disobedience movements that came from within as well as from outside his party, stating that he did not seek India's freedom out of the ashes of a destroyed Britain. However, like the changing fortunes of the war itself, the movement for freedom saw the rise of two movements that formed the climax of the 100 year struggle for independence.
In March 1942, faced with an increasingly dissatisfied sub-continent only reluctantly participating in the war, and deteriorations in the war situation in Europe and South East Asia, and with growing dissatisfactions among Indian troops—especially in Europe—and among the civilian population in the sub-continent, the British government sent a delegation to India under Stafford Cripps, which was known as the Cripps' Mission. The purpose of the mission was to negotiate with the Indian National Congress a deal to obtain total co-operation during the war, in return for progressive devolution and distribution of power from the crown and the Viceroy to elected Indian legislature. However, the talks failed, having failed to address the key demand of a timeframe towards self-government, and of definition of the powers to be relinquished, essentially portraying an offer of limited dominion-status that was wholly unacceptable to the Indian movement.

On August 8, 1942, the Quit India resolution was passed at the Bombay Session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC). The draft proposed, that if the British did not accede to the demands, a massive Civil Disobedience would be launched. However, it was an extremely controversial decision. At Gowalia Tank, Mumbai, Gandhi urged Indians to start a non-violent civil disobedience movement. Gandhi told the masses to act as an independent nation and not to follow the orders of the British.

The British, already alarmed by the advance of the Japanese army to the India–Burma border, imprisoned Gandhi at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. The Congress Party's Working Committee, that is national leadership was arrested and imprisoned at the Ahmednagar Fort. They also banned the party altogether. As a result large-scale protests and demonstrations were held all over the country. Workers remained absent en masse and strikes were called. The movement also saw widespread acts of sabotage. Indian under-ground organisation carried out bomb attacks on allied supply
convoys; government buildings were set on fire, electricity lines were disconnected and transport and communication lines were severed. The Congress had lesser success in rallying other political forces, including the Muslim League under a single mast and movement. It did, however, obtain passive support from a substantial Muslim population at the peak of the movement.

The British swiftly responded by mass detentions. A total over 100,000 arrests were made nationwide, mass fines were levied, bombs were airdropped and demonstrators were subjected to public flogging.

The movement soon became a leaderless act of defiance, with a number of acts deviating from Gandhi's principle of non-violence. In large parts of the country, the local underground organisations took over the movement. However, by 1943, Quit India movement had petered out.

Viscount Louis Mountbatten, the last British Governor-General of India, announced the partitioning of the British Indian Empire into a secular India and a Muslim Pakistan. On 14 August 1947, Pakistan was declared a separate nation. At midnight, on 15 August 1947, India became an independent nation. Violent clashes between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs followed. Prime Minister Nehru and Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel invited Mountbatten to continue as Governor General of India. He was replaced in June 1948 by Chakravarti Rajagopalachari. Patel took on the responsibility of unifying 565 princely states, steering efforts by his “iron fist in a velvet glove” policies, exemplified by the use of military force to integrate Junagadh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Hyderabad state (Operation Polo) into India.

The Constituent Assembly completed the work of drafting the constitution on 26 November 1949; on 26 January 1950 the Republic of
India was officially proclaimed. The Constituent Assembly elected Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, taking over from Governor General Rajgopalachari.

Probably, ours is the only country which has the greatest number of people who have been to prison. Jail holds no terrors to our people. Men, women, young boys and girls cheerfully went to prison and the British rulers did not know what to do. They tried to impose humiliating regulations and beat up prisoners on the slightest provocation. But they could not cow down the spirit or break the will of the prisoners.

"It was all an Indian affair: the satyagrahis were Indian, the firing and lathi charging policeman were Indian, the men employed for torture work were Indian, and policemen punished in retaliation were Indian."\(^{20}\)

Historically, and at the time of Independence, the socio economic scene in rural India has been characterised by widespread inequalities, especially in the ownership of land and wealth. A small minority of big landholders owned a major portion of the agricultural land, while millions of small peasants weighed down by perpetual indebtedness eked out a precarious living on tiny fragmented holdings. More than half of the cultivated land was under tenancy, and the bulk of the tenants enjoyed no security of tenure or fixity of rent. At the bottom of the agrarian pyramid, there was a vast army of landless agricultural workers whose social and economic status was pathetic. Many dispossessed peasants took to robbery, dacoity and what has been called social banditry, preferring these to starvation and social degradation. The most militant and widespread of the peasant movements was the Indigo Revolt of 1859-60.
The period of thirty years of the Gandhian age was brought about the revolutionary changes not only in the political scene but in all walks of Indian life. In the social sphere, the Gandhian movement led to removal untouchability, awakening among women, religious reform movements, awakening among the depressed classes etc. which has greatly influenced Indian English literature.

**POST-INDEPENDANCE PERIOD**

In the first couple of decades after independence, the political discourse in India was guided, by and large, by the legacy of the freedom movement.

Though this was one of the peaceful period where we would scarcely see any of the arrests. The government faced the protests from the left wing parties. The dissatisfied souls encouraged the Girani Kamgars and Agricultural labours to protest against the existing system.

In the Telangana area of Andhra, during the war period, the communists had built up a strong social base in the villages. During 1946-47, it led to an armed uprising which continued even after independence. The Indian communists were opposed to the idea of any compromise with the British during 1946-47. And when independence came in August 1947, they even went to the extent of describing it as 'sham'.

In February 1948 the CPI launched an armed insurrection. During the same period, some other Marxists were also trying their hands at it on various parts of India. S.A.Dange in Bombay, S Chettiar in Madras and Muzzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta were the prominent individuals, who were trying to create their groups in the area of their operations.
The Indian Maoists are commonly known as Naxalites, after the north Bengal village of Naxalbari where their struggle began. From the late 1960s onwards they have been active in central and eastern India. Attacking police stations, beheading public officials, the Naxalites remain committed to an armed revolution. Maoism gave a call to split the CPs all over the world in the name of armed revolution—‘proletarian’, ‘socialist’ and what not, and disrupted the WCM. Thousands of youth were misled by this pseudo-revolutionism. The process of disruption continues even today.

In 1967 a peasant uprising broke out in Naxalbari, in northern West Bengal. The insurgency was led by hardliner district-level CPI(M) leaders Charu Majumdar and Kanu Sanyal. The hardliners within CPI(M) saw the Naxalbari uprising as the spark that would ignite the Indian revolution.

In Andhra Pradesh another revolt took place. There the pro-Naxalbari dissidents had not registered any presence. But in the party organisation there were many veterans from the Telangana armed struggle, who rallied against the central party leadership. In Andhra Pradesh, the radicals had a strong base even amongst the state-level leadership. The main leader of the radical tendency was T. Nagi Reddy, a member of the state legislative assembly.

Practically, all Naxalite groups trace their origin to the CPI(ML). A separate offshoot from the beginning was the Maoist Communist Centre, which evolved out of the Dakshin Desh group. The MCC was later fused with the People's War Group to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist). A third offshoot was that of the Andhra revolutionary communists, mainly represented by the UCCRI (ML), following the mass line legacy of T. Nagi Reddy, which broke with the AICCCCR at an early stage.
EMERGENCY 1975-1977

A state of emergency was declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in June 1975 by invoking Article 352 of the Constitution of India, and it lasted for 21 months. Emergency provisions suspended all the Constitutional rights and gave power to rule by decree. It enabled the Prime Minister to suspend elections and civil liberties.

The renowned congress men like Babu Jagajivan Ram, Y.B. Chavan and R.P. Sinha attributed the victory of the fifth general elections to Mrs. Gandhi. It was termed Mrs. Gandhi’s era. In 1971, the country witnessed the rising of Indira wave, which brought an unprecedented victory to Mrs. Gandhi’s party.

The anti Congress movement in Gujarat grew out of hardship suffered by people due to spiralling prices and growing scarcity of basic necessities of life. The prices of food grains, edible oil, vegetables and meat rose so exorbitantly, that ordinary man could not afford to buy them.

In May 1974, the railway employees demanded a higher pay raise owing to rise in prices. The Government arrested over 30,000 railway workers and trade union leaders under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) of 1971 and the Defence of India rules 1971, (the rule authorised the Government to arrest any person on suspicion and detain him without trial).

Raj Narayan, her socialist rival at parliamentary elections of 1971, in the Raibareli constituency of U.P. filed a suit on charges of electoral malpractices in Allahabad High Court. The verdict of June 12, 1975, of declaring Indira Gandhi guilty of charges of corrupt electoral practices, made her election to the parliament null and void, disqualifying her from contesting a seat to parliament or state assembly for the next six years. She asked for a...
stay of 20 days for judgement so as to buy time to elect a new leader for Congress party in the parliament.

Her failure to secure an 'unconditional' stay order from the Supreme Court encouraged the opposition leaders to announce an action programme to commence on 25 June, and last for next eight days – to educate people on the need of Mrs. Gandhi to step down on the grounds of political propriety and democratic convention.

Indira Gandhi Government arrested hundreds of prominent opposition and other political leaders (including some congress dissidents) under the powers invested in it by the emergency, that had been declared on 26th June by the President Fakruddin Ali Ahmed, who acting on the advice of his council of ministers, declared a state of emergency under false assumption that security of India was threatened by internal disturbances.

Nearly 3000 political opponents were jailed. The people were deprived of their freedom and fundamental rights. The event remains a dark chapter in the history of the sub continent. Devasahayam aptly sums up the period as follows:

The Emergency signalled extinction of freedom. During the nineteen months of active Emergency, freedom and fundamental rights stood suspended. People moved in hushed silence, stunned and traumatized by Draconian goings on. Across the nation, grovelling administrators, academicians, advocates and accountants vied with each other to sing paeans of glory to the emergency rulers, some signing pledges of loyalty and servitude in blood! The bulk of civil service crawled when asked to bend. Higher echelons of judiciary bowed to the dust and were willing to decree that under the

42
Emergency regime citizens did not even have the right to life. Politicians of all hue and colour, barring honourable exceptions, lay supine and prostrate... .21

It was sad that individuals and institutions surrendered without resisting in the least and the world’s largest democracy drifted towards dictatorship.

The Congress Party admitted that more than one lakh persons were jailed during the Emergency. The exact number was 1,10,806. Of these, 34,988 were detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act. These prisoners included Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Chandra Shekhar, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K.Advani, Bala Saheb Deoras, and a large number of MPs, MLAs and eminent journalists.

Almost all MISA detenues had filed habeas corpus petitions in their respective State High Courts. At all places, Government had raised the same objection: in an Emergency, all Fundamental Rights are suspended and so no detenue has a right to file a Habeas Corpus petition. Almost all the High Courts rejected the Government’s objection and ruled in favour of the petitioners. Government not only went in appeal to the Supreme Court but actually punished the judges who had allowed the petitions. Haridwari Lal records it thus:

The diary I used to maintain while I was in prison records the names of 19 judges who were transferred to other High Courts because they had decided against Government.22

The Government used police forces across the country to place thousands of protestors and strike leaders under preventive detention. Jai Prakash Narayan, Raj Narain, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, Jivatram Kripalani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, Satyendra Narayan Sinha and
other protest leaders were immediately arrested. Organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Jamait-e-Islami along with some political parties were banned. Numerous Communist leaders were arrested along with many others involved with their party. At least nine high courts pronounced that even after the declaration of an emergency a person could challenge his detention. The Supreme Court over-ruled all of them upholding the state's plea for power to detain a person without the necessity of informing him of the reasons/grounds of his arrest or, to suspend his personal liberties or, to deprive him of his right to life, in an absolute manner (the 'habeas corpus case') Many political workers who were not arrested in the first wave, went 'underground' continuing organising protests.

In Bihar, Chhatra Sangharsha Samity and Yuva Sangharsha Samity and in Punjab the Akali Dal were very active. In West Bengal, Paschimbanga Nagarik Samity, Kolkata and Khabar groups along with Sangram, and in Orissa, Srimati Rama Devi, the Sarvodaya leader, were very active in the publication and distribution of underground literature. In Delhi, Delhi University and JNU students were also very active groups. Books like Why Emergency?, Lies Unmasked, "Prison Diary", Tortures of Political Prisoners in India, Snehalata Reddy’s Prison Diary and Delhi Under Emergency were published in the underground.

Against this backdrop the social question was finally raised, not by the colonial rulers, but by its challengers: the Indian independence movement. Yet, even in the Indian National Congress, the movement’s key political organization founded in 1885 – the social question did not play a major role on its agenda at first. The hereditary belief that the welfare arrangements should be left to the different (religious) communities was unsuccessfully challenged until 1917. Only after a group representing the untouchables within Congress had been formed, Congress as a whole adopted its policies
to condemn untouchability, and embraced a social reform agenda in which the question of self-government was tied to the demand for more just government for India’s people.

Self governance was henceforth seen as more than just a moral right: as the only way to relieve the majority of the Indians from their poverty; the belief was prevalent that “political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving masses”. Yet, within Congress and the independence movement at large, different ideas on how poverty and exclusion were to be overcome and which role the state should play, continued to compete: the three important intellectual leaders Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and B.R. Ambedkar proposed different agendas for reform.

Mohandas Gandhi’s social reform agenda was centred around three issues: the need to stop the practice of untouchability, the realisation of equality of women and the education of the masses. Yet, Gandhi’s clearest call has been for self-rule, swaraj, including the (economic) self-reliance swadeshi of the Indian village, as well as the whole country. In Gandhi’s version, swaraj was a concept of direct democracy and localised economy with the village at its core. It was meant to challenge the British rule economically, through a boycott of British products and increase self-determination of the individual through economic self-sufficiency. The social question to Gandhi could not be won through new structures alone, but was one of local reform and individual change.
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