Colonialism in India, as has become evident, served a positive purpose as it provided the backdrop for destroying much that was before its time like the atomized, autarchic village-system, fragmented polity, social passivity and intellectual inertia which had reproduced an unchanging existence for centuries. These transformations created the material as well as ideological basis for the Indian people to advance to higher forms of social existence through economic unity, intellectual progress and finally, nationhood. Desai considers (1981: 49) the dissolution of the physical, political, economic and socio-cultural isolation of the village as “historically necessary for the economic, social and political unification of the Indian people.” It was also the primary step and “became the material premise for the emergence of the Indian nation out of the amorphous mass of the Indian people...” (ibid). The void created by the destruction of the village-system was filled by the colonial-capitalist transformation of Indian economy which created the pre-condition for unification and integration of Indians. A brief review of the effects of this transformation is necessary.

The spread of capitalist production system and relations in agriculture created a national agricultural system which was a vital, and, at the same time, a dependent part of Indian economy. Such agricultural reorganisation had a number of consequences. First, private ownership led to dissection and fragmentation of land, ultimately making the small holdings unprofitable vis-à-vis the market.
Second, a disproportionate dependence upon land became evident, which had not been a feature of pre-colonial economy. Rajani Palme-Dutt's lucid observation that "the destruction of the old balance of agriculture and industry and relegation of India to the role of an agricultural appendage of imperialism" (1997: 203) supports the observations made by Desai. Millions of ruined artisans and craftsmen had to abandon their generations-old occupations and had turned to land as an alternative source of livelihood.

Third, the new land revenue system increased the indebtedness and poverty of the peasant to such an extent as to preclude any possibility of improving the quality of agricultural production.

Furthermore, the natural resources were made increasingly unavailable to the peasant and he fell prey to the middleman, the moneylender and the merchant for selling his produce. Thus, on the one hand, quality of production suffered, while the quality of life of the peasant declined, on the other. His indebtedness ultimately forced him to sell his land and work as a landless labourer. Thus, we find the growth of the class of landless agricultural labourers.

Again, capitalist production relations led to the emergence of another agrarian class, namely, the non-cultivating landholders who had, hitherto, no connection with either land or cultivation. Land now became not only a commodity for generation of wealth but also aided the acquisition of high social status. Hence, this new class of landlords, often absentee, had interest only in quantitative increase of production in order to increase the residue after payment of revenue and dues to the state.

Last, but not the least, introduction of capitalist production relations was not accompanied by capitalist technological innovations. Thus, pre-capitalist system with capitalist production relations made India primarily "an agrarian colony for the production of raw materials for British industries." (Desai1981: 73). However, while independent development of Indian agriculture and fulfillment of the economic requirements of the people were prevented, "British
rule over India elevated Indian agriculture to the status of a national agriculture. This was a progressive aspect of the British conquest" (ibid).

In the industrial sector also whatever development occurred was geared to the requirements of British industrial efforts. For instance, Desai cites (ibid: 103–4) the example of the construction of railways in India which "was primarily undertaken to meet the raw material and market requirements of the British industries." In fact, Desai quotes (ibid: 106) Sir Valentine Chirol's observation in the Observer on April 2, 1922 that "it was only under the pressure of war necessities that Government was driven to abandon its former attitude of aloofness if not jealousy towards purely Indian enterprise." Again, British domination in the financial sector "retarded the rapid tempo and free growth of the industrial and general economic development of India...It was due to the fact that a good proportion of foreign capital had been invested in non-industrial economic fields since this was found more profitable. Even regarding industries, it found expression in light industries" (ibid: 115–6). Nevertheless, though the goal was profit-making rather than genuine development, such 'insufficient' and 'unbalanced' industrialisation played a revolutionary role as it "made the Indian economy more unified, cohesive and organic" (ibid: 124), thereby creating the material condition for the growth of nationalist feeling. As this economic transformation occurred under colonial direction so the people were first united in their exploitation, deprivation, sufferings and misery. As the economy assumed a national character, so the problems also acquired national dimensions rather than remaining local or regional. Hence, the grievances were common and the people "jointly struggled for the removal of the various handicaps on industrial development" (ibid). The demand for industrialisation became a part of the nationalist sentiments.

The ideological basis for the emergence of nationalism was provided by the spread of western education in India by the efforts of the British themselves and also some educated and enlightened Indians. This actually had a profound
impact upon the character and content of nationalism. First, this education was really liberal and secular as it liberated knowledge from Hindu upper-caste monopoly and made it universal, thereby laying the foundation of mass education in future India. Second, dissemination of this education through the medium of English enabled the educated Indians to overcome the obstacle of multilingualism and communicate with each other on a national scale. Third, this education exposed the Indians to rational, scientific, democratic thought as opposed to the irrational, superstitious, hierarchic, absolutist thought of the medieval period. Hence, English educated Indians could initiate social reform movements against reactionary social practices and institutions on the one hand, and give a democratic content and orientation to the nationalist movement, on the other. Finally, this education had a profound impact on the advancement of intellectual thought during the nationalist movement and in the formation of the post-colonial state.

Mention must be made of the emergence of the popular press in India which contributed to the formation and dissemination of nationalist sentiments and ideas. For instance, ideas percolated from the elites to the masses through the press and generated awareness and patriotism among the people. Thus, various nationalist groups could popularise their ideologies, policies, programmes and methods of struggle among the people on a national scale. Again, large-scale, swift and constant exchange of views could be made possible through the press. Furthermore, the vernacular press— provincial in origin but national in content and orientation— played an important role in generating awareness against social maladies and evils on the one hand, and colonial exploitation on the other. The press also initiated closer intellectual contact between countries struggling for national liberation. Actually, says Desai (ibid: 238), “the Press has been one of the principal forces which has helped various nations to build up a world outlook and shape their own national programmes and policies on the basis of a comprehension of world development as a whole”
and "construct solidarity ties between the progressive forces of different countries."

However, according to Desai (ibid: 158) neither the press nor the progressive role played by modern education in India were fully instrumental in generating nationalism—"it would be incorrect to conclude that Indian nationalism was the child of this education." On the contrary, Indian nationalism was the outcome of new material-social conditions which generated new forces—both being consequences of British colonialism in India. Both Palme-Dutt (1997: 304ff) and Desai (1981:158) are of the opinion that imperialist conquest unleashed new productive system and classes whose material interests were fundamentally contradictory to those of British capitalism. Thus, "the movement arose out of the conflict of British and Indian interests in the economy and other spheres. This conflict of interests is the genetic cause of the Indian national movement" (Desai 1981: 158). R.Palme-Dutt also echoes this opinion, "The Indian national movement arose from social conditions, from the conditions of imperialism and its system of exploitation, and from the social and economic forces generated within Indian society under the conditions of that exploitation" (1997: 308).

The material conditions for the unification of the Indian people and emergence of nationalism were, thus, created in India. These material conditions brought about a restructuring of pre-colonial system of stratification which, by itself, was quite unique "and perhaps without a parallel in history" (Desai1981: 5). It was a multireligious society with internal divisions and segregations within the religions, especially Hinduism. The religio-social hierarchy determined not only position, prestige and power but also professions and occupations. The colonial production process changed this antiquated structural arrangement of Indian society. In other words, "The economic foundations of the caste were shattered by the new economic forces and forms introduced into India as a result of the
British conquest" (ibid: 247). The capitalist forces of production brought in new relations of production which categorised people into 'classes', cutting across caste divisions and thereby changing the social face of the country. These emergent classes were the new social forces; “they were primarily the offspring of the new capitalist economic structure which developed in India as a result of the British conquest...” (ibid: 174) and formed the subjective basis of Indian nationalism.

A brief overview of the classes is necessary. First, a number of old classes survived throughout the colonial period and later staked a claim to state power as part of the ruling coalition after independence. These were the feudal princes and nobility, and semi-feudal propertied classes. They, along with the 'landlord' class created in British India, remained the bastions of reactionary and anti-progressive ideas. Throughout the colonial period they hardly exhibited any nationalist feelings.

Second, a number of new classes emerged out of the colonial production process but their emergence did not occur simultaneously. They originated at different moments in time, according to the ripening of necessary material conditions.

Third, the level of consciousness of various classes was not at par with each other; i.e. some made quicker transformations from a 'class-in-itself' to a 'class-for-itself'. In other words, the development of classes was uneven.

Fourth, as the internal developments within the classes were also uneven so the nationalist aspirations differed significantly from class to class.

Finally, the class interests dictated the contribution and participation of each class in the nationalist movement. So while there was a “joint movement of all or a number of classes...against foreign rule,” there were also a number of “separate movements of various social classes pursuing their own respective interests and aims....Each social class or group organized itself and struggled to satisfy its own interests” (ibid: 218). The objective of ousting the British and
ending colonial rule remained common for all—but the purpose behind the objective differed significantly. The sharp schism and disharmony between classes shaped Indian nationalism and the nationalist movement. Thus a brief glance into the origin and development of classes is necessary to understand the content and process of nationalism in India. This would also have a bearing upon the understanding of the future State in India.

The revolutionary transformation of the countryside witnessed a total shattering of the rural social structure. Introduction of private property in agriculture saw the birth of various classes connected to the production process as owners or non-owners and cultivators or non-cultivators, the categories being mutually inclusive. There was a hierarchical arrangement with the wealthiest at the top and the poorest at the bottom. The class of zamindars in the zamindari and the peasant proprietors in the ryotwari systems quickly took control over land which had hitherto belonged to the village community and became large estate owners. Their primary concern was not betterment of the condition of the land or the peasantry but extraction of as much return as possible. This class of landholders and their managerial personnel were extremely reactionary and had an attitude of vehement opposition to reforms and democratic social progress. Far from opposing the foreign rule they sought protection of their lives, property and interests from the colonial state itself. The non-cultivating landlord also served as the moneylender or an intermediate merchant, both of whom became indispensable to the peasant. The former was instrumental in the systematic impoverishment and pauperisation of the peasant, transforming him into a landless labourer. The latter was the bridge between the peasant and the market as the product first had to be sold to the merchant to reach the market. These were all parasitic landowning classes who did not play any progressive role in agricultural development but actually robbed and ruined both the people—and the land and ensured centralisation of wealth generated through agricultural production.
The creation of the right to lease land brought in a new class of tenants and sub-tenants. They were not owners of land but cultivators on land leased to them by the landowners. A major part of their produce was transformed into rent while they had to bear the burden of a chain of non-cultivating rent receivers. The middle and small peasant proprietors also faced similar plights. Consequently, a small minority of peasant proprietors could become rich peasants while the rest descended to the ranks of poor peasants, tenants of absentee landlords or landless labourers. As a result, they became indebted to the moneylender who took increasing control over their meager resources while they swelled the ranks of the agrarian proletariat.

Furthermore, people from other occupations also joined in overcrowding the agrarian sector. For instance, the mass of dispossessed and ruined artisans and handicraftsmen could not be absorbed into the indigenous industrial sector as the “decline of village artisan industries and urban handicrafts in India was not accomplished by the simultaneous, parallel and proportionate expansion of modern industries in India....The millions of ruined artisans and craftsmen...had no alternative save to crowd in agriculture” (ibid: 96-99). This ruined mass, which took to agriculture for survival, was gradually but systematically proletarianised. Ultimately, as Radhakamal Mukherjee (ibid: 72) had remarked in page 23 of Congress Agrarian Inquiry Committee Report “so long as there is no radical change in the rural economy of India...the problem of the landless peasants will become more and more acute and there will be a tendency for this class to come in line with the industrial proletariat of the cities. That will portend social upheavals.” Thus, the new agrarian wage workers became an integral class of the emergent social forces in India, created on the basis of new capitalist relations under colonial initiative. This class transcended the narrow confines of locality or region and became national both in character and scope. They constituted a class which was a component part of the Indian nation and hence, they came to exist as a
national unit with commonality of interests and problems. Their pauperisation and proletarianisation made them more militant than the propertied classes and it was roughly after 1918 that their consciousness began to develop and they started participating in the nationalist movement.

Another class to emerge on the basis of British colonial rule was the educated intelligentsia including middle-class professionals. This class, for its emergence, is perhaps most heavily indebted to the British, or to the European body of knowledge which came to India as a direct consequence of colonial rule. This class was the first to study the culture of western enlightenment and imbibe its rationalist-democratic doctrines, concepts and spirit. Thus, says Desai (ibid: 86), the “ideals of the conquerors” were most effectively imposed “on the conquered peoples” through this class. This ideological-cultural aspect of colonialism is “one of the most harmful effects of a foreign rule” (ibid: 40-1); yet, this class, through their western education, could comprehend the complex problems of the incipient Indian nation. Consequently, they were the first to acquire a national consciousness and, to a great extent, integrated the people into a modern nation. They did this through socio-religio reform programmes and movements on the one hand; on the other, they gave leadership in anti-colonial movements. This class was created to fill up the bureaucratic, technocratic and clerical posts of the politico-administrative machinery of the colonial state and uphold the superiority of the foreign masters. Yet, this class, entirely a product of British rule, became the most virulent critic of that foreign rule and ended up by giving guidance and leadership to the anti-colonial movement—it “finally set, as the objective, Independence in terms of a sovereign state existence for the Indian people” (ibid: 173).

The third major section of the emergent new social forces was the Indian bourgeoisie whose rise and development was bound up with the expansion of trade, commerce, industry and banking. The bourgeoisie, it must be remembered at the outset, did not develop as a homogenous class. It was
internally divided into three major segments, namely, commercial, industrial and financial bourgeoisie. They originated at different historical moments in the course of capitalist development in India. Each had their own interests and their participation in the nationalist movement was guided by those interests. Another unique aspect of the Indian case was that capitalism in India, unlike in Europe, did not develop spontaneously. As it emerged under a colonial situation so it was sporadic, uneven, lopsided and oriented to the purpose of imperialism. However, as Europeans engaged in trade, commerce, finance etc. they enjoyed a privileged position vis-à-vis the Indians; so the latter developed a fundamental contradiction with their European counterparts.

The presence of the Indian commercial bourgeoisie could be felt from the mid-nineteenth century. By early twentieth century the industrial bourgeoisie had become sufficiently strong and conscious to fight in order to "replace the British monopoly of industries in India" (ibid: 202). By the first decade of twentieth century the industrial bourgeoisie entered the orbit of nationalist movement and maintained their dominance and significance throughout the period.

Introduction of capitalist production relations made inevitable the emergence of a modern working class. From a constructive viewpoint, modern factories, mines, plantations, transport system etc. led to the birth of the Indian proletariat. Seen from the perspective of the ruinous effects of British colonialism, the modern proletariat emerged from the shattered agrarian mass, which built up the army of the proletariat. A section remained in the villages to become the agrarian wage workers while a sizeable portion came to the urban centres to become industrial and other types of wage workers. In this transformation the people lost their traditional habitats, methods of livelihood and survival, culture, traditions and value-systems to create a mass body of shifting, rootless, anonymous population.
The Indian proletariat as an organised class developed much later than the other major classes. Certain factors were responsible for their delayed transformation into a class 'for-itself'. For instance, they were mostly uneducated and culturally backward; hence, they were unable to imbibe the militant and revolutionary ideas of mid-nineteenth to twentieth century Europe. Again, their propertyless status made them "more militant than the peasant" (ibid: 208); yet, lack of philosophical-ideological training and guidance obstructed their evolution into a class consciously fighting for their rights. This problem was compounded by "caste and communal divisions which split them, influence of religious, superstition and a fatalistic attitude towards life", all of "which weakened the will to act boldly" (ibid: 209). However, certain other objective factors enabled them to organise themselves which ultimately led to formation of trade unions and other political activities of the working class. First, the task of organising the workers spatially was much easier as they were "concentrated in factories and workshops in the industrial centres...in contrast to that of the peasants who were scattered over a vast area and hence difficult to be welded into unions" (ibid: 208). Second, the worker, due to the very nature of his work, could not work in isolation like the peasant but worked together with his fellow men to operate the production process. This "slowly engenders in the worker a collective urge and a capacity to cooperate" (ibid: 209). Third, the worker's independence from "the capricious forces of Nature" makes him "self-confident, logical and clearheaded, in contrast to the peasant who develops self-diffidence and defeatism" (ibid: 208–9). Last, to Desai the working class occupies key positions in the operative aspects of contemporary society which are "socially and economically most vital to maintain modern society" (ibid: 209). All these factors helped in the consolidation of the proletariat as a class which became a major segment of the Indian social scene. They came late in the nationalist movement; yet, true to their class character, brought in a wider vision of future Indian polity and society. As Desai observes (ibid) "while other classes of
contemporary Indian society desired a free India, Indian labour dreamt of a free socialist India."

The various classes, created by British-induced capitalist production relations, were part of one gigantic nationalist upsurge. Yet, their emergence at different times brought their political maturation at different points in the course of the nationalist movement. Furthermore, their class interests conditioned their perception of nationalism and objectives of the movement. In a nutshell (ibid: 159), "different classes had their specific grievances against Britain. The industrialists desired freedom for unobstructed industrialisation of India and protection for their native industries. The educated classes demanded the Indianization of Services, since the higher posts were mainly the preserve of the British. The agriculturists demanded reduction of the land tax. The workers demanded better conditions of work and a living wage. The nation as a whole demanded the freedom of association and press, assembly, elected legislatures, representative institutions, dominion status, home rule and finally complete Independence. It was out of these contradictions of interests of Britain and India that Indian nationalism grew."

Hence, the various classes saw the nationalist movement as a platform to address their respective grievances. The success of the movement meant different things to different classes. Economically their interests differed but politically they had a common goal. Contradictions between the Indians and the British were irreconcilable and their resolutions were possible only through the end of colonial rule and political freedom. But the contradictions existing between various classes led to a fragmented nationalism which became manifest through multiple subnational tendencies in the post-colonial period.

The Indian social scene was a conglomeration of old and new classes. Remnants of some old classes survived in a modified form alongside new classes. The surviving classes, says Desai (ibid: 182) "were not a pure class of medieval
nobles who lived on revenue mostly derived from land” but were more often “transformed into modern capitalists bound up with the new capitalist economy.” But often they retained their old outlooks corresponding with past ages—frequently, class interests developed on the basis of an amalgamation of old and new ideas. The new classes, on the other hand, imbied some modern outlooks and attitudes, though, “it should, however, be noted that all the new classes were not consistently democratic in dealing with some vital national problems” (ibid: 217). It was often found that the propertied classes “sacrificed the general interests of national economic advance to their sectional interests...” (ibid). All these made the “Indian society a complicated organism with extremely variegated and antagonistic social forces struggling for their respective interests within it” (ibid: 182). This class differentiation and opposition between them can be taken as a major reason for “the slow growth of national consciousness and national unity among the Indian people” (ibid: 183).

In the rural sector the uppermost class in the social hierarchy was the landowning class—an aristocracy manufactured and possessed by the colonial state. This conservative and unenterprising section remained loyal to the foreign master till the very end. Apart from their reactionary opposition to and their anti-democratic attitude to social reform programmes and other vital issues of the Indian people, they, as a class, sought the protection of the colonial state against their fellow Indians—the large mass of propertyless, deprived and poor countrymen. As a class they never developed any nationalist consciousness and hence, never participated in the nationalist movement; yet, asked for “appropriate representation in the legislature” (ibid: 185).

The peasant proprietors were much more conscious and had a nationalist orientation—unlike the landlords. The former was directly connected to the cultivation of land and was adversely affected by the various land reform measures. Moreover, through payment of land tax they came more into direct
contact with the colonial state. Hence, they soon acquired their own class consciousness where they identified the colonial state as the primary exploiter and aggressor. They interpreted the political struggle for Swaraj in terms of a struggle against a heavy land tax. After the end of the non-Cooperation movement they started the formation of independent peasant organisations. They voted in favour of the Indian National Congress in 1937 elections to the provincial legislatures—yet, throughout they remained critical of the Congress leadership and dominance in the nationalist movement. They could never be integrated under the Congress umbrella because in their opinion (ibid: 191) the latter "was solicitous of the interests of the capitalists and landed magnates."

The small peasants, tenants and land labourers organised themselves on the basis of specific grievances and demands. It is true that they were influenced by the nationalist propaganda and the nationalist spirit but the colonial state was not their sole enemy. Natural to their class situation they came into conflict with the zamindar, and not the state, on the question of rent—the landlord, merchant and moneylender were the more immediate exploiters. Hence, within the nationalist movement they formulated their programme of demands which included reduction of rent, abolition of the practice of extortion of illegal dues as well as such dues themselves, rackrenting and elimination of other forms of exploitation. However, according to N.G.Ranga (ibid: 189), even the "agitation led by the Mahatma in Champaran did not lead up to any fight against the main causes for the terrible poverty and sufferings of Champaran peasants, namely the excessive rents and exorbitant incidence of debts..." Desai also agrees that the INC leaders on the whole tended to overlook or ignore the peasant question, their interests and demands. Echoing Ranga, Desai is also of the opinion that "It does strike us rather significant that both he (Gandhi) and Rajen Prasad should have remained scrupulously silent upon the ravages of the zamindari system..." just as the "Congress governments which were subsequently established in a number of provinces ...failed to meet the obligations made to
the kisans” (ibid: 193). The more radical elements within the nationalist leadership, however, realised the need for independent peasant organisations and leadership as they constituted a vast section of the population. They “also thought that the national struggle for Swaraj could be successful only if the kisans were drawn into its orbit, by taking up their own class demands” (ibid: 192). It can be mentioned in this context that with the end of colonialism the plight of the poor peasant or the agricultural labourer did not improve—in independent India they had to continue with their struggles against the local exploiters like landlord or the moneylender, who were aligned to the ruling group of the post-colonial State, as well as the national exploiter, the State.

The bourgeoisie, especially the industrial segment, had become sufficiently conscious by the early years of the twentieth century and started supporting the professional classes who were already fighting to break the British monopoly in services and professions. As the commercial and industrial interests of the Indian bourgeoisie were obstructed and damaged by colonial rule, so they saw the Swadeshi and boycott movements as opportunities to voice their grievances. They also realised the twin necessities of making the Congress-led movement the primary channel of nationalism on the one hand, and assuming control over the INC, on the other. This would enable the bourgeoisie to shape and control the movement in accordance with its class interests and also mould the post-colonial State accordingly. Thus, “the tendency was towards increasing control of this class over the Indian national Congress” (ibid: 203). As part of protecting their class interests, they supported parts of the Gandhian ideology. For instance, “Gandhi’s social philosophy based on such theories as those of class harmony, capitalists’ trusteeship of their property and ‘Capitalists are fathers and workers are children’ also appealed to the industrialists” (ibid: 204). Furthermore, in Gandhian idealisation of poverty and love for opponent they saw the best antidote to labour discontent arising out of poor work conditions, low wages and poverty. The wealthy industrialists made no attempt to
actualise the Gandhian principles in their real life, yet, "saw in this philosophy a defence against the working class movement developing on a class struggle basis" (ibid.). Thus, the Gandhian philosophy was appropriated by the bourgeoisie and it was used as a weapon against the colonial government to wrest economic and political concessions which would ultimately benefit the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie, however, never favoured any programme of radical agrarian reform, even after independence, because "in India the two classes, the zamindars and the industrialists, were often interlocked" in their interests (ibid: 205). The two propertyed classes invested heavily in each other's sectors and had a common concern in protecting each other's interests against the propertyless adversaries. This unholy nexus continued even in the post-colonial period to establish dominance over the State apparatus. The bourgeoisie thus sacrificed the national interest of overall economic advancement to promote their sectional interests. The very logic of its class position and interests made this class increasingly unprogressive and even reactionary.

The Indian proletariat, a major part of Indian society, came late into the nationalist movement, because, says Desai (ibid: 208), it "developed national and class consciousness much later than the intelligentsia, the educated middle-class, and the bourgeoisie." In the period preceding the First World War there were instances of workers' movements but they were mostly sporadic, spontaneous and "not animated by any definite conscious class purpose" (ibid: 210). Hence, Desai thinks that as the movements were spontaneous uprisings so they did not have any conscious planning or organisation behind them.

According to a Report of the Whitley Commission (ibid: 210–11), the Indian proletariat started developing class, trade union and nationalist-political consciousness from the period after the end of the War. A series of industrial and political strikes in protest of Rowlatt Act etc. culminated in the formation of the All-India Trade Union Congress in 1920. However, the agenda of the AITUC
remained liberal for almost a decade as the leadership was in the hands of the liberals. It was not until the radical elements could capture the leadership that Workers’ and Peasants’ Parties (WPP) were formed which brought the proletariat within the umbrella of the nationalist movement. Yet, their leftist ideological orientations preserved their distinction from the Congress-led nationalist movement. The workers joined the Congress-led demonstrations and supported the Election Manifesto during 1937 provincial elections with enthusiasm. But, on the one hand, they all through maintained their distinct class identity. On the other hand, they were also highly disillusioned about the undemocratic, pre-capitalist stance of the provincial governments which practically did nothing to alleviate the working and living conditions of the workers.

The nationalist movement, to the working class, was not an end in itself. Neither was it just a means to political freedom from colonial rule. For them, it was the vehicle of their emancipation and liberation from capitalist exploitation—the AITUC “set as its aim the establishment of a socialist state in India” (ibid: 209). This programme implied socialisation and nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange systems. Their programme also included establishment of various social liberties, better socio-economic work as well as better living conditions for the workers. Last, but not the least, they saw the nationalist movement as a means to remove ascriptive privileges and create a real democratic, egalitarian society.

The modern Indian intelligentsia was, perhaps, the first to develop class and national consciousness. They developed as a class decades before the bourgeoisie could do so. They assimilated the ideas of nationalism, democracy, rationalism, etc., and were the first to feel the democratic-patriotic impulse. They were also the first to comprehend the constructive as well as the destructive aspects of colonial rule. The earliest members of this class, though small in number, correctly realised the necessity of importing “ideas of
nationalism and freedom to wider and wider sections of the Indian people” (ibid: 197). Only then it would be possible to rid the country of the prevailing social maladies like fatalism, belief in superstitions, various types of oppression, etc., and integrate the people into a modern nation. Hence, their primary task was social, cultural and psychological liberation of the people which would then be followed by political liberation. Their programmes included giving impetus to spread of western education, socio-religio reform movements, crusades against caste and gender discrimination and oppression, untouchability, etc.

The intelligentsia was also the first to realise the destructive aspects of colonialism. They highlighted the draining of economic resources from this country, ideological-cultural colonialism, etc. Hence, it was imperative for them to instill some kind of nationalist consciousness among the people and then organise large-scale movements against the colonial government. They not only welcomed British efforts at politico-administrative unification of India but often used the colonial state and its laws in their crusade against social evils. By building the edifice of nationalism upon the colonial state they became “the makers of modern India” (ibid). They also became the pioneers and leaders of all progressive social, religious, political, economic and cultural movements.

As Desai observes (ibid: 218), “there were two simultaneous movements in the country, both on a national basis and on an all-India scale.” The first type of movements were class movements, which were numerous, distinctive in interests and aims, and had interrelationships of alliances and conflicts. They occurred alongside the nationalist movement and were often co-opted by the latter for principally a numerical show of strength. The other type of movement was the nationalist movement. It was largely political as it aimed for Home Rule, Dominion Status and eventually complete Independence. This movement had a common and unified objective of eliminating foreign political control from India.
Another strand of nationalism can be found in movements by the living in the feudal princely states of India. To trace the origin of these movements Desai cites (1977, 1: 8) the observations of Prof. Urmila Phadnis in her historical review of the Indian States in her work *Towards the Integration of the Indian States, 1919-1947*. In the opinion of Prof. Phadnis disintegration of the Mughal empire provided the English East India Company the opportunity to assume control and political supremacy over the territory of India. "War led to outright territorial gain and diplomacy was oriented to conclusions of such treaties and alliances which conferred on the company political supremacy over states (Urmila Phadnis, P.L. Cheodgen)" (ibid). The princely states, according to Desai, were a peculiar feature of the Indian society and the National Independence Struggle. The States were a peculiar political entity because the colonial power instead of destroying them "...at one stroke" kept them "alive to serve its basic political ends" (Desai 1938: 7). The colonial government had deliberately maintained the pre-British feudal States in a semi-independent manner for their economic-commercial expansion on the one hand, and as political allies and support base for its domination over India, on the other. Consequently, princely States remained outside the orbit of structural and qualitative transformations ushered in British India.

Desai reiterates (1977, 1: 8) the opinion expressed by Laxman Singh as enumerated in his book *Political and Constitutional Developments in the Princely States of Rajasthan (1920-1949)* that "It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in debatable territory...The situation of these feudatory states, checker boarding all India as they do, are a great safeguard." The British devised the strategy of utilizing the princes through more active collaboration with them as an antidote to the rising nationalist movement. The rulers of the
princely states, while maintaining their rulership, had embraced British colonialism because they were fully aware of the grievances and ferment among the masses. The latter, just like their counterparts in British India, had a series of demands ranging from redressal of immediate grievances to democratic rights, civil liberties, representative institutions and outright rejection of foreign rule over India. The Princes became “nominal allies but really servile supporters of British domination” because they were aware that the fate of the States was “inextricably bound up with that of British Imperialism, that with the extinction of the latter the former too” would “suffer a similar fate...” (Desai 1938: 45). Furthermore, both British India and the Princely States were ruled autocratically—the former with British administrative practices and the latter in a wholly personalized manner against a feudal backdrop.

To understand the wave of nationalism in these states it is necessary, briefly, to look into the prevailing socio-economic situation. Economically these states were predominantly agrarian with the conditions “on a still lower level than even the agriculture in British India” where “the appallingly miserable conditions of peasants...in spite of the irrigation works and...programmes of agricultural aids by the British government” (ibid: 23) has been well documented. The classes found here were similar to those in British India and the labouring classes like the peasantry, landlabourers, artisans, craftsmen, etc., were mired in even more abject poverty than their equivalents in British India. The princes and the nobility were so affluent that, as Desai comments (ibid: 21) “…the lot of the people of the States, as compared with that of their Princes, truly we find that no country in the world today could show a greater contrast between reckless affluence and abject poverty.” Slavery, forced labour and various methods of oppression were rampant. Politically the States were absolutely autocratic and all freedoms were crushed before State tyranny. Against inhuman oppression, deprivation and ignorance the victim, i.e. “the
average citizen of a Native State" was “living in a state of perpetual terror, slavery
and starvation” (ibid: 24).

This situation of slavery, oppression, exploitation and deprivation was the
backdrop for the emergence of nationalism in the native States. Yet, initially
their struggles were not against the colonial state but against their native rulers
for amelioration of their abominable conditions. But these rulers were the
biggest Indian allies of the colonial power. As the struggles of the people of the
princely states undermined and weakened the feudal State edifice so it also dealt
a blow to one of the pillars of British Imperialism in India. As Desai points out
(ibid: 58) “an attack on the pillar which supports an edifice, is an attack on the
edifice itself.” In this sense, it was anti-imperialist and a vital part of the National
Liberation Struggle of the entire Indian people against foreign domination.

Certain common features of these disparately conducted struggles in
almost six hundred units can be identified. In the first place, from 1918 onwards
movements began to form through welfare and social service organisations.
Though politically innocuous and devoted essentially to social work, these
became vehicles of exposing the numerous evils prevalent in polity, economy
and society. According to Desai (1977, 2: 6), Sewa Sanities, Hitkari Sabhas, night
schools, circulating libraries etc. were organisations of such kind. Again, Praja
Mandals, Praja Parishads, States’ Peoples’ Congress etc. ushered in movements
for civil and democratic rights, responsible and representative governments.
They also initiated propaganda activities for exposing the malpractices in
legislation and administration. Furthermore, these movements did not remain
confined within particular states but spread to entire regions and beyond to
culminate in the formation of the All India States’ Peoples’ Conference in 1927.
It became the pivotal organisation in developing peoples’ movements in
princely states but ultimately became a counterpart of the Indian National
Congress. This was so as it generally followed peaceful methods of agitation
based on the twin Gandhian principles of class collaboration and change of heart on part of the rulers.

However, its dissident leftist offshoot—All India States' Peoples' Republican League—emphasised more aggressive, militant paths of struggle including the use of force, if and when necessary. Desai infers (ibid: 9) that any confrontation or struggle in the princely states assumed political significance as it confronted the ruler and the state apparatus. The movements took various violent and non-violent forms, starting from peaceful agitation and civil disobedience to individual and group armed violence. Desai, however, points out (ibid: 10), that even in princely states the leadership always consciously discouraged any education or training for the people which would enable the masses to acquire militancy, resort to armed struggle and evolve leadership from below which might determine alternative forms of struggle. The instances of struggle being suspended when those acquired class and armed lines points to the fact that “Gandhi kept very careful watch on this point, and ruthlessly came down against any small indication of struggle taking to this line” (ibid).

To Gandhi and right-wing Congress leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad etc. the States' Peoples' struggles against the feudal regimes was “a regrettable domestic strife between two sections of the Indian people” (Desai 1938: 61). Concerned with strengthening the doctrine of class harmony and a united front of all sections of Indian people, these leaders remained oblivious to the entity of the Princes “as the historical allies of Britain, whose fall will synchronise with the fall of the Imperialist Overlord” (ibid: 59). They did not want the sharpening of the struggles between the Princes and their subjects due to Gandhi’s fear of the potential power of the masses, which had time and again compelled him to abort a number of mass movements in British India midway, forced him to take a stance of “‘non-interference’ in the States” (ibid: 60). In fact, Gandhi did not lose “hope that the Princes will deem it a pride to become real trustees of their people” (ibid: 53). Furthermore, he did not seek to destroy
their status as he believed "in the conversion of individuals and societies" (ibid). However, citing the case of the mass movement in Travancore, Desai counters, "The lie of Gandhi that 'Princes have the welfare of their people at heart' stands exposed and the fiction of the united front of the Princes and their subjects against the Common Imperialist opponent is exploded" (ibid: 49). Actually as Stalin (1993:16) had said, "propaganda regarding 'harmony of interests'" in essence "diverts the attention of large strata of population from social questions, questions of the class struggle, to national questions, questions 'common' to the proletariat" and the propertied classes.

The left-wing leaders like Subhash Chandra Bose wanted the Congress to unify and lead these struggles as part of a bourgeois-democratic movement with the objective of crushing and eliminating feudalism, along with imperialism, from Indian society. Pressure by Left forces compelled the Congress to give spasmodic and unwilling support overtly; but covertly it followed the policy of discouraging and sabotaging the movements by propagating the policies of conciliation and compromise between the subjects and their rulers. Desai cites (1938: 56) the example of Vallabhbhai Patel effecting in Mysore "a 'compromise' between the people and the Prince, when he persuaded the people to associate the State flag, the flag of feudal oppression, with the National flag, the flag of ending that oppression, at all popular meetings." Hence, in Mysore and elsewhere the people were committed to respect the flag of feudal bondage—it implied the acceptance of the principle of harmony of interests of the Prince and his subjects, thereby making the anti-feudal struggle null and void in effect.

The contradictoriness of the attitude and position of the Congress became evident from its appeals and requests to the Princes to grant democratic rights, representative institutions and responsible government to the people while opposing "the mass struggle of these people to extort those rights from the rulers" (ibid: 54). Not only so, through the Resolution on the States in the
Haripura session of 1938, the Congress dissociated itself from any such movement as the Congress Committees in the States were not to “engage in parliamentary activity nor launch any direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress” (ibid: 55). However, Subhash Chandra Bose in his Presidential Address at Haripura Congress, 1938, declared that, individual Congressmen were not prevented from “actively espousing the cause of the subjects and participating in their struggle” (Government of West Bengal 1987:167). Also “it was declared for the first time unequivocally that the Congress ideal of Purna Swaraj was applicable not only to British India, but also to princely India” (ibid: 169). But Congress’ refusal to be associated with the States’ Peoples’ Movement at the organizational level was due to its illusion of two separate struggles which, on its turn, had dangerous consequences for the future of India.

So far as the nationalist movement was concerned, the Congress policy by refusing to unify the two streams into an all-India National Liberation Struggle against the feudal-imperialist bloc actually prevented “the Indian people from getting a correct estimate of the real alignment of these forces in the National Independence Struggle” (Desai 1938: 61). Furthermore, by perpetuating the division between the people of the Princely States and British India, the Congress actually served “the interests of Imperialism and the Princes, who are opposed to and obstruct the unity of the two sections of the Indian people, a unity which is against the interests of both foreign and native rulers” as well as future rulers (ibid: 62).

Writing three decades after Independence, it was clear to Desai, as enumerated in the S.G. Deuskar Lecture on (7.4.1977-9.4.1977) “States’ ‘Peoples’ Movement in India” at CSSS, Calcutta, that the INC had never wanted an armed revolutionary overthrow of the colonial power including its military, bureaucratic and legal infrastructure which was to be the inheritance of the bourgeoisie in independent India. Thus, neither in British India nor in the
princely states the exploited and oppressed classes were organised to build up powerful organs of struggle which would provide alternative organs of rule. The masses were used only as a pressure-valve to strengthen the bargaining position of the Congress in its bid to acquire increasing control over the administrative apparatus. The mass movements, all over the country, were never permitted to transcend certain limits of militancy and intensity "which would open up the possibilities of alternative mode of rule, in the process may uproot the major bourgeois Legal (sic) normative and administrative framework built by Britishers, which would serve Indian bourgeoisie itself when it came to power" (Desai 1977, 1:14). Thus, while the mass movements were discouraged, thwarted or disowned and representatives of States' people were bypassed, the Congress accomplished the merger of British India and Princely States, even at the cost of Partition, due to the needs of the Indian bourgeoisie. In the face of numerous mass movements during 1942-47, the Indian bourgeoisie was in a "hurry to secure power, and use the state apparatus to accelerate Bourgeois development in a territory which would, though be truncated by Partition, would be compensated by accretion of territories and resources of six hundred states" (ibid: 18–19).

By keeping the states as "a separate parallel, passive force in the political scheme of India" (Desai 1938: 63) the Congress leaders perpetuated the continuation of feudalism, which is a "bitter and obstinate opponent of all progress" (ibid: 64). The States were abolished in independent India as a precondition for advancement to higher forms of socio-cultural existence. Yet, failure to give due recognition and support to the States' Peoples' democratic movements contributed to the continued existence of feudalism which has all along been a hindrance to social and political freedom, to cultural and economic backwardness of India.

Not only in Princely States but also in rest of the country the bourgeoisie, says Desai (1977, 2:12), did not permit any movement to emerge which would
destroy the basis of the prevailing exploitative-oppressive socio-political system. However, it is noteworthy that "a leadership and organisation which shouted most loudly about ethical means, non-violent methods, 'purity of means', and prevented all the actions of the masses which appeared militant and based on force" (ibid) had no objection to the use of force, coercion and repression against the masses in their legitimate quest for democracy, civil liberties, responsible government, betterment of socio-economic conditions etc. in fact, this leadership had "started use of force most nonchalantly (sic), as soon as it secured even limited power as in 1937-39" (ibid). The Congress leaders and ministries had pledged "to burn and wreck and smash' the Imperialist Engine of Oppression of the Indian people, its State," yet, "for eighteen months, these 'wreckers' are running this apparatus, using it to suppress the rising Mass Movements" (Desai 1939:18). In the above-cited article Desai gives a number of instances where the Congress ministries, based on "the immaculate twin principles of Truth and Non-Violence" were perpetuating violence and terrorism against the democratic aspirations of the people. Desai points out (ibid, 3-4) the instance of Gandhi's denunciation of a mass picketing by Cawnpore textile workers against the exploitation by the textile magnates as 'violent' while police firing on Bombay workers on November 7, 1938, who were condemning the Black Bill of the Bombay Congress Government, was justified by Vallabhbhai Patel as necessary for protection of life and property. Similarly, police terrorism by Bombay Congress Government against Sholapur Labour Leaders and workers of Gokak and Dharavi for organising a powerful mass demonstration in support of the Release of Political Prisoners Day fixed by Congress "to exert pressure on Imperialism to release all political prisoners rotting in Imperialist Jails" were "really great feats of Non-Violence achieved by the Congress ministry" (ibid: 8). Time and again, the repressive State apparatus was used against the people in general, and workers and peasants in particular, in defence of the interests of the capitalist-landlord. It is clear to Desai that the
Congress ministries performed as an arm of the Imperialist State to curb the civil liberties of the people rather than organising and leading the mass movements for expanding democratic freedoms. To Desai, “This ministerial violence is more reprehensible precisely because it is directed not against the Imperialist foe but against the anti-Imperialist masses” (ibid: 12).

The legislative measures, in spite of the electoral promises, did not touch a fringe of the problem of peasant poverty but confirmed and consolidated “peasant slavery as a whole, regarding debts, dues to be paid to Patidars etc., land tax and so on. The Peasant relief measures of the Rajaji’s Government in the Madras bear the same futile and treacherous character...” (ibid: 15–16).

Desai continues (ibid: 29) that it is not an accident that during Congress regime in pre-independence period no capitalist or landlord had been a victim of State terrorism—all such violence had been directed solely against the masses, the workers, the peasants, i.e. the anti-imperialist elements fighting for democratic rights and liberties. Furthermore, it is also clear to Desai that the Congress actually, through its ministries, was a hindrance to the preparation and conduct of genuine anti-imperialist mass movements in the country. It was also apparent that Gandhi opposed the overthrow of the present system which protected the interests of the propertied classes, yet, supported the violent maintenance and perpetuation of that structure. Non-violence was for the oppressed, downtrodden while Gandhi recommended “the use of state violence in form of armed forces to maintain the privileged position of propertied exploiters” (ibid: 33).

All these instances clearly demonstrate that the bourgeoisie had succeeded in establishing its dominance over both the Congress as well as the nationalist movement. According to Stalin (1993:14), the bourgeoisie does this by claiming its own cause as a cause of the nation as a whole—“It recruits itself an army from among its ‘countrymen’ in the interests of...the ‘fatherland’. Nor do the ‘folk’ always remain unresponsive to its appeals, they rally around its
the repression from above affects them also and provokes their discontent." When the bourgeoisie succeeds in drawing in the proletariat and the peasantry into the national movement, it "externally assumes a 'nation-wide' character" (ibid: 16). But the workers "combat the policy of national oppression in all its forms, subtle or crude..." (ibid: 17). Though the Congress tried to project an anti-imperialist united front of all people belonging to all classes, the Nationalist Movement, in effect, became an arena of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the labouring classes of India. By making the Congress its instrument of class domination, the bourgeoisie paved the way for post-independence capture of power and domination over other classes. The propertied classes were "forced by the very logic of their position...to blind the masses to the reality of exploitation and propagate among them the Untruth of the identity of interests of the Princes and their subjects, the zamindars and tenants, the employers and the workers" (Desai 1939: 21). It would not be out of context here to refer to the view of Antonio Gramsci as how the commonality of purpose and programme among people differentially located within the power structure in the national context had been forged by the bourgeoisie (Aloysius 1997: 217ff). The implications as well as consequences of such class oriented policies of the Congress vitiated the very contours of our independence. It led to the "uprooting of millions of people and debasing of consciousness as a consequence of unprincipled acceptance of Partition" (Desai 1977, 2: 5).

Indian nationalism, thus, at the moment of its culmination was betrayed by the Party—Indian National Congress—which had been the leading force of the nationalist movement. The assent of the INC "to the vivisection of India and the Indian Nation," says Desai, "presents an astounding paradox..." (2000:48). This is so as the party which had been the "uncompromising exponent" and "representative" of Indian Nationalism and had unshaking faith in the unity of India had "within a short time, removed this fundamental conception and agreed to the Partition of India in return for the British withdrawal from India"
According to the C.P.I., as revealed in the Election Manifesto of 1952 in Mohit Sen edited *Documents of the History of the C.P.I.: 1951-1956* (Kaviraj 1979: 343) the leaders of the Indian National Congress instead of winning freedom for the country had actually betrayed the nationalist movement. “They have allowed the foreigners and the reactionary Indian vested interests to plunder and loot our people just as they did in the past. They have themselves joined in the loot” (ibid). In the princely states also, says Kaviraj, “traditionally, Congress policy had been to be ambiguously inactive in this areas” (ibid: 350). This act of the INC, thinks Desai (2000: 48ff), was not sudden, but rooted in its pre-independence activities, guided by the interests of the propertied classes. The observations of G.L. Mehta (ibid: 56) are important in this context. In his opinion, “the transfer of power which took place...was in the nature of a Constitutional revolution; it involved no breakdown of government or administration as it happens after a violent upheaval. So far as India is concerned, the transfer of power has in some respects been taking place for over three decades both in legislature and executive branches.” Indian nationalism was a multi-class movement where all classes were motivated by their particular class interests. A number of, at times quite divergent, ideologies and movements tried to co-exist as well as compete with each other to capture the allegiance of the 'nationals'. In the opinion of P. Duara (1993:1–26; also quoted in Ozkirimli 2000: 228) in that sense “nationalism is rarely the nationalism of the nation, but rather represents the site where very different views of the nation contest and negotiate with each other.” Ania Loomba also observes that (Bandyopadhyay 2004:190), “the ‘nation’ itself is a ground of dispute and debate, a site for the competing imaginings of different ideological and political interests.” In the Indian context, the propertied classes were trying to preserve the pre-independence exploitative-oppressive structure while the labouring classes were endeavouring to overthrow that very structure. Whatever nationalist feelings could be generated under such circumstances became even more
fragmented with the exit of the common enemy. It had only been the exigencies of national unity to oust the European coloniser that had produced the national liberation struggle. The common objective had kept all class, community, regional and other differences in check; as Stalin was of the opinion (1993:1), "As long as people believed in 'a bright future' they fought side by side irrespective of nationality: common questions first and foremost! But when doubt crept into people's hearts, they began to depart, each to his own national tent."

Hence, as Rupert Emerson correctly pointed out in his book *Representative Government in South East Asia* (Desai 2000: 53) that "the colonial revolution does not end with the elimination of foreign rulers, but begins with that." Political independence is followed by social revolution "wherein gigantic class battles are fought out" (ibid: 54). In India the class differences threatened to overwhelm the State after independence. The Indian bourgeoisie—most dominant class of the nationalist movement—could not resolve the various problems of Indian society because "this class, by the very logic of its position (living in the modern period of general capitalist decline and further in a backward society) is denied the historical ability of successfully solving the fundamental problems of that society" (ibid). Not only did this class historically originate in a period of degeneration, decline and decay of world capitalism, but as it also did not develop from the ruins of feudalism, it became considerably interwoven with the feudal forces. To counter its weakness arising out of its origin on the one hand, and lack of industrial base on the other, it aligned itself with the reactionary and non-progressive feudal and semi-feudal elements. So the nationalist movement could not be a bourgeois-democratic movement as it was confined only to the ouster of foreign rulers and capture of state power rather than elimination of feudal and other pre-capitalist elements. The INC hence, "decided to shape the political, economic, social and cultural life of the
people according to the needs of the historically outmoded bourgeois class whom it represented...” (ibid: 55).