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# UNIT 7 PATTERNS OF ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES

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## 7.0 OBJECTIVES

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Decolonisation is the most significant development of post-Second World War period. It took place as a result of end of colonial rule in large number of erstwhile colonies, preceded by anti-colonial struggles in these colonies. This unit deals with various patterns of these struggles. After going through this unit you will be able to:

- recall the urge of the oppressed peoples for freedom;
- identify the patterns of anti-colonial struggles;
- explain the means adopted in different colonies in their struggles; and
- trace the three stages in the process of anti-colonial struggles.

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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When the United Nations was set up in 1945, it had only 51 (original) members. Of these, India was not then a sovereign state. It was under British rule. Besides, two members viz. Ukraine and Bylo-Russia were Union Republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Today, at the dawn of 21st century there are 189 sovereign countries who are members of the United Nations. Most (not all) of them were colonies of one Imperial Power or the other in 1945. The process of termination of foreign colonial rule began with the independence of the Philippines from the United States in 1946. But, it got real boost with the independence of India and creation of the Dominions of India and Pakistan by Britain in August 1947. This was followed, in quick succession, by the independence of a large number of colonies in Asia and Africa earlier ruled by Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Portugal. Most of the Colonial Powers were forced to grant independence to their colonies by the anti-colonial struggles carried out in the colonies.

All the colonies did not follow any uniform pattern in their struggle against their rulers. While some of the erstwhile colonies had to wage prolonged struggles for their independence, there were some where such struggles were waged for a short period. In some of the colonies hardly any struggle was waged, and independence came in the wake of then ongoing decolonisation. There were two main patterns of anti-colonial struggles. In some of the colonies, the struggle was limited against their colonial masters, and not against the then existing socio-economic systems. Where struggles were merely against the rulers, and not against the system, the desire was to secure transfer of political power from the colonial masters to the peoples of the colonies. These struggles were described as "independence movements", which merely sought transfer of political power to the peoples of the countries concerned. However, where there was a fight not only against the foreign rule, but also against the existing socio-economic system which was unjust, undemocratic and supportive of exploitation, these struggles were termed as "liberation movements" or "liberation struggles."

Another important aspect of freedom struggles was the methods that were employed in different countries. While in some of the countries, like India, non-violence was insisted upon as the tool of struggle, in others violent means had to be adopted to achieve the desired goal of decolonisation. The struggles were, therefore, either non-violent and peaceful, or agitational in nature and using force and violence as means of the struggle.

In this unit, you will read about these patterns and methods of anti-colonial struggles that eventually ended colonialism and freed large number of colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

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## 7.2 ANTI-COLONIALISM EXPLAINED

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A large number of present members of the United Nations were subjected to foreign rule and exploitation, for a long time, before they attained sovereignty and full statehood after the Second World War. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a number of European Powers set out to establish their economic domination and political control over vast territories of Asia and Africa. Practically the entire continent of Africa and large parts of Asia had become colonies either of Britain or France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium or the Netherlands. The peoples of colonies had to carry out struggles for their freedom from foreign rulers. These struggles are known as anti-colonial struggles, and were carried out in different ways in different colonies. The process of victory of anti-colonial struggles and achievement of freedom by the colonies came to be known as decolonisation.

### 7.2.1 Colonialism

The term colonialism is used to indicate a situation in which economically prosperous and developed countries of Europe established their control over the backward, poor and underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The basic feature of colonialism is exploitation of underdeveloped countries by the rich European nations. Imperialism is a term that indicates political control of one country over the other. The imperial powers acquired political control over large number of countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Thus, if colonialism was economic exploitation, imperialism was political control. The two went hand-in-gloves. In most cases imperialism followed economic domination and exploitation. Colonies were used to acquire cheap raw material and labour, and for dumping in their markets the finished goods produced by the colonial powers. Both colonialism and imperialism were exploitative and undemocratic. One naturally followed the other.

The colonialists had their arguments to support this system of exploitation. The defenders of colonialism and imperialism pleaded their case in terms of white man's burden. They argued that it was the obligation of advanced nations to help the people of "backward" countries - to "civilise" and "Christianise" them, and "to teach them the dignity of labour, and to impress upon them the beauties of their own concepts of law and order." According to Palmer and Perkins, "They argued that colonialism was a necessary prelude to the emergence of most of the free and independent states of the world and to the twentieth century awakening of Asia and Africa." These arguments of supporters of colonialism were rightly rebutted by its critics who used such terms as brutality, exploitation, misery, hatred and degradation for colonialism and its practices. The critics insisted that the struggle for empires led only to the urge to create greater and still greater empires and that the appetite of empire builders knew no limits. Colonialism was the foundation of imperialism.

Portugal and Spain were the first to establish their colonies. They were soon joined by Britain, France, the Netherlands and Germany. The first to lose its colonies were Germany and Turkey who were deprived of all their colonies after their defeat in the First World War. Even Japan and the US had joined the race. After the First World War only four African countries were fully or partially independent. The rest of the Continent was under one colonial power or the other. The British Empire was so vast that the sun never set in it. The 13 British colonies in North America were the first to liberate themselves in 1770s and 1780s, and they established the sovereign United States of America. The Portuguese and Spanish colonies of Latin America were next to acquire independence. Asia and Africa had to wage struggles for independence, in which they succeeded only after the Second World War.

### 7.2.2 Colonies' Desire for Liberation

Peoples living in colonies had long suffered exploitation at the hands of their European masters. They were denied basic rights and freedom. They had practically no share in governance. The colonies were raw-material suppliers who were denied not only industrialisation and development, but were also denied the right to self-government. Supporters of colonialism, such as J.A. Hobson explained colonialism as "... a natural outflow of nationality; its test is the power of colonists to transplant the civilization they represent to the new natural, and social environment in which they find themselves." This so called civilising of the peoples of colonies was a garb under which the colonialists exploited the colonies. As people from colonies such as India got limited opportunity to visit the western countries and study there, they learnt how they were being exploited, and that what was the value of freedom that the European people enjoyed. This prompted educated people in colonies to awaken their fellow countrymen to the realities of imperialism and to work for liberation and self-governance.

At the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian countries held in 1955, President Sukarno of Indonesia said, "Colonialism has... its modern dress in the form of economic control, intellectual control, and actual physical control by a small but alien community..." It was, therefore, argued at the Conference that, "Colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end." By the time of Bandung Conference the Afro-Asian peoples had come to the conclusion that both colonialism and imperialism referred to a "superior-inferior relationship." Thus, hundreds of millions of people in Asia and Africa resolved to abandon their position as "inferiors" and to assert their equality with the peoples of former colonial powers.

Thus, though the process of anti-colonial struggles and decolonisation had begun soon after the Second World War, the urge for liberation and self-governance and to defeat exploitation made for accelerated anti-colonial struggles from 1950s onwards.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** i) Use space provided below each question to write your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What was colonialism and what were its manifestations?

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2) What was the reaction of subject peoples to the concept of white man's burden?

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## 7.3 PATTERNS OF ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES

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Most of the colonies of various European Powers had to wage struggle for their independence. However, there was no uniform pattern of these struggles, nor a common method of the struggle, nor even the duration of struggles was, generally speaking, the same. Their nature often differed sharply and the time taken by a movement to be successful depended on many factors such as determination of local leadership, support of the people and attitude of the colonial power concerned. In many countries, protest against colonial rule had existed right from the time of arrival of colonial rulers. In other countries like Ghana (Gold Coast), Nigeria, the Congo, Angola, etc. such movements began much after many of the Asian countries had already become free. It is not possible in this unit to go into all the details of struggles of all the colonies. What is proposed to be done is to examine the broad patterns and methods of freedom struggles. In the present section two broad patterns of anti-colonial struggles are dealt with. In the next section (7.4) an attempt will be made to briefly deal with the methods used by different colonies. The two main patterns were generally highlighted by the leftist scholars.

### 7.3.1 National Independence Movements

A large number of countries, including India, followed the pattern of anti-colonial struggles known as independence movements. These movements were aimed at removal of the foreign rulers, and securing political independence. It was believed that the principal concern of the leadership of freedom movements was transfer of power from the imperial masters to the local people. The aim was to replace the foreign governments by national governments and to build strong state after independence. The critics pointed out that it simply meant change of rulers. For example, in case of India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, etc. the objective was to throw the British out, and secure transfer of power to the local

elite. The national independence movements were not immediately concerned with the restructuring of colonial societies. Leftist scholars describe these movements as bourgeois, professional and bureaucratic movements for political change.

The point that the critics tried to make was that transfer of power made no difference to the common man and woman who remained under the existing exploitative socio-economic system.

National independence movements did not seek to change the social system or the economic order. In India and Pakistan, for example, caste continued to dominate the social system which perpetuated social injustice. In economic sphere capitalists and landlords continued to enjoy full power over their workers and peasants. Industrial management remained exploitative. The workers were given no share in management. Not only that, conditions of living and work were neither hygienic nor conducive to good life. The peasants in the rural areas remained at the mercy of landlords and big peasants. To sum up, political power changed hands, while socio-economic system remained as before. Exploitation remained; exploiters changed.

This was the result of freedom movements carried out by parties and leaders who were essentially concerned with transfer of political power. Most of the leaders had been educated in Great Britain, or in other European countries. In many countries these "westernised" leaders failed to be mass leaders. This, according to critics, was a pattern that helped leadership to acquire power, but did not help the common man overcome his difficulties.

### 7.3.2 National Liberation Movements

These movements began rather late. In very few colonies movements that were launched and carried out for independence had twin purpose. These anti-colonial struggles were aimed at liberation of the masses from exploitation and injustice. At the same time they wanted to defeat the foreign rulers and seek power for the people, not for the elite. This, however, is doubtful if the gains actually reached the masses. Power, when transferred, went into the hands of leadership. Vietnam can be cited as an example of the liberation movement. The Communist Party, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh had to wage a long struggle first against the French who wanted to regain their hold, after Japanese defeat and retain it as long as they could. Later, when US intervened on the side of South Vietnam, where a right wing government had come to power, the Ho Chi Minh regime had to fight against the Americans and South Vietnamese. At the same time, this struggle was aimed at removal of poverty, illiteracy and exploitation.

The objective of the national liberation movements (or liberation struggles), as in case of Vietnam or Congo or Angola was ending of alien rule and radical restructuring of socio-economic systems. The aim was to bring about socio-economic justice and ensure power to the people. Though the western critics dubbed it as mere communist domination, the leaders of the movement described it as people's struggle for their rights, and freedom, and struggle against foreign domination and internal injustice perpetuated by the landlords and handful of owners of wealth.

To conclude, the two main patterns of anti-colonial struggles were common in one respect. Both types of struggles were to defeat the colonialism and imperialism by throwing the foreign rulers out - British in case of India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana etc.; French in case of Algeria, Ivory Coast and Indo-China Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam; Belgians in case of Congo; the Dutch in case of Indonesia, and Portuguese in case of Angola and Mozambique. While,

this one objective was common, the difference between the independence movements and liberation struggles was that whereas former sought only the political freedom from foreign rule or Swaraj the latter also wanted social and economic justice and defeat of exploitation in all its manifestations. Guided by Marxist-Leninist ideas, their aim was social revolution along with political independence.

### Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use space provided below each question to write your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Distinguish between national independence movements and national liberation movements.

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- 2) What was the objective of national liberation movements?

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## 7.4 METHODS OF ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES

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Colonialism was a major curse. It was defeated as a result of vigorous efforts made by the Afro-Asian countries. The outcome of anti-colonial struggles was described as a revolution. Palmer and Perkins wrote that, "The 'revolt of Asia' may prove to be the most significant development of the twentieth century." Earlier Arnold Toynbee had predicted that even the challenge of communism "may come to seem a small affair when the probably far more potent civilisation of India and China respond to our western challenge..." Thus, the revolutionary changes in Asia and Africa were considered very significant developments. The British Prime Minister Mr. Harold Macmillan had said in 1959 in a speech in Moscow that, "Imperialism is an epoch in history, not a present reality." But, the so-called 'epoch' ruined the economics of Afro-Asian countries. As Nehru said (1954) the crisis of time of Asia was 'Colonialism versus anti-colonialism'. The anti-colonial struggles were carried out either peacefully or through violent means. There was indeed lot of role of colonial powers themselves. They were forced by developments both at national and international levels to give up their empires.

### 7.4.1 Peaceful Non-Violent Struggles

An important method of anti-colonial struggle was non-violence. This was adopted under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Later, several other colonies also followed the path shown by India. Indian National Congress established in 1885 as a forum for expression of aspirations of educated Indians was, at that time, generally welcomed by the British. But, it soon became an anti-British platform. Initially, the Congress leadership (including Surendra Nath Banerjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and others) merely sought reforms that would give some participation to Indians in the Legislative Councils, but within two decades, its main concern

turned out to be anti-British. Indian National Congress considered defeat of the British raj as its main objective. Like most nationalist movements, the freedom movement in India came to be divided into less militant and more militant factions. The first was represented by Gokhale, and subsequently by Mahatma Gandhi; and the second was led by Tilak, Lajpat Rai and B.C. Pal. For the first faction, reforms was the main objective; for the second it was defeat of the British rule. By and large, Congress remained committed to non-violent methods, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Non-violence was Gandhi's main weapon. He initiated the non-cooperation movement after Jalianwala Bagh Massacre (1919) on the conditions that it would remain non-violent and Indians were to boycott British courts, goods and educational institutions. The movement was doing very well when suddenly in 1922 an angry mob in Chauri Chaura (Uttar Pradesh) put a police station on fire, killing nearly two dozen policemen. Brushing aside criticism, Gandhiji withdrew the movement as (at one place) it had turned violent. His peaceful Dandi March, to break the infamous salt law of the British rulers, began the civil disobedience movement which again was to remain peaceful, as people would disobey the laws that were unjust. The Quit India Movement of 1942 was again to remain peaceful, but even before it could be formally launched, the British Government arrested all prominent leaders, leaving the people leaderless. There was, therefore, some element of violence provoked by the British themselves. Though some young revolutionaries like Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Ashfaq Ullah Khan and Ram Prasad Bismil did not follow Gandhiji's diktat of non-violence, yet their enthusiasm and sacrifice contributed to India's freedom struggle in a big way. Large number of Indian leaders (including Gandhi, Nehru and Patel) were sent to jail several times.

Many other countries also adopted non-violent and peaceful method for fighting against the foreign rule and to gain independence. There was little freedom movement in Sri Lanka. It gained its independence from Britain in 1948, as a consequence of British departure from India.

Burma (Myanmar) was a part of British India till the enforcement of Government of India Act of 1935 (in 1937). As such it was associated with India's non-violent struggle. When the Second World War began, the Burmese nationalists were generally pro-Japanese, but later became anti-Japanese. With the armaments supplied by the British, the Burmese nationalists got together in Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). The Labour Government which came to power in the UK in 1945 recognised the AFPFL as the organisation to deal with. The British Governor of Burma wanted to arrest the most important nationalist leader Aung San. The Government recalled the Governor and dealt with Aung San's party for transfer of power. Although Aung San and other leaders were assassinated in July 1947, their surviving colleagues achieved the goal of independence in January 1948. There was no fighting. Calvocoressi concluded that, "The British, strongly influenced by their own pledge to leave India and also by the belief that it was not possible to use the Indian troops ... against the Burmese..." decided to transfer power. Although, there was internal strife after independence, the freedom movement was generally non-violent.

Many of the African countries also used non-violence as weapon of their freedom struggle. The Europeans had taken possession of Africa at the height of industrial revolution. The disparity between Europeans and Africans was enormous. African countries did not have prolonged movements for freedom. African leaders drew inspiration from both India and America. They formed National Congresses in different countries. Many of them were attracted by Gandhian ideas of non-violence. From the American Continent, particularly the Caribbean, Africans

gained confidence and dignity and a habit of meeting together. A number of Pan African Conferences were held. The Sixth such Conferences held after the Second World War at Manchester was attended by several prominent African leaders including Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Akinola and Julius Nyerere. It demanded independence, which would have appeared very unreal five years earlier. A mere ten years later West African colonies attained independence leading the way to the end of colonialism in rest of Africa also. East African colonies followed suit.

#### 7.4.2 Armed Struggles

Peaceful and non-violent means did not, or could not, work in all the anti-colonial struggles. In several cases nationalists were forced to take to gun and adopt revolutionary means. In India, the movement generally remained peaceful, yet some patriotic youth did not have the patience to wait for the success of Gandhiji's weapon. Young men like Ashfaq Ullah Khan, Ram Prasad Bismil and their friends looted government treasury from a train at Kakori in Uttar Pradesh. They were arrested, tried and hanged to death. They gladly made the supreme sacrifice for the country's independence. Later, Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and their friends gladly went to the gallows for having thrown a bomb in the central legislature. Many more revolutionaries made sacrifices after using armed struggle as a tool. Even Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, broke the jail managed to flee the country during the Second World War, reached Germany and then Japan, set up the Indian National Army to fight for India's freedom. Though all these patriots died before independence, their role cannot be ignored.

Much earlier, in Latin America, independence was achieved from the Spanish and Portuguese colonies through revolutionary movements started first in Spanish colony of Mexico and later in Venezuela, Argentina etc. By 1825, Spain had lost most of its vast empire.

Kenya was a British colony, in East Africa, till it attained freedom late in 1963. Soon after the Second World War a number of non-official members of the Legislative Council were given ministerial positions. But all of them were white. The blacks were denied this privilege. In 1952, the white rulers were faced with a 'savagery outbreak' in the Kikuyu tribe (in the neighbourhood of capital Nairobi). They had for long nourished grievances against the white settlers. The movement was led by Jomo Kenyatta, a former student of London University, and now President of the Kenya African Union. In addition, the Kikuyu had formed a secret society called Mau Mau. Its activities were the militant expression of a deep-seated nationalist movement. Mau Mau administered oaths to its members and performed secret rites. They fought for independence. Calvecoressi described its activities as "anti-Christian", and wrote that, "With time the society became extreme in its ambitious and barbarous in its practices. It took to murder... and finally developed a campaign of violence and guerrilla warfare." Britain tried to crush the movement with bigger force. Even Jomo Kenyatta was sentenced in 1954 to seven years imprisonment "for organising Mau Mau". The activities of Mau Mau became violent and it killed around 8000 African opponents (who supported the British), while 68 European were also done to death. Having realised the futility of suppression, the British Government took to negotiation in 1960, which finally led to Kenya's independence in December 1963. Meanwhile, Kenyatta had taken over as the Prime Minister in June. His Kenya African National Union (KANU) succeeded in May elections, and on its insistence the British proposal for a federal Kenya was dropped.

Belgian Congo was an entirely different story. Its independence was proclaimed on June 30, 1960 and official celebrations lasted for four days. Just 48 hours later



there occurred a mutiny in the Force Publique, which sparked off a train of terrible disaster. Congo's independence produced not only internal chaos and civil war, but also one of the major international crises of the post-war period.

Indonesia in the South East Asia was ruled by the Netherlands as 'The Netherlands East Indies.' A strong nationalist movement had developed there in the first decade of the twentieth century. The first Indonesian party called Boedi Oetomo was founded in 1908. Its nature was described by Robert Payne thus: "The movement possessed no political credo. Essentially scholastic, it looked towards India, deriving strength not from nascent Moslem nationalism but from Rabindra Nath Tagore's vision of a self-governing Asia at peace..." This movement never became strong. It was soon eclipsed by a more militant party, Sarekat Islam. It advocated political and social reforms and adopted a pro-muslim platform. It demanded complete independence, and during the First World War it adopted socialist programme.

The Indonesian nationalist movement became more vigorous with the formation of National Indonesian Party under the leadership of Dr. Sukarno (Soekarno). The Dutch used force, but could not suppress the movement. The Dutch relied largely on the policy of stern repression. Accordingly, in late 1920s and early 1930s prominent leaders including Sukarno and Hatta were sent into exile. After the fall of the Netherlands in 1940 (during the Second World War), Indonesians cooperated with the conquerors of the country viz. the Japanese. After Japanese defeat in August 1945, the British troops landed in the Dutch East Indies, and with their support an Indonesian Republic, with Sukarno as President, was proclaimed. Though the Dutch Government granted de facto recognition to the Republic in March 1947, it tried all means to incorporate it in some kind of union with the Dutch Crown. For two years Dutch resorted to dual policy of now repression, now peace. They used armed might and carried out hostilities in the name of 'police action.' India, and several other Afro-Asian countries gave full support to Indonesian nationalists. Thus, Indonesia's struggle on its part was largely peaceful, yet violence was used to suppress it. The Indonesian nationalists had to fight a long struggle for four years against the Dutch. It was virtually an open war between the Colonial Power and the nationalist forces.

The same story, but with far more bloodshed, was repeated in Vietnam. The French colony of Indo-China was occupied by the Japanese during the Second World War. A reference was made to Vietnam in Section 7.3.2 dealing with liberation movements. French Indo-China included Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Vietnam itself was a Union of the Protectorates of Annam and Tongking and the colony of Cochin-China (Together known as three Kys, and were Annanite by race and Chinese by culture); the protected Kingdoms of Luang Prabang or Laos, and Cambodia were Thai by race and Indian by culture. During the Japanese occupation, three Kys became the autonomous state of Vietnam, and upon the Japanese withdrawal Ho Chi Minh, the leader of Communist dominated nationalist coalition proclaimed the independent republic of Viet. As in case of Korea, the three Kys got divided as the British took control of the territory south of 16 parallel and the Chinese in the north. The north became communist and south became pro-US and anti-communist. From then, till early 1970s, the territory faced violence, conflict and war. It was French endeavour to regain control of Indo-China, but the Geneva Conference of 1954 finally terminated French control and independent states of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were recognized. But, after the French withdrawal, America entered the scene and there was a prolonged struggle between pro-Soviet North and pro-US South Vietnam, till the entire Vietnam became a communist controlled state. Thus, the Indo-Chinese struggle virtually became a civil war.

### Check Your Progress 3

**Note:** i) Use space provided below each question to write your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What was the utility of non-violent peaceful struggle to defeat colonialism?

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2) How did the armed struggles ensure success of anti-colonial struggles?

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## 7.5 THREE STAGES OF ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES

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Patterns and methods of anti-colonial struggles were largely influenced by changes in international environment and changes within the colonial powers. The Second World War, emergence of two Super Powers, Cold War and weakened position of once powerful Britain, France and other European Powers certainly ensured success of anti-colonial struggles. In this section, you will read about three stages of freedom struggles. These three stages are explained below as general patterns, not necessarily followed in all the colonies and all the anti-colonial struggles. Geoffrey Barraclough analysed the struggles for freedom by dividing them into three stages. Here no distinction is made between independence movements and liberation movements. The three stages discussed by Barraclough were: proto-nationalism; the rise of new leadership; and the struggle assuming the nature of mass movements.

### 7.5.1 Proto-Nationalism

The first stage, called proto-nationalism refers to the earliest period of anti-colonial struggles. During this early phase people in the colonies had not yet become aware of their rights and the need for independence. By and large, colonial rule was accepted by the local people. Nevertheless, social groups and political movements demanded reforms within the system of colonial rule. In India, the Indian National Congress was established in 1885, but not to oust the British rulers. For the next 20 years, the Congress remained a forum of quality debates. Its sessions were annual gatherings of western - educated well-dressed English-speaking elite. The then leadership believed in the superiority of British civilisation and Englishmen's sense of justice and fair play. The early demands of the Congress were limited to local reforms, limited share in the Councils and job opportunities for educated Indians. There was no-confrontation with the colonial masters. It was the stage of submitting petitions and seeking reforms. In Indonesia, the first stage began only in 1910-11 with the beginning of religious - nationalist movement called Sarekat Islam. Similar movements began in African colonies like Algeria, Nigeria etc. only around 1920.



The second stage is described as the rise of new leadership. As nationalism became mature and struggle against colonial powers became the goal, a number of new, patriotic, dedicated leaders emerged in the colonies who took over the control of movement. Nationalism began to gain ground among the middle classes. During this stage demands made on colonial powers were substantially expanded, and independence was considered as a future goal. In India, this stage lasted till after the First World War. The social base of the Congress Party had expanded, yet the struggle had not fully become a mass movement. Complete independence, or purna swaraj, was demanded only in 1930. Till then the goal was dominion status. During this period leadership passed from the hands of Gokhale to Mahatma Gandhi, and soon leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad came in the forefront. In Indonesia, Sarakat Islam committed itself to independence in 1917 under the leadership of Sukarno. In Tunisia and Nigeria such turning points were reached in 1934 and 1944 respectively. There was no chronological similarity in different stages in different countries, but several prominent leaders emerged in different colonies. These included Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Kwame Nkrumah in Gold Coast (Ghana) and Aung San in Burma (Myanmar).

### 7.5.3 Mass Movement

The third and final stage leading to success of anti-colonial struggles was known as mass movement. National movements became so strong by this time that, in many cases, colonial rulers had to use force (often brutal force) to maintain themselves in power. In India, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, the movement reached the common man even in the remote villages. This process began with the civil disobedience movement. The movement for purna swaraj was a mass struggle for independence. The British used force, arrested large number of people and often sent prominent leaders to jail. The British rulers had become panicky even with the mere announcement of Quit India Movement in August 1942. In Indonesia, a comparable movement could be launched by Sukarno only during the Second World War. In Nigeria, the third stage was reached only in 1951.

The three stages were not equally distinct everywhere. The process extended to longest period of time in the British colonies. In many of the French colonies it took just 10 to 20 years. In the Belgian Congo, there were hardly any demands for independence till 1955. Many local leaders then visualised a period of 60 years or longer for independence. Still, the turn of events was so fast that the Congo was free in 1960.

#### Check Your Progress 4

**Note:** i) Use space provided below each question to write your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain briefly the proto-nationalism stage of anti-colonial struggle.

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## 7.6 SUCCESS OF ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES

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The process of termination of colonial rule is described as decolonisation. The anti-colonial struggles achieved success and colonial system was liquidated in phases and stages. It took nearly 45 years for the entire process to be completed. Anti-colonial struggles achieved their first success in Asia, and then in Africa. In 1946 the Philippines achieved independence, and in 1947 India became free from British colonial rule. Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Burma (Myanmar) achieved freedom in 1948, and next year independence and sovereignty of Indonesia was formally recognized by the Netherlands. Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam (former Indo-china) were recognized as sovereign states in 1949, but they remained within the French Union until France finally lost control in 1954.

The second phase commenced in mid-1950s when Morocco and Tunisia left the French Union. Britain pulled out of Egyptian Sudan and Malaya became independent in 1957. But all these states had enjoyed some degree of autonomy even when they were parts of French or British colonial system. The freedom struggle of Gold Coast (Ghana) under the leadership of Nkrumah successfully ended in 1957. This struggle was a short affair, but its victory proved that the will of the colonial powers to rule was cracking. "French Community" established in 1958 to "assimilate" all the French colonies in it broke up just after two years as Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Upper Volta, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Togo and Cameroon all became independent. Also in 1960, Britain withdrew from Nigeria, an independent Somalia was created with the fusion of British and Italian Somaliland, and the Belgian Congo became independent. In 1961 British rule ended in Cyprus, Sierra Leone, Tanganyika and Kuwait. Next year Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago and Uganda achieved freedom from Britain. In 1962, France ended her long war in Algeria and gave her full freedom. In 1963, anti-colonial struggle succeeded in Kenya, and Zanzibar also became free. While most of Asia and Africa became independent by mid 1960s, the struggle of the colonies of Portugal and Spain did not succeed till 1970s. With the fall of Portuguese ruler Salazar, Guinea - Bissau achieved its independence in 1974. Angola and Mozambique followed suit in 1975.

It is only in the last phase that Namibia succeeded in its long anti-colonial struggle in 1990 when South Africa was forced to grant independence to its neighbour. Although the United States always declared itself to be against colonial system it still continued to rule over Guam and Puerto Rico.

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## 7.7 LET US SUM UP

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A number of European powers had established themselves as rulers of large parts of Asia and Africa. The European Powers had converted the Afro-Asian countries into their colonies for economic exploitation. The colonies became only the raw material suppliers and markets for the finished goods dumped by the rulers. Politically, they were governed by the colonial powers. Thus, they were victims of colonialism and imperialism at the hands of European Powers such as Great Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands. The Germans were deprived of their colonies after the First World War. Peoples of colonies realised that until they fought for their rights, their socio-economic-political exploitation would continue.

The anti-colonial struggles were carried out by the peoples of colonies for their liberation. No uniform pattern was followed by all the colonies in their anti-colonial struggles, nor did they adopt any one common method. Generally speaking, two broad patterns were found. These were (i) national independence movements; and (ii) national liberation movements. Countries like India, Kenya,

Ghana, Burma etc. carried out independence movements. These movements were aimed at defeat of colonial powers, and transfer of political power from the European rulers to the local people. The Leftist scholars described these movements as bourgeois, professional and bureaucratic movements as they did not seek socio-economic reconstruction. Their objective was merely the transfer of power. The national liberation movements, on the other hand, had dual objectives - to achieve political independence and bring about complete socio-economic changes. These movements believed in socio-economic transformation of colonial societies.

Two different methods were used to achieve success of anti-colonial struggles. These were: (a) peaceful non-violent method as preached and practiced by Mahatma Gandhi, using methods such as satyagraha, boycott, non-cooperation with the rulers and finally peaceful disobedience of anti-people laws; and (b) armed struggles with the use of force to compel the foreign rulers to give up power, end exploitation and to withdraw themselves from the colonies. Although no two countries went through exactly same process, normally anti-colonial struggles passed through three stages. These were (i) proto-nationalism - when nationalism began to evolve, accepting the superiority of Europeans, yet seeking reforms concessions and limited participation in the councils; (ii) the rise of new leadership - when national sentiments had matured, new leaders emerged who were mostly educated in western countries, who were inspired by ideas of liberty and self-rule, and who prepared their countrymen to fight for their right and remove the colonial rulers; and (iii) the period of mass movements - when the movements reached the grassroot levels and common men and women came forward eventually forcing the colonialists to withdraw.

The anti-colonial struggles succeeded in different colonies in phases and stages spreading over a period of nearly 45 years from 1945 to 1990. But, most of the colonies had achieved their freedom in the first twenty years after the Second World War.

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## 7.8 KEY WORDS

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**Colonialism** : System of economic exploitation by the rich and industrialised countries of Europe. The victims of exploitation mostly were countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

**Imperialism** : System of political control of one country over another. A bigger power establishes its rule over another country through the route of colonialism or through conquest.

**Cold War** : The term used for tension between two Power Blocs that had emerged in the world after the Second World War. The blocs led by the US and former USSR carried out the Cold War without the use of armaments or armed forces. It was diplomatic warfare.

**Mau Mau Movement** : A secret movement launched in Kenya that adopted militant methods. The aim of the agitation was to regain the land that had been occupied by the Britishers, to end colonialism and work for freedom.

**Proto-Nationalism** : The term is derived from 'proto-type' which means first model. It was nationalism in its initial form, or in infancy, which was yet to mature into mass movement.

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## 7.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

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Guir Lundestad (1986). *East West North South*, Norwegian University Press Oslo.

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Richard C. Bone (1962), *Contemporary South-East Asia*, Random House, New York.

J.S. Furnivall (1948), *Colonial Policy and Practice*, Cambridge.

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K.A. Busia (1962) *The Challenge of Africa*, Frederick Praeger, New York.

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## 7.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) A system of economic exploitation of weaker, underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa by the industrialised nations of Europe. (For details please see Sub-section 7.2.1)
- 2) After initial phase of awe of the white rulers, the subject peoples refused to accept that they were a burden. In fact, the white rulers were destroying local economics and social and political systems. They desired liberation and self-governance. (For details please see Sub-section 7.2.2)

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Whereas the national independence movements sought removal of foreign rulers and transfer of power to the local people, the liberation movements sought the transformation of socio-economic structure also. (For details please see Section 7.3)
- 2) The aim of national liberation movements was not merely to achieve political independence, but also to end social discrimination and economic injustice by transformation of entire socio-economic system after political independence. (For details please see Sub-section 7.3.2)

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) The non-violent methods introduced by Mahatma Gandhi were useful in awakening the people, to make the freedom struggle a mass movement, to persuade the rulers to leave and achieve independence without bloodshed on either side. (For details please see Sub-section 7.4.1)

- 2) The armed struggles involved large masses, used force, violence and even guerrilla tactics so that the foreign rulers could be defeated through their own weapon i.e. the use of force. (For details please see Sub-section 7.4.2)

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) During this stage nationalism had just begun to emerge. It was in its infancy, seeking reforms through prayers and petitions. The approach was not agitational. (For details please see Sub-section 7.5.1).