

COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM IN INDIA

Nationalism

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • October 21, 2026 • 50 min read

POLITICAL SCIENCE · STUDY NOTE

Nationalism in India

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Nationalism is the feeling of belonging to a nation, and the political movement which claims that a people sharing a land, a history and a destiny should rule themselves. It is one of the strongest forces of the modern world. It built the nation-states of Europe in the nineteenth century, and it drove the freedom movements of Asia and Africa in the twentieth. In India, nationalism grew under British rule and united people of many regions, languages, religions and castes in a movement for freedom.

This note is the second main unit of the paper on Colonialism and Nationalism in India. It explains the meaning of nationalism and the leading theories, and then follows the rise of Indian nationalism and its phases from the founding of the Congress in 1885 to

independence in 1947. It also looks at the ideologies inside the movement and at the debates among historians. It is written for UG students, and also serves those preparing for PG, OPSC, UPSC and UGC NET.

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1. Meaning and definitions

The word nation comes from the Latin *natio*, meaning birth or race. In modern politics, a nation is a community of people who believe that they belong together, because of a shared territory, history, language, culture or common political life. Nationalism is the idea and the movement built on this belief. It asks for loyalty to the nation, and often for a state of its own. Nationalism should be distinguished from patriotism, which is love of one's country, and from the state, which is a political and legal body.

Summary of definitions

Writer	Work	Main idea
Ernest Renan	What Is a Nation? (1882)	A nation is a spiritual principle, a shared past and a present wish to live together
Hans Kohn	The Idea of Nationalism (1944)	A state of mind in which the highest loyalty is given to the nation
Ernest Gellner	Nations and Nationalism (1983)	A political principle that the national and the political unit should coincide
Benedict Anderson	Imagined Communities (1983)	The nation is an imagined political community, limited and sovereign
Anthony D. Smith	National Identity (1991)	An ideological movement for the autonomy, unity and identity of a people
Eric Hobsbawm	Nations and Nationalism since 1780 (1990)	Nations are modern, shaped by invented traditions
Rabindranath Tagore	Nationalism (1917)	A critic of the nation as an organised self-interest
Bipan Chandra	India's Struggle for Independence	Indian nationalism as a movement against the colonial system

Scholar-wise definitions

Ernest Renan. The French thinker said in his lecture of 1882 that a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. It rests on a rich legacy of memories and on present consent, the wish to live together. He added that a nation's existence is, in his phrase, a daily plebiscite. The idea is useful in India's case, where the sense of unity came from shared experience of subjection and struggle rather than from one language or religion.

Hans Kohn. Kohn described nationalism as a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state. He also separated a Western type of nationalism, based on citizenship and reason, from an Eastern type, based on culture and ethnicity, a division which has been debated.

Ernest Gellner. Gellner argued that nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. He linked it to industrial society, in which a common education and language are needed. For him, nationalism creates nations, and does not simply express old ones.

Benedict Anderson. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson wrote that a nation is an imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because members will never meet most of their fellow members, yet each has an image of their union. He gave great weight to print capitalism, meaning books and newspapers in the languages of the people.

Anthony D. Smith. Smith defined nationalism as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members consider to be an actual or potential nation. He argued that modern nations are built on older ethnic ties and symbols, which he called *ethnies*.

Eric Hobsbawm. The British historian wrote that nations are modern, and that the traditions that appear ancient are often invented to serve present needs. His account has been used to examine the way symbols such as flags, anthems and festivals create national feeling.

Rabindranath Tagore. In his lectures on Nationalism (1917), Tagore criticised the Western nation as a political and commercial organisation that puts self-interest above humanity. He warned India against copying it. His view reminds students that Indian thinkers were not all in agreement.

Bipan Chandra. Chandra and other historians described Indian nationalism as the product of the contradiction between the interests of the Indian people and colonial rule. They saw the movement as a struggle to create a nation out of a diverse society and to end foreign control.

A note to the student

The wording of these definitions differs in different books, and several are given here in substance rather than word for word. In an answer, state the idea in simple sentences, name the writer, and link it to the Indian case. Check the exact wording in the book prescribed by your university.

What the definitions share

- Nationalism is a sense of belonging to a community of people, and loyalty to it.
- It usually seeks self-rule, unity and a distinct identity.
- It is a modern idea, linked to print, education, markets and the state, though it draws on older memories.
- It can be liberating, as in anti-colonial movements, and also exclusive, if it denies a place to others.
- It is not the same as patriotism or the state.

2. Characteristics of Indian nationalism

Anti-colonial in origin

Indian nationalism grew as a reaction to British rule. It took shape around the shared experience of economic hardship, political exclusion and racial insult. The movement was thus defined mainly by what it opposed, and the demand for self-rule became its central aim. In examination answers, this point links the study of nationalism to the unit on colonialism.

A nation in the making

India was a country of many languages, religions, castes and regions, and leaders did not claim that a finished nation already existed. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in *The Discovery of India* that the idea of unity had to be built through common effort. Bipan Chandra described the movement as a process in which a nation was made during the struggle itself. This is a major difference from many European cases.

Unity in diversity

The movement tried to bring together people of different regions and faiths under one banner. Leaders came from Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat and Madras, and the Congress met in different cities every year. The slogan of unity in diversity was not always met in practice, but it guided the movement's policy.

Civic and inclusive ideal

The mainstream movement defined the nation by shared political rights and territory, not by religion or race. Congress presidents included Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians, for example Badruddin Tyabji in 1887 and Dadabhai Naoroji in 1886. This civic idea was later written into the Constitution through universal citizenship.

Leadership of the educated middle class at first

The early leaders were lawyers, teachers, journalists and officials who had received English education. They knew British laws and institutions, and they used them to make demands. Later the movement widened to peasants, workers, women and students under Gandhi, so the social base changed over time.

Change from constitutional to mass methods

The early Congress used petitions, memorials and resolutions. After 1905, boycott and swadeshi were adopted. From 1919, Gandhi led mass non-cooperation, civil disobedience and the Quit India struggle. A student should be able to name the methods of each phase.

Non-violence and satyagraha

Gandhi's technique of satyagraha, meaning insistence on truth, used non-violent protest, strikes, fasts and refusal to obey unjust laws. It allowed large numbers of poor and unarmed people to take part, and it gave the movement a moral claim. Other streams, such as revolutionaries and the Indian National Army, used force, so non-violence was dominant but not the only method.

Economic critique of colonial rule

The drain theory of Naoroji, Ranade and R. C. Dutt gave the movement a shared grievance which touched every class. The swadeshi movement and later the demand for economic planning came from this critique. It explains why economic questions stayed at the centre of Congress politics.

Many ideological streams

Inside the movement were liberals, radicals, Gandhians, socialists, communists, revolutionaries and groups with religious or communal views. There were also movements for lower castes, such as those of Phule and Ambedkar. The national movement was therefore a broad front with differences and arguments, not a single doctrine.

Link with social reform and cultural revival

Reform movements such as the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Aligarh Movement prepared minds for change, and the revival of interest in literature, history and art created pride in the past. At the same time, some forms of revival, which looked to one religious tradition, made the task of inclusion harder.

Role of the press and associations

Newspapers such as The Hindu, Kesari, Amrita Bazar Patrika and Young India spread ideas, and associations such as the Indian Association and the Congress gave them an organisation. This is in line with Benedict Anderson's idea of the role of print.

Growing participation of women, peasants and workers

Women joined in large numbers in the Swadeshi period and especially in the civil disobedience of 1930, with leaders such as Sarojini Naidu and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay. Peasant movements, such as Champaran and Bardoli, and workers' strikes were linked to the national struggle. The movement became a mass movement through these groups.

Influence of world events

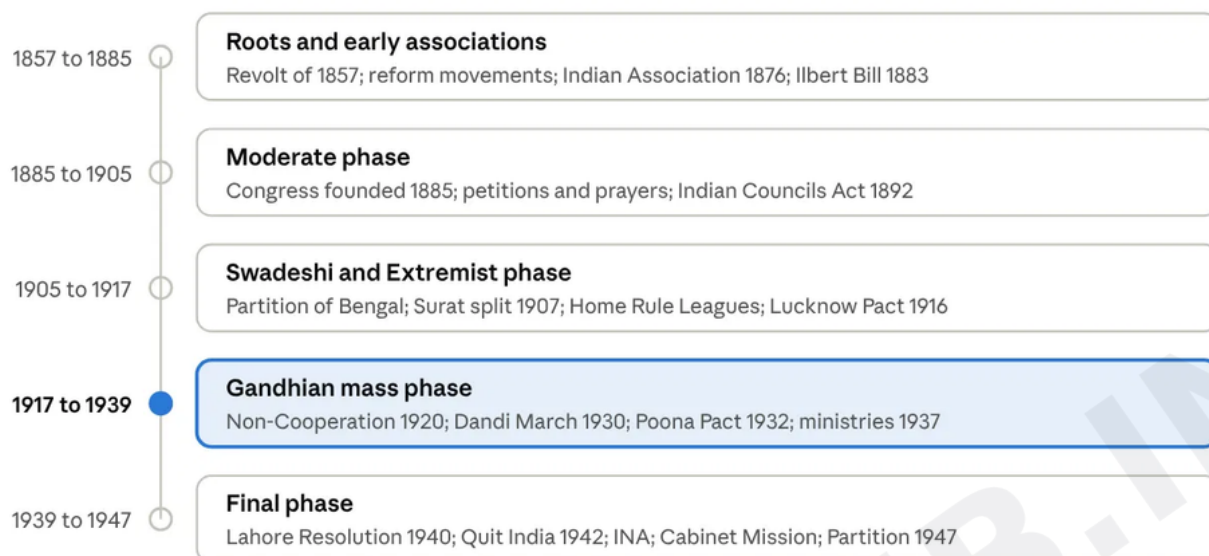
Indian nationalists took inspiration from the struggles of Ireland, Italy under Mazzini, and Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, and from the Russian Revolution of 1917. They also linked their cause with anti-imperial movements elsewhere, as at the Brussels conference of 1927.

Challenge of communalism

Communal politics, which asked for separate representation and later a separate state, was a main challenge. The Muslim League, formed in 1906, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the demand for Pakistan from 1940 show this. The movement ended in independence and Partition together, which is an important point for a critical answer.

3. Phases of Indian nationalism at a glance

Four phases took an elite petition into a mass struggle



The dates are markers, not sharp breaks. The movement widened from a small educated group to peasants, workers and women, and the highlighted Gandhian phase was the turning point from petition to mass action.

4. Theories of nationalism

Scholars disagree on how nations arise and why nationalism spreads. The main theories are given below, with the writers linked to each.

Primordialism

Primordialists hold that nations rest on ancient and natural ties of blood, language, religion and territory. People are born into a nation, and nationalism is the awakening of an old identity. Writers such as Clifford Geertz, who spoke of primordial attachments, are linked with this view. Critics point out that such ties are often fluid and that people can belong to several communities at once.

Perennialism

Perennialists accept that nations are old, but they say that they appear in history at different times and have their own life. They stress continuity from ancient and medieval periods to the present, as in the claim that India has been a cultural unit since ancient times. It is less strict than primordialism.

Modernism

Modernists argue that nations and nationalism are products of the modern period, tied to industrialisation, capitalism, the modern state, print and mass education.

Ernest Gellner. He held that industrial society needs a standard language and education, and that nationalism produces nations to meet that need.

Benedict Anderson. He stressed print capitalism, which brought people speaking the same language into an imagined community. Newspapers and novels allowed people to feel that they shared time with distant fellow citizens.

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. In *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), they showed that many symbols which seem ancient were created recently.

Karl Deutsch. In *Nationalism and Social Communication* (1953), he argued that nations form where communication within a group is dense.

The modernist view fits India well, since the national movement grew with railways, newspapers and English education.

Ethno-symbolism

Anthony D. Smith argued that modern nations are rooted in older ethnic communities, with their myths, memories and symbols. Nationalists use these materials to build the nation. The theory is a bridge between the modernist and the primordialist views.

Liberal theory

Liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Giuseppe Mazzini saw the nation as the natural unit of self-government and held that peoples had a right to determine their own destiny. Woodrow Wilson's principle of self-determination after 1918 came from this view. Indian Moderates drew on it in their early demands.

Marxist theory

Marx and Engels regarded nationalism as an expression of the rise of the capitalist class, and expected working-class solidarity to rise above it. Lenin, however, supported the right of oppressed nations to self-determination and saw anti-colonial movements as allies against imperialism. In India, writers such as A. R. Desai explained nationalism as the result of the rise of a new class structure under colonialism.

Gandhi's view

In *Hind Swaraj* (1909), Gandhi criticised modern industrial civilisation and spoke of swaraj as self-rule and moral self-control. His nationalism was based on inclusion, non-violence and the village, and he opposed hatred of the British as people.

Tagore's critique

Tagore warned that the Western idea of the nation, as an organised power for self-interest, could lead to conflict and to suppression of human values. He favoured a universal outlook and cultural dialogue.

Postcolonial theory

Partha Chatterjee, in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (1986), argued that Indian nationalism was in part a derivative discourse, since it took over the Western framework even as it opposed Western rule. In *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993), he argued that nationalists claimed the inner or spiritual domain of culture as their own, while accepting Western ideas in the outer material domain. This approach has made scholars more aware

of the gap between elite ideas and popular experience.

Civic and ethnic nationalism

Hans Kohn and others distinguished civic nationalism, based on citizenship and shared political values, from ethnic nationalism, based on descent and culture. Mainstream Indian nationalism claimed to be civic, though historians point to ethnic and religious elements in some streams.

Summary of theories

Theory	Main writers	Main claim
Primordialism	Geertz and others	Nations rest on old natural ties
Perennialism	Historians of continuity	Nations are old but change
Modernism	Gellner, Anderson, Hobsbawm, Deutsch	Nations are modern products
Ethno-symbolism	A. D. Smith	Modern nations draw on older ethnic symbols
Liberal	Mill, Mazzini, Wilson	Right of peoples to self-government
Marxist	Marx, Lenin, A. R. Desai	Class base; anti-imperialist uses of nationalism
Gandhian	Gandhi	Swaraj, non-violence, inclusion
Critical	Tagore	Warning against narrow nation-worship
Postcolonial	Partha Chatterjee	Derivative discourse; inner and outer domains

5. The rise of Indian nationalism

Indian nationalism did not come suddenly. It grew over the nineteenth century through a number of causes, some created by colonial rule itself and some by the response of Indians. The founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 marked the start of an all-India

political organisation.

Economic causes

The economic policy of the rulers, with heavy revenue, the decline of handicrafts, famines and the drain of wealth, affected peasants, artisans, workers and the educated alike. The economic critique of Naoroji, Ranade and R. C. Dutt gave these complaints a political form, and showed that poverty was the result of policy.

Political and administrative unification

British rule brought the whole country under one administration with one set of laws, one civil service and one army. This unified the land in a way that earlier rulers had not, and it gave Indians a common government to oppose. Bipan Chandra counted this among the unintended results of colonial rule.

Communications

Railways, the telegraph and the post linked distant regions. Leaders could travel and meet, ideas could spread, and the Congress could hold annual sessions in different cities. The railways also allowed grain and goods to move, though mainly in the interest of the rulers.

Western education

English education created a class of Indians who read about liberty, rights and nationalism in the works of Mill, Burke, Rousseau and Mazzini. Common English language also allowed people from different regions to speak to one another. The same education, however, was open only to a few, and graduates often found few jobs, which made them discontented.

The press

Newspapers and journals in English and in Indian languages grew fast after 1850. They reported the failures of government, discussed political ideas and linked readers across regions. Papers such as The Hindu (1878), the Amrita Bazar Patrika and the Kesari became major voices of opinion.

Social and religious reform

Reform movements challenged evils such as sati, child marriage and caste restrictions, and spread ideas of reason and equality. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission, and Muslim reform at Aligarh, gave a sense of self-respect and prepared people for political action.

Rediscovery of the past

Orientalist scholars such as William Jones, Max Muller and others, and Indian historians, brought the ancient literature, art and history to public attention. This created pride in India's heritage and a sense of a shared culture, though it also encouraged the view of a Hindu golden age, which later fed communal feeling.

Racial discrimination and reactionary policies

The racial attitude of many Europeans angered educated Indians. The Ilbert Bill of 1883, which would have allowed Indian judges to try Europeans in the districts, met with such fierce opposition from Europeans that it was changed, and this showed Indians that justice was not equal. Lord Lytton's policies, including the lowering of the age limit for the Indian Civil Service to nineteen in 1876, the grand Delhi Durbar of 1877 during a famine, the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 and the Arms Act of 1878, caused wide anger. In contrast, Lord Ripon (1880 to 1884), who favoured local self-government and the repeal of the Vernacular Press Act, was loved by Indians.

International influences

The unification of Italy and Germany, the Irish Home Rule movement and the Japanese success against Russia in 1905 showed that nationalism could succeed. These examples gave Indian leaders confidence, especially after 1905.

Early political associations

Before the Congress, regional bodies were formed: the British Indian Association (1851), the Madras Native Association, the Bombay Association (1852), the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870), the Indian Association (1876) of Surendranath Banerjea and Ananda Mohan Bose, the Madras Mahajana Sabha (1884) and the Bombay Presidency Association (1885). The Indian Association held an Indian National Conference in Calcutta in 1883 and 1885. These prepared the way for an all-India body.

The founding of the Indian National Congress

The first session of the Indian National Congress met at Bombay on 28 December 1885, at the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College, with 72 delegates, and with W. C. Bonnerjee in the chair. A. O. Hume, a retired British civil servant, took the initiative in calling the meeting, with the support of leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Dinshaw Wacha. Its first aims were to promote friendship among workers for the country, to develop a sense of unity, and to present Indian opinion to the government.

The safety valve theory

A view known as the safety valve theory holds that Hume formed the Congress, with the knowledge of Viceroy Lord Dufferin, to provide a peaceful outlet for discontent and avoid a revolt like that of 1857. Lala Lajpat Rai gave this view in 1916 and it was repeated by others. Bipan Chandra and other historians argue that the early Indian leaders used Hume's name to avoid official hostility, while they themselves had a clear political purpose, which was to build a national movement. This reading is sometimes called the lightning conductor theory. Students should state both views and give a reasoned conclusion.

Summary of the causes

Cause	Main point	Effect on nationalism
Economic exploitation	Drain, famines, decline of crafts	Shared grievance

Unification	One administration, one law	A common frame
Communications	Railways, telegraph, post	Contact among regions
Western education	New ideas; English as common language	Educated leadership
Press	Newspapers and journals	Public opinion
Reform movements	Self-respect; rational thinking	Social base for politics
Racial discrimination	Ilbert Bill, 1883	Awareness of inequality
Reactionary policy	Lytton's measures, 1876 to 1880	Anger and organisation
World events	Italy, Ireland, Japan	Confidence

6. The Moderate phase (1885 to 1905)

The first twenty years of the Congress are called the Moderate phase. The leaders believed in constitutional methods, in the sense of justice of the British people and in gradual reform.

The leaders

The main Moderate leaders were Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, W. C. Bonnerjee, Surendranath Banerjea, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dinshaw Wacha, Madan Mohan Malaviya, G. Subramania Iyer and Ananda Mohan Bose. Many of them were lawyers, teachers and journalists with a liberal outlook, who admired British institutions. Gokhale, whom Gandhi later called his political guru, founded the Servants of India Society in 1905.

The beliefs of the Moderates

The Moderates believed that British rule had brought benefits such as law, order and education, but that it was being run in a way that harmed India. They thought that the rulers could be persuaded by reasoned argument. They accepted British rule as a stage in India's development, and they asked for a larger share for Indians in it, not for its end. They also saw that the nation was only in the process of being formed and that a wider base was needed for an effective struggle.

Methods: petition, prayer and protest

The Moderates used petitions, memorials, public meetings, resolutions, speeches and writing in the press. They sent delegations to England, such as that of 1890, and formed a British Committee of the Congress in 1889 with its journal India, supported by William Digby. They worked to win over British public opinion and sympathetic members of Parliament. Critics later called this the politics of petition, prayer and protest.

Political demands

The main political demands were:

- expansion and reform of the Legislative Councils, with a larger number of elected Indians and powers over the budget;
- Indianisation of the services, with simultaneous examinations for the Indian Civil Service in India and in London;
- separation of the judiciary from the executive;
- repeal of the Arms Act and the freedom of speech and press; and
- an end to racial discrimination in the courts and in the services.

The Moderates later spoke of self-government on the model of the self-governing colonies, as in the speeches of Naoroji in 1906.

Economic demands

The Moderates attacked the drain of wealth and the heavy burden of land revenue. They demanded reduction of military expenditure and of the salt tax, protection for Indian industry, relief from famine, and the development of agriculture and education. Their analysis was a main intellectual achievement, since it showed that poverty was the result of policy.

Achievements

The Indian Councils Act of 1892 expanded the Legislative Councils, allowed members to ask questions and discuss the budget, and introduced a system of nomination in an indirect form, though it fell short of what the Congress had asked. The House of Commons passed a resolution in 1893 for simultaneous examinations, which the government did not carry out. The Welby Commission on Indian expenditure (1895 to 1900) heard Naoroji, Wacha, Gokhale and Subramania Iyer, and accepted some of the complaints about the cost of the army and the Home Charges. The Moderates also trained a generation in public life and built a national organisation.

Criticism of the Moderates

The Extremists called the Moderate method politics of mendicancy, meaning begging. The movement was limited to the educated middle class and had little contact with peasants and workers. Its demands were modest, and the government paid little attention to them. Lord Curzon said in 1900 that the Congress was tottering to its fall and that one of his greatest ambitions was to assist it to a peaceful demise.

Defence of the Moderates

Nationalist historians such as Bipan Chandra reply that the Moderates did essential foundation work. They created political awareness, spread the economic critique, held the first all-India platform and used the limited means open to them. A weak movement could not have faced a strong state with force, and the Moderates wisely avoided early repression.

Summary of the Moderate phase

Aspect	Moderate approach
Leaders	Naoroji, Mehta, Banerjea, Gokhale, Ranade
Social base	Educated middle class
Aim	Reform within British rule; later self-government

Methods	Petitions, speeches, press, delegations
Main demands	Council reform, Indianisation, lower military cost, relief from taxes
Gains	Indian Councils Act (1892); public awareness; Welby Commission
Weakness	Narrow base; little response from the government

7. Swadeshi, Extremists and revolutionaries (1905 to 1917)

In the early twentieth century, the movement became more militant. The cause was the failure of Moderate methods and the policies of Lord Curzon, and the high point was the Swadeshi movement against the partition of Bengal.

Causes of the new militancy

Several causes can be given. The Moderate demands had brought few results. Famines and plague at the end of the nineteenth century caused much hardship. A growing group of young leaders had lost faith in petitions. The success of Japan against Russia in 1905 showed that an Asian power could defeat a European one. The policies of Lord Curzon, such as the Calcutta Corporation Act of 1899, the Indian Universities Act of 1904, the Official Secrets Act of 1904 and above all the partition of Bengal, angered educated Indians.

The partition of Bengal

Announced in July 1905 and put into effect on 16 October 1905, the partition divided Bengal into a Muslim-majority Eastern Bengal and Assam, and a Hindu-majority West Bengal. The government said that the province was too large to administer, but Indians saw a plan to divide Hindus and Muslims and weaken the growing nationalism of Bengal. The day of partition was observed as a day of mourning, with fasting and the tying of rakhi to show unity.

The Swadeshi and boycott movement

The movement called for the use of Indian-made goods and the boycott of foreign goods, especially British cloth, as well as of government schools, courts and titles. Swadeshi enterprises were started, including textile mills, banks and soap and match factories. A National Council of Education was set up in 1906, and the Bengal National College was opened under Aurobindo Ghose. The Congress at Calcutta in 1906 under Dadabhai Naoroji declared swaraj as its goal, and adopted the four resolutions of swadeshi, boycott, national education and swaraj.

The Extremist leaders

The Extremists, also called militant nationalists, included Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghose, with the first three often called the Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate. Tilak said that swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it. They believed in self-reliance, in mass action and in the use of religious and cultural symbols, such as the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals. Tilak started the Kesari and the Mahratta newspapers and promoted these festivals to reach the common people.

The Surat split (1907)

At the Surat session of December 1907, the Moderates and the Extremists clashed over the choice of president and the resolutions on swadeshi and boycott. The session broke up in disorder, and the Congress split. The Moderates, who kept control, adopted a creed that demanded self-government within the British Empire by constitutional means. The split helped the government, which was repressing the Extremists.

Government repression and concessions

The government used harsh measures: the Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act of 1908, the Indian Press Act of 1910, the arrest of leaders, and the trial and transportation of Tilak to Mandalay in 1908 for six years. At the same time, it offered concessions. The Morley-Minto Reforms (the Indian Councils Act of 1909) expanded the Legislative Councils, but included

separate electorates for Muslims, which later became a source of division. In 1911, at the Delhi Durbar of George V, the partition of Bengal was annulled and the capital was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi, which took place in 1911 to 1912.

The revolutionaries

Some young people turned to violence. Groups such as the Anushilan Samiti and the Yugantar in Bengal, and similar groups in Maharashtra and Punjab, used assassinations and bomb attacks. Khudiram Bose was hanged in 1908 after an attack at Muzaffarpur, and the Alipore Bomb Case involved Aurobindo Ghose. Madan Lal Dhingra shot the official Curzon Wylie in London in 1909, and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar worked from India House in London. Abroad, the Ghadar Party was formed in 1913 in San Francisco by Indians such as Lala Har Dayal, and the Komagata Maru incident of 1914 involved Sikh passengers who were refused entry to Canada. The revolutionaries did not have a mass base, but their sacrifice moved many.

The Muslim League (1906)

The All-India Muslim League was founded at Dhaka in December 1906, with the support of leaders such as Aga Khan and Nawab Salimullah. Its early aim was loyalty to the government and protection of the political rights of Muslims. The demand for separate electorates, granted in 1909, was one of its achievements.

The First World War and the Home Rule Leagues

The First World War (1914 to 1918) created new conditions. Annie Besant and Tilak started the Home Rule Leagues in 1916, Tilak's at Poona in April and Besant's at Madras (Adyar) in September, demanding self-government within the Empire. Tilak was freed in 1914 and rejoined the Congress in 1916.

The Lucknow Pact (1916)

At Lucknow in December 1916, the Congress and the Muslim League held their sessions together, the Moderates and Extremists reunited, and the two bodies agreed on a joint scheme of reform. The Congress accepted separate electorates for Muslims, and the League joined in demanding self-government. It was a high point of Hindu-Muslim cooperation, though the acceptance of separate electorates later drew criticism.

The August Declaration (1917)

On 20 August 1917, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, declared that the aim of British policy was the gradual development of self-governing institutions and the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the Empire. It was the first official recognition of self-government as an aim.

Summary of the phase

Event	Year	Significance
Partition of Bengal	1905	Start of Swadeshi movement
Calcutta session of the Congress	1906	Swaraj, swadeshi, boycott and national education
Muslim League formed	1906	Separate political organisation
Surat split	1907	Division between Moderates and Extremists
Morley-Minto Reforms	1909	Separate electorates
Annulment of partition	1911	Success of agitation
Ghadar Party	1913	Revolutionary activity abroad
Home Rule Leagues	1916	Revival of political activity
Lucknow Pact	1916	Congress and League cooperation
August Declaration	1917	Self-government as official aim

8. The Gandhian era (1917 to 1939)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned from South Africa in January 1915. After a period of study of Indian conditions, he became the leader of the national movement, and the movement changed from a middle-class campaign into a mass struggle. Historians call the period from about 1919 to 1947 the Gandhian phase.

Gandhi's methods and ideas

Gandhi's central ideas were satyagraha, meaning firm adherence to truth, ahimsa or non-violence, and swaraj. He held that Indians could resist injustice without hatred, by refusing cooperation and by willingly accepting punishment. He stressed constructive work, such as spinning khadi, removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity and village reconstruction.

The early satyagrahas

Gandhi tried his methods in three local struggles. At Champaran in Bihar in 1917, he took up the cause of indigo cultivators under the tinkathia system. At Ahmedabad in 1918, he supported textile workers in a wage dispute and used a fast. At Kheda in Gujarat in 1918, he led peasants who asked for remission of revenue after a failed crop. These gave him contacts with peasants and workers and a base for the later movement.

The Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh

The Rowlatt Act of March 1919 allowed detention without trial for up to two years. Gandhi called a nationwide hartal and started a satyagraha against it. On 13 April 1919, in the Baisakhi gathering at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, General Dyer ordered troops to fire on an unarmed crowd, which led to many deaths. The Hunter Committee was appointed to inquire, but its findings were mild. Rabindranath Tagore gave up his knighthood in protest.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

The Government of India Act of 1919 introduced dyarchy in the provinces. The Congress was dissatisfied with it, and the shock of Jallianwala Bagh and the Rowlatt Act turned opinion towards direct action.

The Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement (1920 to 1922)

Muslims in India were upset by the harsh treatment of Turkey and its Sultan, who was regarded as Caliph, after the war. A Khilafat movement was led by the Ali brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Gandhi linked it with the demand for swaraj. The Congress, at the special session in Calcutta in September 1920 and at Nagpur in December 1920, adopted the programme of non-cooperation: surrender of titles, boycott of courts, schools and legislatures, boycott of foreign cloth and promotion of khadi, and national education. It was the first mass movement under the Congress, with wide participation of peasants, workers and students. In February 1922, a mob at Chauri Chaura in Uttar Pradesh burnt a police station and killed policemen, and Gandhi suspended the movement, which disappointed many leaders.

The Swarajists and the revolutionary revival

After the suspension, C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party in 1923, which contested elections to the Legislative Councils with the aim of obstructing them from within, while the no-changers, such as Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel, carried on the constructive work. Revolutionary activity revived, with groups such as the Hindustan Republican Association, formed in 1924, the Kakori train action of 1925, and the later Hindustan Socialist Republican Association with Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and others. Bhagat Singh and his companions were hanged in March 1931.

Left currents and peasant movements

The Russian Revolution and the growth of trade unions led to the founding of the Communist Party of India in 1925 and of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920. Within the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose gave voice to the left, and the Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934. The All India Kisan Sabha was set up in 1936 with Swami Sahajanand Saraswati as president. Movements such as the Bardoli satyagraha of 1928 under Vallabhbhai Patel showed peasant strength.

The Simon Commission and the Nehru Report

The government appointed the Simon Commission in November 1927 to report on constitutional reform, with no Indian member, and the commission was boycotted with the slogan Simon Go Back when it arrived in February 1928. Lala Lajpat Rai was injured in a police charge at Lahore and died soon after. In response to the challenge of Lord Birkenhead to frame a constitution, an all-parties committee under Motilal Nehru produced the Nehru Report in August 1928, which asked for dominion status and rejected separate electorates. Mohammad Ali Jinnah presented his Fourteen Points in 1929.

Purna Swaraj and the Civil Disobedience Movement

At the Lahore session in December 1929, under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress declared complete independence, purna swaraj, as its goal. On 26 January 1930, Independence Day was observed. On 12 March 1930, Gandhi began the Dandi March from Sabarmati with 78 followers, and on 6 April he made salt at Dandi in breach of the salt law. The Civil Disobedience Movement spread over the country, with salt satyagraha, boycott of foreign cloth and liquor, refusal to pay taxes in some areas, and large participation of women. Thousands were arrested.

The Round Table Conferences and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact

Three Round Table Conferences were held in London between 1930 and 1932. The Congress did not attend the first. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 1931 suspended civil disobedience in exchange for release of prisoners and some concessions, and Gandhi attended the second conference as the sole Congress representative, which ended without agreement. Civil disobedience was renewed in 1932 and was put down by repression.

The Communal Award and the Poona Pact

In August 1932, Ramsay MacDonald announced the Communal Award, which gave separate electorates to Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and also the depressed classes. Gandhi began a fast in Yerwada jail in protest at the separation of the depressed classes. After talks with B. R. Ambedkar, the Poona Pact was signed in September 1932, which gave the depressed classes reserved seats in the joint electorate, with more seats than the Award had offered. Gandhi then launched his campaign against untouchability, calling the group Harijans.

The Government of India Act (1935) and the elections of 1937

The Act of 1935 provided for provincial autonomy and an all-India federation, which was never established. In the elections of early 1937, the Congress won a majority in five provinces and became the largest party in several others, and formed ministries in seven and later eight provinces. The Muslim League did poorly, and Jinnah rejected Congress's offer of a coalition on its own terms. The Congress ministries did reforms in areas such as debt relief, education and civil liberties. They resigned in October and November 1939 in protest against India being drawn into the Second World War without consultation.

Summary of the Gandhian phase

Event	Year	Significance
Champaran, Ahmedabad, Kheda	1917 to 1918	Early satyagrahas
Rowlatt Act; Jallianwala Bagh	1919	Anger and turn to mass action

Non-Cooperation and Khilafat	1920 to 1922	First mass movement
Swaraj Party	1923	Council entry
Simon Commission; Nehru Report	1927 to 1928	Boycott; constitutional proposal
Purna Swaraj resolution	1929	Complete independence as aim
Dandi March; Civil Disobedience	1930	Mass participation, women's role
Gandhi-Irwin Pact	1931	Truce and talks
Communal Award; Poona Pact	1932	Question of depressed classes
Government of India Act; elections	1935 and 1937	Provincial autonomy; Congress ministries

9. The final phase (1939 to 1947) and other streams

The Second World War and its aftermath brought the movement to its end, with independence and Partition together. The period was one of mass struggle, of the rise of the demand for Pakistan and of negotiation with a weakened Britain.

The outbreak of war

In September 1939, the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow declared India at war without consulting Indian leaders. The Congress asked the British to state their war aims and their plans for India's freedom, and when the reply was unsatisfactory, the Congress ministries resigned in October and November 1939. The Muslim League observed a Day of Deliverance on 22 December 1939.

The Lahore Resolution (1940)

At Lahore in March 1940, the Muslim League adopted a resolution, moved by A. K. Fazlul Huq and later known as the Pakistan Resolution, which asked that areas in which Muslims were in a majority should be grouped to form independent states. Jinnah put forward the two-nation theory, which held that Hindus and Muslims were separate nations. The demand grew in strength in the following years.

The August Offer and Individual Satyagraha

The August Offer of 1940 promised the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and a body to frame a constitution after the war, with an assurance to minorities. The Congress rejected it. It then launched the Individual Satyagraha in October 1940, in which selected persons, beginning with Vinoba Bhave, offered symbolic resistance.

The Cripps Mission (1942)

With the Japanese advance in Southeast Asia, the British government sent Sir Stafford Cripps in March 1942 with a draft declaration which offered dominion status after the war, a constituent assembly, and the right of provinces to stay out of the union. The Congress objected to the right to opt out and to the lack of immediate transfer of power, and the Muslim League wanted a clear promise of Pakistan. The mission failed.

The Quit India Movement (1942)

On 8 August 1942, at Bombay, the Congress passed the Quit India resolution, and Gandhi gave the call of do or die in his speech at Gowalia Tank. The leaders were arrested on 9 August, and the Congress was banned. A spontaneous mass movement followed, with strikes, attacks on government property and communications, and the formation of parallel governments in places such as Ballia in Uttar Pradesh, Tamluk in Bengal and Satara in Maharashtra. The government used severe force. Leaders such as Aruna Asaf Ali, Jayaprakash Narayan and Usha Mehta, who ran an underground radio, played prominent roles. The movement was suppressed by the end of 1943, but it showed that British rule could not continue.

The Indian National Army

Subhas Chandra Bose, who had left the Congress in 1939 and founded the Forward Bloc, escaped from India in 1941 and went to Germany and then to Southeast Asia. With Japanese help, he took over the leadership of the Indian National Army, first formed by Mohan Singh and Rash Behari Bose, and set up the Provisional Government of Free India in October 1943

in Singapore. The INA, called the Azad Hind Fauj, fought along with the Japanese in Burma and Manipur, but was defeated in 1944 to 1945. The trials of INA officers at the Red Fort in 1945 to 1946 produced widespread public protest.

Talks and plans

Gandhi held talks with Jinnah in 1944, based on the formula proposed by C. Rajagopalachari, which accepted a form of the Pakistan demand after independence, but they failed. The Wavell Plan was discussed at the Simla Conference in June and July 1945, which failed because of a disagreement over the choice of Muslim members.

Postwar upsurge and the naval mutiny

After the war, there was a wave of popular feeling, seen in strikes, demonstrations against the INA trials and the revolt of Royal Indian Navy ratings in Bombay in February 1946. The elections of 1945 to 1946 showed the strength of the Congress in the general seats and of the Muslim League in the Muslim seats.

The Cabinet Mission (1946)

The British Labour government sent a Cabinet Mission with Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A. V. Alexander in March 1946. Its plan of 16 May 1946 rejected a separate Pakistan, and proposed a federal union with three groups of provinces and a constituent assembly. The Muslim League first accepted and then withdrew after a disagreement over the interim government, and called for Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946, which was followed by communal violence in Calcutta and elsewhere. An interim government under Nehru was formed in September 1946, and the Muslim League joined it in October. The Constituent Assembly first met on 9 December 1946.

Independence and Partition

On 20 February 1947, Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that Britain would leave India by June 1948. Lord Mountbatten arrived as Viceroy in March 1947, and, finding that the situation was deteriorating, put forward the Plan of 3 June 1947, which accepted the

partition of the country and of Punjab and Bengal, with a decision for the princely states to accede to either dominion. The Indian Independence Act, passed in July 1947, set up two dominions, India and Pakistan, from 15 August 1947. The Radcliffe Commission drew the boundary. Partition was followed by one of the largest forced migrations in history and by terrible violence.

Other streams of the movement

Beyond the Congress, many groups shaped the movement. The Muslim League under Jinnah moved from a call for safeguards to the demand for Pakistan. B. R. Ambedkar, through the Scheduled Castes Federation, argued for the rights of the depressed classes. Communists and socialists organised peasants and workers. The All India States Peoples' Conference, formed in 1927, led movements in the princely states. Women took part widely in the movements and in organisations such as the All India Women's Conference, formed in 1927. Tribal groups also rose against colonial and local oppression.

Summary of the final phase

Event	Year	Significance
Outbreak of war; ministries resign	1939	End of cooperation with government
Lahore Resolution	1940	Demand for Pakistan
Cripps Mission	1942	Failure of offer of postwar dominion status
Quit India Movement	1942	Mass revolt; Do or Die
Indian National Army	1943 to 1945	Armed struggle from abroad
Naval mutiny	1946	Loss of British control of forces
Cabinet Mission	1946	Failed plan for federal union
Attlee's statement	1947	Date set for British withdrawal
Independence and Partition	15 August 1947	End of colonial rule; creation of two states

10. Ideologies, interpretations and challenges of Indian nationalism

The Indian national movement was not a single doctrine. It included many ideas about what the nation was and what freedom should mean. This section lists the main streams, the schools of historians who interpret them, and the challenges that the movement faced.

Liberal nationalism

The early Congress leaders, such as Naoroji, Gokhale and Ranade, held to liberal ideas of rights, representation and constitutional government. They believed in gradual reform within the empire. Their work shaped the demand for civil liberties and parliamentary democracy, which later entered the Constitution.

Radical or extremist nationalism

Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo stressed self-reliance, boycott and mass mobilisation. They used cultural and religious symbols to reach the people. Their approach was a bridge between the Moderate phase and the Gandhian phase, although some of their symbols were later criticised as exclusive.

Gandhian nationalism

Gandhi's nationalism rested on non-violence, truth, village self-reliance and moral politics. He sought unity of Hindus and Muslims and the end of untouchability, and he appealed to women and peasants. Critics said that his religious language limited his appeal to Muslims and that his rejection of industrialisation was not practical, while admirers said that he brought the masses into politics.

Socialist and communist streams

Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jayaprakash Narayan, Narendra Dev and Acharya Kripalani were among those who brought socialist ideas of equality and planning to the Congress. The Communist Party, formed in 1925, with leaders such as S. A. Dange and M. N.

Roy, stressed class struggle. They linked political freedom with economic justice, and they influenced the Karachi Congress resolution of 1931 on fundamental rights and economic policy.

Revolutionary nationalism

Revolutionary groups held that British rule could be ended only by force. Bhagat Singh and his comrades, in the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, combined the use of arms with socialist ideas, as shown in his essay *Why I Am an Atheist* (1930). Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army was also part of this armed current.

Hindu nationalism

A stream of Hindu nationalism developed in the same period. V. D. Savarkar's pamphlet *Essentials of Hindutva* (1923) defined the nation by a shared land, race and culture. The Hindu Mahasabha (1915) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (1925) belong to this stream. It stood apart from the mainstream movement and differed from the inclusive idea of the Congress.

Muslim political thought

Muslim thinkers and leaders held various views. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others supported composite nationalism and the Congress. Muhammad Iqbal, in his address to the Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930, spoke of a consolidated Muslim state in the north-west. Choudhary Rahmat Ali coined the name Pakistan in 1933, and Jinnah later argued that Muslims were a separate nation. The Khilafat movement and the Aligarh tradition were other strands.

Dalit and social justice movements

Jyotiba Phule, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, who started the Self-Respect Movement in 1925, and B. R. Ambedkar argued that political freedom had little value without social equality. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) criticised caste hierarchy, and he demanded separate political safeguards for the depressed classes. These movements made the

national movement face the question of social inclusion.

Women and nationalism

Women took part in the national movement at all stages, from the Swadeshi movement to Quit India. Leaders such as Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Kasturba Gandhi, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asaf Ali and Sucheta Kripalani held prominent roles. The movement gave women a public voice, though the leadership of the Congress remained largely male.

Interpretations by historians

The colonial or imperialist view. Early British writers saw the movement as the work of a small educated group, which did not represent the people, and argued that India was not one nation.

The Cambridge School. Anil Seal, John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and others argued that Indian politics was a competition among elites for power and jobs, using patronage, and that nationalism was a language used in this competition. Critics say that it ignores ideas and mass participation.

The nationalist view. Historians such as Bipan Chandra, Sumit Sarkar in part and others saw the movement as a broad struggle of the people under colonial rule. Bipan Chandra's *India's Struggle for Independence* (1988) is a standard text in this tradition.

The Marxist view. A. R. Desai and R. P. Dutt explained nationalism as the product of the rise of a capitalist and middle class. Later Marxist writers stressed the compromises of the Congress leadership with the propertied classes.

The Subaltern view. Ranajit Guha and others in the Subaltern Studies group argued that the politics of peasants, tribes and workers had its own domain, which was not simply led by elites, and that the history of the national movement should be written from below.

Challenges and limits of the movement

The movement faced a number of challenges. Communalism grew from the 1920s and led to Partition. Caste divisions and the question of untouchability were addressed in part by Gandhi and Ambedkar, but not fully. Regional and language differences were handled by the Congress through linguistic provincial committees from 1920. The relation between the princely states and British India remained unresolved until 1947. The Congress also had to hold together groups with opposing interests, such as industrialists and workers, or landlords and peasants.

Summary of ideologies

Stream	Leaders	Main idea
Liberal	Naoroji, Gokhale, Ranade	Constitutional reform; rights
Radical	Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Pal, Aurobindo	Swaraj; self-reliance; mass action
Gandhian	Gandhi	Non-violence; satyagraha; swaraj
Socialist and communist	Nehru, Bose, J. P. Narayan, Dange, Roy	Equality; planning; class
Revolutionary	Bhagat Singh, Azad, Bose	Armed struggle
Hindu nationalist	Savarkar	Nation defined by Hindu culture
Muslim political	Iqbal, Jinnah; Azad	Separate nation; composite nationalism
Social justice	Phule, Ambedkar, Periyar	Caste equality as a condition of freedom

11. Importance and limitations of nationalism

Nationalism has been among the most powerful ideas of modern history. It has built states, ended empires and given people a sense of dignity. It has also caused wars and exclusion. A balanced answer on nationalism must state both sides, with examples from India and from the world.

Importance

It gives people a sense of identity and belonging. A shared national feeling joins people across differences of region, caste and class. In India, the feeling of being Indian grew in the struggle against colonial rule and gave millions a common identity.

It inspires the struggle for freedom. Nationalism gave anti-colonial movements their strength. The Indian national movement, as well as those in Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt and Africa, used the claim of a people to rule itself as its moral base.

It supports unity and state-building. Where a state is built out of diverse groups, a common national feeling helps to hold it together. After 1947, the idea of a common Indian nationhood supported the integration of the princely states and the framing of one Constitution.

It encourages sacrifice and civic duty. People are willing to give time, money and even their lives for a cause they feel to be their own. The Swadeshi movement, the Salt March and the Quit India struggle show this.

It promotes self-reliance and economic development. Swadeshi in India led to Indian enterprises, banks and national education, and after independence the call for self-reliance supported planning and industry.

It encourages democracy and popular sovereignty. The idea that the nation belongs to its people is the base of modern democracy. In India, the demand for self-rule led directly to a Constitution which begins with the words We, the people of India.

It revives culture, language and the arts. National feeling led to interest in history, literature and local languages. The Bengal renaissance, the growth of Indian-language newspapers and the work of writers such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Subramania Bharati are examples.

It supports social reform and equality. The national movement took up causes such as the removal of untouchability, women's education and universal franchise, and the Karachi resolution of 1931 promised equal rights. Even when the results were limited, the idea of

equal citizens spread.

It gives a basis for international solidarity. Nationalism in one colony inspired others. Indian leaders supported freedom struggles in Asia and Africa, and after 1947 India took up anti-colonialism in the United Nations and in the Non-Aligned Movement.

It gives legitimacy to the state. A government which is seen as the voice of the nation can ask for loyalty and taxes. This is a source of stability in new states.

Limitations

It can become aggressive and lead to conflict. Extreme nationalism, which claims the superiority of one nation, led to the wars of the twentieth century, including the two world wars and fascism in Italy and Germany.

It can exclude minorities. When the nation is defined by one religion, language or race, others may be treated as outsiders. The partition of India and the violence of 1947 show the cost of conflicting national claims.

It can suppress internal diversity. A demand for national unity may push aside regional, tribal or linguistic identities. In India, debates on the language of the nation and on the rights of regions have shown this tension.

It can hide inequality within the nation. A call for unity can set aside the claims of the poor, lower castes and women. Ambedkar and others warned that political freedom without social equality would be incomplete.

It can be used by elites for their own ends. Leaders may use national feeling to win support or to silence criticism, and nationalist language can serve the interests of particular classes.

It can be narrow and inward-looking. Tagore feared that a nationalism which valued only its own interests would damage human values and ignore global problems such as peace and the environment.

It may rest on myths. Nations are often described as ancient and unified, but historians such as Hobsbawm and Anderson show that traditions are often invented or imagined. Reliance on such myths may distort history.

It can lead to the neglect of rights. In the name of national security or unity, governments may limit freedom of speech and dissent, as colonial rulers did with sedition laws and as some independent states have done.

It is hard to apply in multi-national or plural states. Where many communities live together, demands for separate nations may lead to secession and conflict, as in the cases of Yugoslavia or the partition of the subcontinent.

It may clash with global needs. Problems such as climate change, pandemics and trade need cooperation, which narrow nationalism may obstruct.

Illustrations

Theme	Illustration	What it shows
Identity	Shared symbols such as the tricolour and Vande Mataram in the Swadeshi movement	Common identity built through symbols
Freedom struggle	Non-Cooperation, Dandi, Quit India	Mass mobilisation against foreign rule
Self-reliance	Swadeshi enterprises after 1905	Economic side of nationalism
Inclusion	Poona Pact, 1932	Attempt to include depressed classes
Exclusion	Partition, 1947	Conflicting national claims
Cultural revival	Bengal renaissance; vernacular press	Pride in language and heritage
Critique	Tagore's Nationalism, 1917	Warning against narrow nationalism

State-building	Integration of the princely states	Nationalism and national unity
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12. Use in examinations

What examiners expect

Examination	Typical expectation	How to answer
UG semester paper (Core V)	Meaning, causes, phases and ideologies of Indian nationalism	Definition, scholar, causes or phases with dates and leaders
PG (MA History and Political Science)	Theories and historiography	Compare modernist and other theories; name schools of history
OPSC (OCS and OAS Mains)	Analysis of phases, leaders and methods	Introduction, phases, evaluation, conclusion
UPSC Mains (GS Paper 1)	Freedom struggle, major events and contributions	Facts, causes, results and significance
UGC NET (History and Political Science)	Authors, concepts, events, dates	Know writers, books, Acts, sessions and pacts

Practice questions

1. Define nationalism and distinguish it from patriotism.
2. Discuss the main factors in the rise of Indian nationalism.
3. Examine the aims, methods and achievements of the Moderates.
4. Assess the importance of the Swadeshi movement and the partition of Bengal.
5. Discuss the role of Gandhi in the transformation of the national movement into a mass movement.
6. Explain the main ideological streams in the Indian national movement.
7. Critically examine the different interpretations of Indian nationalism.

Structured outline for a long answer

Question: Discuss the factors responsible for the rise of Indian nationalism.

Introduction

- Define nationalism and state that Indian nationalism arose in the conditions created by colonial rule.
- Mention that historians see it as a response to both colonial exploitation and new ideas.

Body

- Economic causes: drain of wealth, decline of crafts, famines, the economic critique.
- Political and administrative unification; railways, telegraph and post.
- Western education and the English-educated middle class; the press.
- Social and religious reform, and the rediscovery of the past.
- Racial discrimination and reactionary policies: Ilbert Bill, Lytton's measures.
- International influences, and the founding of the Congress in 1885.

Conclusion

- Colonial rule created the conditions and the grievances, and Indian leaders gave them organised form.
- Nationalism grew into a mass movement through the leadership of Gandhi.

Sample answer (about 200 words)

Introduction. Nationalism is a sense of belonging to a nation and a demand that it should rule itself. Indian nationalism arose in the nineteenth century as a result of conditions created by British rule and of the response of Indians to those conditions.

Body. Economic exploitation, through heavy revenue, the decline of handicrafts, famines and the drain of wealth, affected all classes, and Naoroji, Ranade and R. C. Dutt gave it a political meaning. British rule unified the country politically and administratively, and

railways, the telegraph and the post brought people together. English education created a middle class which absorbed ideas of liberty and nationhood, and the press spread them. Social and religious reform movements gave self-respect, and the rediscovery of India's past created pride. Racial discrimination, as in the Ilbert Bill controversy of 1883, and the reactionary policies of Lytton, such as the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, caused anger. Events abroad, such as the Italian and Irish movements, gave confidence. These causes led to the founding of the Congress in 1885.

Conclusion. Colonial rule itself created the conditions for nationalism, and Indian leaders turned discontent into a movement. Under Gandhi it became a mass struggle.

Quick check

- Who presided over the first session of the Congress in 1885?
- What is meant by the safety valve theory?
- Which session of the Congress declared purna swaraj, and in which year?
- Name the pact of 1932 between Gandhi and Ambedkar.
- Who wrote Imagined Communities?

Common mistakes

- Using nationalism, patriotism and the state as if they meant the same thing.
- Treating the Moderate phase only as a failure and not noting its achievements.
- Writing the history of the movement as a list of dates without causes.
- Giving only the Congress version and leaving out other streams such as revolutionaries, the Left, Ambedkar and the Muslim League.
- Mixing up the Poona Pact, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the Lucknow Pact.
- Ending with a conclusion which only repeats the introduction.

13. Critical analysis

Was there an Indian nation before the movement?

Some British writers claimed that India was only a geographical expression and that the movement could not be national. Indian nationalists argued that India had an old cultural unity, as shown in pilgrimages, languages and shared epics. Modern historians such as Bipan Chandra reply that the nation was being made during the struggle against colonial rule, so neither view is wholly right: there were old links, but the political nation was a modern creation. Anderson's idea of an imagined community fits this reading.

Who led and who followed?

The nationalist view stresses the unity of the people under the Congress. The Cambridge School stresses the role of elite patronage networks and treats ideology as secondary. The Subaltern school argues that peasants, tribes and workers acted on their own terms, sometimes against both the rulers and the Congress. A good answer will note that each school captures something and misses something.

Was Gandhi the creator or the beneficiary of mass nationalism?

Some writers see Gandhi as the architect who brought the masses into politics. Others, such as Ranajit Guha, argue that peasants and workers had their own protests, and that Gandhi's leadership gave an organised form to them while also limiting them, for example when he stopped the Non-Cooperation Movement after Chauri Chaura. Marxist writers have criticised him for restraining class conflict. Admirers reply that non-violence kept the movement broad and morally strong.

The Moderates: failure or foundation?

Extremists and later critics attacked the Moderates for begging. Nationalist historians value their economic critique and their training of public opinion. Judging them fairly means asking what other methods could have worked at the time, given the strength of the state and the narrow base of the movement.

Inclusive or exclusive?

The movement claimed an inclusive and civic idea of the nation. Critics note that the cultural symbols used by many leaders, from the Ganapati festival to Vande Mataram, came from a Hindu tradition, and that this made it harder to bring Muslims in. Others reply that the Congress had many Muslim leaders, from Tyabji to Azad, and that the League's demand grew out of political competition and the colonial policy of separate electorates as well. The question of why Partition happened has no single answer.

Social question versus political question

The movement was mainly a struggle against foreign rule, and leaders often postponed social questions such as caste and land. Ambedkar, Periyar and the Left criticised this. Gandhi's campaign against untouchability and the Karachi resolution showed some response. The argument continues on whether social reform could have been pushed further without splitting the movement.

Derivative or original?

Partha Chatterjee argued that Indian nationalism took over many Western categories even as it opposed Western rule. Others point to original contributions, such as satyagraha and the idea of swaraj, which were not copied from any model. The debate raises the question whether anti-colonial thought can ever be wholly independent of the colonial context.

Nationalism and democracy

The national movement taught the practice of mass politics, the use of elections and constitutionalism, and it prepared a leadership which accepted a democratic Constitution in 1950. At the same time, the idea of the nation as one body has sometimes been used to limit dissent. This tension is relevant for the discussion of Indian democracy today.

Model concluding paragraph

Indian nationalism was a movement which grew out of the contradictions of colonial rule. It drew on economic grievances, new education and communications, reform movements and the leadership of the Congress, and it passed from the petitions of the Moderates through the militancy of the Swadeshi period to the mass struggles under Gandhi and the final upsurge of 1942 to 1947. It united a diverse society in the demand for freedom, yet it could not prevent Partition and left unresolved questions of caste, class and religion. Historians still disagree on the role of elites and masses, on the part played by Gandhi and on the origin of communal divisions, but all accept that the movement shaped the idea of the Indian nation and the Constitution of free India.

14. UGC NET: authors and books

The following works are often named in syllabi and reading lists. Check the edition and exact title before citing them in an answer.

Author	Work	Relevance
Benedict Anderson	Imagined Communities (1983)	Nation as imagined community; print capitalism
Ernest Gellner	Nations and Nationalism (1983)	Nationalism and industrial society
Eric Hobsbawm	Nations and Nationalism since 1780 (1990)	Invented traditions
Anthony D. Smith	National Identity (1991)	Ethno-symbolism
Hans Kohn	The Idea of Nationalism (1944)	Western and Eastern types
Partha Chatterjee	Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World (1986); The Nation and Its Fragments (1993)	Derivative discourse; inner and outer domains
Rabindranath Tagore	Nationalism (1917)	Critique of the nation
M. K. Gandhi	Hind Swaraj (1909)	Swaraj; critique of modern civilisation

Jawaharlal Nehru	The Discovery of India (1946); An Autobiography (1936)	Nehru's view of the Indian nation
Bipan Chandra and others	India's Struggle for Independence (1988)	Standard nationalist account
Sumit Sarkar	Modern India 1885-1947 (1983)	Social history of the period
A. R. Desai	Social Background of Indian Nationalism (1948)	Marxist account
Anil Seal	The Emergence of Indian Nationalism (1968)	Cambridge School
Ranajit Guha (ed.)	Subaltern Studies	History from below
V. D. Savarkar	Essentials of Hindutva (1923)	Hindu nationalist definition of the nation
B. R. Ambedkar	Annihilation of Caste (1936)	Social justice critique

Revision tip

Make a timeline with ten entries: 1885 (Congress), 1905 (partition of Bengal), 1906 (Muslim League), 1907 (Surat), 1916 (Lucknow Pact), 1919 (Rowlatt and Jallianwala Bagh), 1920 to 1922 (Non-Cooperation), 1930 (Dandi and Civil Disobedience), 1942 (Quit India) and 1947 (independence and Partition). Next to each, write one leader and one result. Then learn the theories of nationalism with one writer for each. NET questions often ask for the matching of writers and works, so revise the table above from memory.

15. Takeaways, sources and further reading

Key takeaways

- Nationalism is a sense of belonging to a nation and a demand for its self-rule; it differs from patriotism and the state.
- The main theories are primordialism, perennialism, modernism, ethno-symbolism, liberal, Marxist, Gandhian, critical and postcolonial views.
- Indian nationalism arose from the conditions created by colonial rule: economic exploitation, unification, education, press, reform movements and racial discrimination.

- The movement passed through the Moderate phase (1885 to 1905), the Swadeshi and Extremist phase (1905 to 1917), the Gandhian mass phase (1917 to 1939) and the final phase (1939 to 1947).
- It included many streams: liberal, radical, Gandhian, socialist, communist, revolutionary, Hindu nationalist, Muslim political, and social justice movements.
- Historians differ in the nationalist, Marxist, Cambridge and Subaltern interpretations.
- The movement united a diverse society but ended with Partition and left questions of caste, class and religion.

Official sources

- [National Archives of India](#)
- [Constitution of India, Legislative Department](#)
- [Press Information Bureau](#)
- [Parliament of India \(Sansad\)](#)
- [Ministry of Culture, Government of India](#)
- [Archaeological Survey of India](#)
- [eGyanKosh, IGNOU](#)

Twenty books for further reading

1. Bipan Chandra and others, India's Struggle for Independence.
2. Sumit Sarkar, Modern India 1885-1947.
3. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, From Plassey to Partition and After.
4. Bipan Chandra, Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India.
5. A. R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism.
6. Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism.
7. Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India.
8. Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World.

9. Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments.
10. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities.
11. Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism.
12. Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780.
13. Anthony D. Smith, National Identity.
14. M. K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj.
15. Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India.
16. Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism.
17. B. R. Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste.
18. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy.
19. Ramachandra Guha, India After Gandhi.
20. Ayesha Jalal, The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan.

Editorial note

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Frequently asked questions

What is nationalism? It is a sense of belonging to a nation and a political movement which claims that a people should govern itself.

How did Indian nationalism arise? Through economic exploitation, administrative unification, communications, Western education, the press, social reform and racial discrimination under colonial rule, along with the founding of the Congress in 1885.

What were the main phases of the Indian national movement? The Moderate phase (1885 to 1905), the Swadeshi and Extremist phase (1905 to 1917), the Gandhian phase (1917 to 1939) and the final phase (1939 to 1947).

What was the Surat split? The division in the Congress in December 1907 between the Moderates and the Extremists.

What is the safety valve theory? The view that A. O. Hume formed the Congress to give an outlet to discontent. Many historians reject it as the full explanation.

How do historians interpret Indian nationalism? Through the nationalist, Marxist, Cambridge and Subaltern approaches, each stressing different forces.

Category: Colonialism and Nationalism in India

Tag: Nationalism

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