

TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION (1942-47)

LORD WAVELL'S PLAN

Lord Wavell, the Viceroy of India, convened a conference of different political leaders at Shimla on 25 June, 1945 with a view to grant more powers to Indians. At the conference, the proposals of the Cripps offer of 1942 were renewed and Lord Wavell offered to reconstruct the Viceroy's Executive Council. Lord Wavell made the following proposals;

1. The Viceroy's Executive Council would be reconstructed. It would wholly consist of Indians except for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief.
2. Hindus and Muslims would be represented at par on the Viceroy's Council.
3. India would be given dominion status in the long run.
4. The Constitution of India would be drafted by Indians themselves.
5. The Governor-General would retain the veto power which he would use in the interest of the people of India.

Lord Wavell's plan was not acceptable to the Muslim League. It insisted that the right to appoint members from the Muslim community should entirely rest with the League. The Congress opposed the proposal of the League on the ground that the Congress represented both the Hindus and the Muslims. (In fact, Abdul Kalam Azad and Abdul Ghaffar Khan presented themselves at Simla in the capacity of leaders and distinguished members of the Congress delegation) The Congress had agreed to Lord Wavell's plan but the adverse attitude of the League to the plan made it inoperative. Judging by the subsequent developments, Wavell's decision to abruptly abandon the British proposals and dissolve the Simla conferences implied an official recognition of the League's monopoly to speak for all Muslims. It also meant that, hereafter, the satisfaction of the League became a **pre-requisite** to any major settlement. The forces for partition had received a morale booster.

THE CABINET MISSION PLAN

Several events that took place in the world as well as in India changed the British attitude towards India.

After the World War II ended, the British Raj was too exhausted and needed a respite. The situation had changed considerably:

The European element in its armed forces wanted to go home rather than stay on indefinitely in India.

In the face of obvious Indian hostility, it was no longer convenient, even possible, to use Indian economy for furthering Britain's global trade interests.

Financially, India was no more a debtor to "governance", and Britain - on the contrary - had become indebted to India to the tune of above \$ 3,000 million.

Nobody could sum up the British predicament in India better than the penultimate viceroy, Lord Wavell, who said, 'Our time in India is limited, and our power to control events almost gone'.

The Second world War ended in August 1945. The labour party, under the prime Minister ship of clement Attlee, came to power in England in the same year. This change was beneficial to India as the Labour party had always favored self-rule for India. The Second World War had shattered British power. USA and Russia emerged as world powers. Both these nations supported India's demand for self-government.

After the surrender of Japan in August, 1945, the soldiers of Indians National Army were taken as war prisoners. The Government wanted to try some of the leaders as traitors since they had broken their pledge of loyalty to the British crown. The historic trial of Shah Nawaz Khan, G.S. Dhillon and Prem Sehgal was held at Red Fort in November, 1945, which roused tremendous national sentiment. Leading advocates like Bhulabhai Desai, sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Jawaharlal Nehru appeared as defense counsels. The court martial held the prisoners guilty. Yet the Government, at its discretion, had to set them free. The entire country was united on the demand for their acquittal. During the trial of the INA personnel there were large-scale demonstrations demanding their release. There were also strikes demonstrating the deep feelings of people British rule.

Furthermore, the rating of the Royal Indian Navy revolted in Mumbai in 1946. This was followed by demonstration and grievances which unnerved the Government.

In the winter of 1945-46, there were general elections in the provinces. The Congress won a majority of the general seats and the Muslim League captured a majority of seats reserved on the Muslim quota. Consequently the congress formed ministries in eight provinces (assam, Bihar, the united provinces, North west Frontier provinces, Bombay, Madras, central provinces and Orissa). A coalition Ministry, headed by Malik Khizar Hayyat Khan (leader of the unionist Party), formed the government in Punjab. But the Muslim League could not form the government in any province, in spite of its victories in the elections. This situation strengthened Jinnah's demand for partition. Communal passions rose high and the entire political atmosphere was charged with suspicion, distrust and violence.

The Cabinet Mission Of India

It was against the background of the events given above that prime Minister Clement Attlee announced in parliament the British government's decision to send a Cabinet Mission to India. It consisted of Lord Pethick Lawrence, sir Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander. The purpose of this mission was to hold consultations with the Indian leaders with the objective of finding out ways and means of a negotiated, peaceful transfer of power in India. Attlee further announced that his Government was aware of the rights of the minorities, yet he could not allow a minority to place a veto on the rights of the majority. The cabinet Mission arrived in India on 16th may 1946. The Mission met leaders of the political parties.

It rejected jinnah's demand for a separate Pakistan composed of Muslim-Majority areas in the North-East on the following grounds:

1. The partition of India as claimed by the League would not solve the communal problem because Hindu minorities would still live in the areas demanded by the League and there was no justification for keeping large Punjab in Pakistan. The same argument, as was advanced by the League for the partition of India, was applied with equal relevance to the separation of the Hindu majority districts in Pakistan.
2. A small Pakistan would not be viable, particularly when its two parts—one in the East and the other in the West—would be separated by hundreds of miles of Indian territory.
3. Partition would involve dislocation of communication network and would involve division of armed forces and services personnel along communal lines.

The Cabinet Mission, Therefore, made fresh proposals with the aim of maintaining unity of India, yet giving reasonable satisfaction to the demand of the league for Pakistan.

Final Proposals of the Cabinet Mission

The cabinet Mission, with the aim of keeping a united India, made the following proposals:

1. India would be a federation of British provinces and the Indian states.
2. The federal government would deal with defense, foreign affairs and communication. All other subjects would be under the control of the provinces
3. British provinces would be divided into three groups. Group A would consist of Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa and the central provinces; Group B would include Punjab, North west frontier provinces and sind; group c would have Bengal and Assam.
4. Each group referred to above would draft a constitution for a regional union if so desired.
5. A province would opt out of the group by a majority decision of its legislature.
6. A constituent Assembly would be elected to draw up the future Constitution of India. It would consist of 389 members, 292 from thru provinces and 93 from the Indian states. Therefore it would be divided into three sections, comprising the three groups of British provinces mentioned above in (3) and each section would draft a constitution for a regional union if so desired, and also for the Constituent provinces. Thus, it envisaged a three-tier system of government, for the provinces for the group and for the union of India.
7. The Constituent Assembly would sign a Treaty with Britain to provide for certain matters arising out of the transfer of power.
8. An Interim government at the centre representing all communities would be installed on the basis of parity between the representatives of the Hindus and the Muslims.

Reaction of the Congress and the League

The Cabinet Mission plan received a Mixed reaction in the congress and the League camps. It preserved the Unity of India but, at the same time, conceded to a large extent the substance of Pakistan, by providing for the grouping of Muslim-majority provinces. The congress welcomed the proposals which provided for an Indian union of provinces and states as it preserved the unity of India. It was also glad to see the proposals rejecting the idea of Pakistan.

The proposals of the cabinet Mission with regard to the grouping of the provinces were not clear. The League regarded the compulsory grouping of the provinces as one of the cornerstones of the plan and were not prepared to compromise on that issue. The congress stand was that the making of groups was optional for the provinces, which should be free to join any group. As a matter of fact, Gandhiji asked the people of Assam not to join the groups if they did not approve of it. Against this, it was suggested that the provinces might join the proposed groups provisionally, but later on freedom might be given to them to leave it if they so desired. Finally, the British Government gave its verdict in favor of the compulsory grouping of the provinces. The League won and the Congress lost its Point.

After due deliberations, the Congress accepted the long-term plan, but rejected the proposal for an interim Government on account of the differences between the Congress and the League over parity of representation in it. The Congress rejected the League's claim of having the exclusive right for nominating members of the Muslim quota in the interim Government. The Congress held that it too had members from the Muslim community who could represent that community. Besides, the Congress said that it could not give up the national character or accept an artificial parity with the Muslim League in the formation of a National Government.

At the end, the League accepted the plan in its entirety and asked Wavell, the Viceroy, to constitute an interim Government. The Congress accepted only that part of the scheme which dealt with constitution-making. It stated that it would join the constituent Assembly with a view to framing the constitution of a free, united and democratic India.

The Viceroy refused to implement the Interim Government plan as it had been rejected by the Congress, the largest political party in India.

The Sikhs too found these proposals unacceptable because they (the Sikhs) were included in the North-western Muslim bloc (Group B). They thought that it would leave them at the mercy of the Muslim community and imperil the Sikh religion and culture. The scheduled castes were of the opinion that these proposals were illusory because no seats were reserved for scheduled castes and also because only one seat was offered to them in the interim Government.

Observance of Direct Action by the League

In July, 1946, elections were held to the Constituent Assembly and the Congress won 212 out of 298 seats, while the League won 73 seats. The League feared that it would be outvoted in the assembly. This was one of the reasons why it withdrew its acceptance of the entire Cabinet Mission Plan and demanded appointment of two different constituent Assemblies.

Jinnah, who had earlier accepted the scheme, was annoyed at the Viceroy's decision to postpone the formation of the Interim government. He accused Wavell of having gone back on his promise. This attitude of Jinnah was a further reason for the League to withdraw its acceptance of the Cabinet plan.

On 27th July, 1946, Jinnah addressed the all India Muslim League Council. In this speech, he condemned the Cabinet plan. He charged Lord Wavell with playing National Congress by treating the latter's conditional acceptance of the plan as genuine and postponing the formation of the interim Government. The League then resolved that any participation by the League in the proposed constitution-making body was dangerous. Thus the League withdrew its earlier acceptance of the cabinet Mission plan.

Jinnah was no more content with negative action. The league under Jinnah's leadership passed a Direct Action Resolution on 30th July, 1946, condemning the British Government and the congress for their breach of faith in the Muslim community and set 16th August, 1946 as a day of protest. The League declared that the time had come for it to resort to direct action to achieve Pakistan.

On 14th August, 1946, the Viceroy invited the congress to form the Interim Government at the centre. Jawaharlal Nehru accepted the offer and invited Jinnah to join it. But Jinnah refused to do so.

16th August, 1946, was the direct Action Day. No programmed of action was chalked out for this day. In many places, there were peaceful demonstrations of Muslim solidarity. But Kolkata was an exception. There a section of people went on rampage, arson, looting and murder. Nearly, 5000 people were killed, 15,000 injured and about one lakh were rendered homeless. Property worth crores of rupees was destroyed. The Muslim League ministry in Bengal could not control the situation. The violence continued for four days. This situation was apparently encouraged by the League ministry, and the British administration remained paralysed. This episode is known as the Great Calcutta Killing.

Violent agitation also spread to other places such as Noakhali (east Bengal) and some places in Bihar. There was loss of life and damage to property. People were panic-stricken everywhere. In the Midst of Violence, Gandhiji went about from village to village in Bengal and Bihar and tried his best to bring peace in the riot-torn areas. Jawaharlal Nehru too worked to restore peace in Bihar through the congress ministry there.

ATTLEE'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF 1947

Several attempts were made between August, 1946 and February, 1947 to find an amicable solution to settle differences between the congress and the League. In August 1946, lord Wavell invited the Congress, the largest party in India, to form the Viceroy's Executive council. The Congress accepted the offer. Nehru, being the congress leader, submitted names of 12 members to the council. He also offered five places to the Muslim League. Jinnah refused to accept the offer.

On 2nd September, 1946, the congress formed the council and Jawaharlal Nehru became its Vice-president. The League soon realized that the congress had grasped power at the centre. It too wanted to join the interim government. Jinnah gave a tacit understanding to the Viceroy and the Congress that the Leagues would give a fair trial to the cabinet Mission Plan and would

join the Constituent Assembly. On 26th October, 1946, representatives of the Leagues were inducted into the Interim Government. So far the Interim Government had been working like a team. But the induction of the Muslim League led to bickering regarding the interpretations of the cabinet mission plan. The Government seemed to be paralyzed.

Elections to the Constituents Assembly, Which was to draft the new constitution for India, were held between July and December, 1946. The first meeting of the assembly was held on 9th December. Contrary to the Expectations of the Viceroy. The League refused to participate in the assembly.

The Constituent Assembly met on 9th December, 1946. Dr rajendra Prasad was elected its president. Various committees were made to look after different tasks connected with the drafting of the new constitution for India. However, The League demanded on 31st January, 1947 that the constituent Assembly should be dissolved. There were communal riots everywhere.

Meanwhile, clement Attlee, prime Minister of England, made an important announcement **on 20th February, 1947 declaring that the British would leave India by June 1948. Power would be handed over to one central Government or More. This announcement referred to the partition of the country.**The British made it clear that they would not stay in India after June, 1948 even if by then the Indian leaders failed to come to an agreement. For the purpose of taking necessary steps for the transfer of power, Lord Wavell was recalled and Lord Louis **Mountbatten** was appointed the Viceroy of India.

The League welcomed this announcement. It intensified its struggle for the achievement of Pakistan. It embarked on the tactics of direct action once again. There was communal rioting all over Northan India. The League also succeeded in toppling the Non-League Government in Punjab. Communal feelings were let loose to such an extent that the unity of India seemed on impossible goal to achieve.

THE MOUNTBATTEN PLAN

Against the background of the severe communal problem in the country, Attlee sent mountbeeten problem in the country, Attlee sent mountbeetan as the Viceroy of India. Admiral Lord Mountbeetan was a member of the british royal family and had served as supreme Allied commander in south East Asia during the march, 1947 with a definite plan. He was given powers to Negotiate and effect transfer of power to Indians. After meeting leaders of different parties and communities, Mountbeetan came to the conclusion that he could not unite the two major parties and partition of the country was inevitable.

Congress was against partition of the country. Abdul Kalam Azad, Like other congress leaders, Opposed the creation of Pakistan. Gandhiji said," Even if the whole of India is in flames, it will not bring Pakistan. Pakistan would be made on my dead body." Jinnah was adamant, he said that Muslims were a separate nation and must have their own state.

The Mountbatten plan stated that the transfer of power in India could be on the basis of the partition of the country. He said that a Bill to this effect would be introduced in British parliament in July, 1947. Power would be transferred to one whole or more states. The Mountbatten plan had the following main points:

1. The date of British withdrawal was advanced from June, 1948 to 15th August, 1947, when power would be handed over to successor Governments in India.
2. The country would be divided into two Dominions, i.e. India and Pakistan.
3. The princely states would have the option to join either of the two Dominions or to remain Independent.
4. A plebiscite would be held in the North West frontier provinces (NWFP) to ascertain whether the people in the area wanted to join India or Pakistan.
5. The provinces of Assam, Bengal and Punjab would be divided. A boundary commission was to be instituted to delimit the boundaries.

ACCEPTANCE BY THE CONGRESS

The Mountbatten plan had a mixed reaction. Jinnah, the leader of the League, accepted it saying that it created a truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan since Punjab and Bengal were divided on the same principles on which the entire country was partitioned. Congress accepted partition of the country as a necessary evil. In this connection Jawaharlal Nehru said:

' For generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free, independent and united India. The proposal to allow certain parts to secede is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one.'

Gandhiji was to be persuaded. He was still against the partition. In a last attempt to keep India united, he suggested offering Jinnah the post of prime Minister in a free, undivided India. Nehru and Sardar Patel disagreed with this suggestion as they felt that they could not rely on the future policies of Jinnah against their past experience of him. In the end, Gandhiji too accepted the Mountbatten plan. The Congress reluctantly accepted the plan for the following reasons:

1. Extension of the British rule was harmful for India. The British instigated the native rulers of Indian states to remain independent. So the Congress thought that it was better to accept partition of the country than have confusion created by the 'Divide and Rule.' Policy of the British.
2. A smaller united India was better than a bigger disorganized country.
3. The Congress believed that it could not have a joint administration with the League against the bitter experience it had when the latter joined the interim Government on October, 1946.
4. Large-scale communal riots that engulfed the whole country proved beyond doubt that it was better to accept the partition of the country than to have bloodshed.

THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE ACT, 1947

Mountbatten, with the approval of the British cabinet, announced the plan on 3rd June, 1947. Then steps were taken to prepare a draft for the Indian Independence Bill to be introduced in

the British parliament. The bill was put before the congress and the League for their comments. After incorporating their comments, the final draft Bill was prepared. Prime minister Attlee introduced the Bill in the house of the commons on 4th July, 1947. The bill was passed by the house of Commons and the House of Lords and it received Royal assent on 18th July, 1947.

Provisions of the Act

The Indian Independence Act was a short document, consisting of less than 20 Sections and 3 Schedules. The following were its main provisions:

1. **Creation of Two Dominions:** It provided for the creation of two independent Dominions from August 15, 1947 to be known as India and Pakistan. The territories of the two Dominions were defined. Pakistan was to comprise east Bengal, West Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, North West frontier provinces and the district of sylhet in Assam. India was to comprise all the remaining included in British India.
2. **A Governor-General for each Dominion:** The Act provided for the appointment of a Governor general for each of the dominions. The Governor-General was to function as a Constitutional head. There was no sphere in which he could act against the wishes of the Ministers. Similarly, the provisional Governors were to act on the advice of their Ministers.
3. **Constituent Assemblies to serve as Central Legislatures:** Pakistan would have a separate Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assemblies of the two Dominions were to serve as their respective Central Legislatures. They had full power to make laws for the Dominion concerned. They were sovereign bodies to make the Constitution and to formulate laws. The existing central Legislative Assembly and the council of state would automatically stand dissolved.
4. **End of the Jurisdiction of the British Parliament:** With effect from 15th August, 1947, His Majesty's Government would cease to have any responsibility for the government of India; and all treaties and agreements between His Majesty's Government and the rulers of Indian States or any authority in tribal areas would lapse. The words "Emperor of India" to be omitted from the royal style and titles.
5. **Princely States Would Become Independent:** All powers and authority of the British Empire to the Princely States were terminated. These States thus became independent.
6. **Abolition of the Office of the Secretary of State:** The office of the Secretary of State for India was to be abolished.
7. **Safeguarding the Interests of Existing Officers:** Provision was also made for safeguarding the interests of the existing officers appointed by the Secretary of State, who would not make any such appointments in future.
8. **Division of the Indian Army and the Sharing of Assets:** Provision was made for the division of Indian Army and the sharing of assets and liabilities between the two Dominions.
9. **Power for Bringing the Act into Operation:** The Governor-General was vested with all powers and authority necessary for bringing the Indian Independence Act into effective operation.

The Indian Independence Act created two independent Dominions-India and Pakistan. Pakistan came into existence on

14th August, 1947. Lord Mountbatten was requested by Pandit Nehru to continue as Governor-General of India. So he became the Governor-General of the Dominion of India. Mohammad Ali Jinnah became the Governor-General of Pakistan. Subsequently, C. Rajagopalachari was sworn in as Governor-General of India on 20th June, 1948. He was the first and the last Governor-General of Indian origin. On 26th January 1950, India became a Republic and Dr. Rajendra Prasad assumed office as President of the Indian Union and the Constituent Assembly became the Parliament of India under the transitional provisions of the new Constitution.

On 15th August, 1947, the first Independence Day in India, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister, addressing the nation said:

'At the stroke of midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment, we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.'

The Bangladesh Liberation War

The Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 was for independence from Pakistan. Pakistan had two parts, East and West, which were separated by about 1,000 miles. East Pakistan was mainly the eastern part of the province of Bengal. The capital of Pakistan was Karachi in West Pakistan and was moved to Islamabad in 1958.

However, due to discrimination in economy and ruling powers against them, the East Pakistanis vigorously protested

The Reasons for war

a. economic

West Pakistan had 97% Muslims and East Pakistanis had 85% Muslims. West Pakistan had four provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and the North-West Frontier. The fifth province was East Pakistan. Having control over the provinces, the West used up more resources than the East.

Between 1948 and 1960, East Pakistan made 70% of all of Pakistan's exports, while it only received 25% of imported money. In 1948, East Pakistan had 11 fabric mills while the West had nine. In 1971, the number of fabric mills in the West grew to 150 while the number in the East went down to 26. About 2.6 billion dollars of resources were also shifted over time from East Pakistan to West Pakistan.

b. political

Although East Pakistan had the largest population among all the provinces, it had much less political power than West Pakistan. This eventually made the people of East Pakistan rebel. Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the Awami League in East Pakistan, explicitly demanded more economic and political powers. The struggle finally culminated into the war of independence.

c. Language Issue

There was also the language issue that kept East Pakistan and West Pakistan in an uneasy status. In 1948, Mohammad Ali Jinnah stated in Dhaka that Urdu was the official language for Pakistan. There was a big argument about this because only the Muhajir in the West and the Biharis in the East spoke Urdu. Most of the West Pakistanis spoke Punjabi and Sindhi, while East Pakistanis spoke Bangla.

East Pakistan therefore disagreed; seven students were killed in a fierce protest on February 21, 1952. This day has been remembered since then and is observed each year to emphasize the importance of the Bengali language. February 21st is now recognized as the International Mother Language Day by the United Nations.

d. Govt.'s Apathy

A devastating cyclone hit East Pakistan in 1970. It was called the Bhola Cyclone. It killed about 500,000 people and made many more homeless. It brought great shock and deep depression among the East Pakistani people. But, the government did not provide enough relief to alleviate the extremely miserable conditions wrought by the cyclone. This caused enormous misery in East Pakistan.

The War

The Awami League, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a landslide victory in the national elections in 1971 and demanded autonomy for East Pakistan. The party won a 160 seats and a majority in the national assembly. This victory also gave it the right to form a government, but Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party refused to let the Sheikh become the Prime Minister of Pakistan. This initiated the war. The Sheikh gave a speech on March 7, 1971 when he urged the people to turn all their homes into a fort of fight. He demanded transfer of power to the elected representative before the assembly meeting on March 25.

Tikka Khan, a West Pakistani general, flew to Dhaka to become the Governor of East Bengal. But, the East Pakistani judges denied him entry. Thereafter, on the night of March 25, the Pakistani army tried to violently crush the Bengali's opposition. Residence halls of the Dhaka University were viciously attacked. On March 26, the Pakistani forces arrested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On the same day, he signed an official declaration for the independence of

Bangladesh. M. A. Hannan, an Awami league leader, is said to have been the first person to read and announce the Declaration of Independence over the radio.

The war between the Pakistan Army and the Bengali freedom fighters, the Mukti Bahini, began.

The head of the Mukti Bahini was General Muhammad Osmani. The Mukti Bahini were trained like guerillas. India gave shelter to the refugees and trained the Mukti Bahini. India also helped with ammunition and its own soldiers. They attacked the Pakistani army. During the training period of the Mukti Bahini, the Pakistani Army encouraged Razakars, the Bengalis who did not want Bangladesh to become an independent country, to suppress the rebellion. The Pakistani Army faced problems as the monsoon came.

This helped Mukti Bahini because they could counter the moves of the Pakistanis. India assumed an active role. Indira Gandhi ordered air and ground attacks. India, having superior equipment and forces, mounted a three-pronged movement on Dhaka from the Indian province West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura. The Indian soldiers, Air Force, and Navy defeated the Pakistani army, while the Bangladeshi Navy helped India. On the ground, three groups of Mukti Bahini and Indian forces fought the Pakistanis. The Pakistanis tried to fight back, but failed to resist them.

A planned military attack by the Pakistan Army was started and was codenamed *Operation Searchlight* – started on 25 March to curb the Bengali nationalist movement.

The Victory

On December 16th, 1971, Dhaka fell to the Mukti Bahini, the elite forces of the Mukti Bahini and the Indian army. An “Instrument of Surrender” was signed by the defeated Pakistani General Niazi and by the Indian commander General Aurora at 16:31 Indian Standard Time.

This is how Bangladesh became liberated and independent. December 16th is recognized as the Victory Day in Bangladesh, while March 26 is recognized as the Independence Day. With sovereignty, Bangladesh is progressing in all aspects.

Vinobha Bhave and Land Donation Movement

In 1951 Vinoba Bhave started his land donation movement, the Bhoodan Movement. He took donated land from land owner Indians and gave it away to the poor and landless, for them to cultivate. Then after 1954, he started to ask for donations of whole villages in a programme he called Gramdan. He got more than 1000 villages by way of donation. Out of these, he obtained 175 donated villages in Tamil Nadu alone. Noted Gandhian and atheist Lavanam was the interpreter of Vinoba Bhave during his land reform movement in Andhra Pradesh and parts of Orissa.

Vinoba spent the later part of his life at his Brahma Vidya Mandir ashram in Paunar, Maharashtra. He died on 15 November 1982 after refusing food and medicine for a few days. The then prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi who was visiting Moscow to attend the funeral of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev cut short her visit to be at the funeral of Vinoba.

Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (14 July 1856 – 17 June 1895)

Gopal Ganesh Agarkar was born in a koknastha Brahman family on 14 July 1856 in Tembhu, a Thembu village in Satara district now in Sangli district of Maharashtra. He was friend of Nilkant Tidke. Agarkar had his primary education from Karad (till 3rd Standard, English medium). After doing some clerical work in a court at Karad, he went to Ratnagiri but could not get education there. In 1878, he got his B. A. degree followed by later M. A. in 1880.

A close associate of Lokamanya Tilak, Agarkar was a co-founder of the renowned educational institutes like New English School (1880), the Deccan Education Society (1884) and Fergusson College (1885) along with Lokamanya Tilak, Vishnushastri Chiplunkar and others. He was the second Principal of Fergusson College and served that post from August-1892 till his last breath.

Agarkar favored primary education as well as mass education. Regarding mass education, he said : "What better tool can there be other than mass education for protecting people's property and life?"

He was the first editor of *Kesari*, a prominent Marathi weekly in those days which was started by Lokamanya Tilak in 1880-81. He subsequently left *Kesari* out of ideological differences with Tilak. For Agarkar social reform was more important than political reform, whereas Tilak favored political reform. Because of this difference in opinion, *Agarkar* resigned from the editorship of *Kesari* in October 1887 and started his own newspaper *Sudharak* (reformer) in 1888 which was a weekly.

In *Sudharak* in which he campaigned against the injustices of untouchability and the caste system. This was published both in English and Marathi. Agarkar abhorred blind adherence to and glorification of tradition and the past. He supported widow re-marriage. Though Agarkar

championed social reforms he let his wife observe all the old traditions of Hindu faith and never once came in her way.

Tilak and Agarkar were contemporaries but with contrasting personalities although both came from families with similar social backgrounds. By nature Tilak tended toward extreme views while Agarkar tended toward the moderate.

In Marathi they would say *Jahal Tilak ani Maval Agarkar*.

Tilak hailed from a financially well-off family, while Agarkar was born in poverty. His financial condition was so bad that he used to study in the light of streetlamps during his college days, owned a single shirt, and never would ride a train or car for traveling.

Ideological conflicts eventually led to a parting of these two social reformers. Agarkar expired unexpectedly on 17 June 1895.

Agarkar writes in his biography in the "futke nashib" that he was the only social worker who witnessed his own funeral, He has also written a book 'Alankar Mimmansa' (अलंकार मीमांसा). In 1892 after death of Fergusson college principal Aapte sir, Agarkar took over as the principal. He died at an early age of 39 in the year 1895 . His death was attributed to asthma.

Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (18 January 1842 – 16 January 1901)

Ranade was born in Niphad in Maharashtrian Chitpavan Brahmin family, a Taluka town in Nashik district.. He spent much of his childhood in Kolhapur where his father was a minister. He began studies at the Elphinstone College in Bombay (now known as Mumbai), at the age of fourteen. He belonged to Bombay University, one of the three new British universities, and was part of the first batches for both the B.A. (1862) and the LL.B. (Government Law School, 1866) where he graduated at the top of his class. Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar was his classmate. Ranade later got his MA degree at the top of his class.

Ranade held the offices of syndic and dean in arts at Bombay University, where he displayed much organizing power and great intimacy with the needs of the student class. He tried to introduce vernacular languages into the university curriculum.

During his life he helped establish the Poona *Sarvajanik Sabha* and the *Prarthana Samaj*, and would edit a Bombay Anglo-Marathi daily paper, the *Induprakash*, founded on his ideology of social and religious reform.

He was appointed Presidency magistrate, fourth judge of the Bombay Small Causes Court in 1871, first-class sub-judge at Pune in 1873, judge of the Poona Small Causes Court in 1884, and

finally to the Bombay High Court in 1893. From 1885 until he joined the High Court, he belonged to the Bombay legislative council.

In 1897, Ranade served on a committee charged with the task of enumerating imperial and provincial expenditure and making recommendations for financial retrenchment. This service won him the decoration of Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire. Ranade also served as a special judge under the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act from 1887.

He had worked as the Professor of English and Economics at the Elphinstone College in Bombay. He was appointed instructor in History in Elphinstone college. He published a book on history entitled *Rise of the Maratha Power* in 1900. Ranade has been called the father of Indian economics for urging (unsuccessfully) the British government to initiate industrialization and state welfare programs. He published books on Indian economics entitled *Essays on Indian Economics – a Collection of Essays and Speeches* in 1898.

He saw the need for heavy industry for economic progress and believed in Western education as a vital element to the foundation of an Indian nation. Reform of Indian culture and use of an adaptation of Western culture, in Ranade's view, would bring about "common interest and fusion of thoughts, amongst all men."

Religious

With his friends Dr Atmaram Pandurang, Bal Mangesh Wagle and Vaman Abaji Modak, Ranade founded the Prarthana Samaj, a Hindu movement inspired by the Brahmo Samaj, espousing principles of enlightened theism based on the ancient Vedas. Prarthana Samaj was started by Keshav Chandra Sen, a staunch Brahma Samajist, with the objective of carrying out religious reforms in Maharashtra.

Ranade presided a function to honor his friend, Virchand Gandhi, who had defended Indian culture and Jainism in 1893's World Religion Parliament in Chicago, USA.

Political

Ranade founded the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and later was one of the originators of the Indian National Congress. He has been portrayed as an early adversary of the politics of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and a mentor to Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

Social

Ranade was against child marriage, the shaving of widows' heads, the heavy cost of marriages and other social functions, and the caste restrictions on traveling abroad, and he strenuously advocated widow remarriage and female education.

He was one of the founders of the Widow Marriage Association in 1861. Ranade did not want to destroy the social atmosphere that was India's heritage. Ranade valued India's history, having had a great interest in Shivaji and the Bhakti movement, but he also recognized the influence of British rule over India on its development.

Though Ranade criticised superstitions and blind faith, he was conservative in his own life. He chose to take *prayaschitta* (religious penance) in case of *Panch-houd Mission Case* rather than taking a strong side of his opinions.

Upon the death of his first wife, his reform-minded friends expected him to marry a widow. However, he adhered to his family's wishes and married a child bride, Ramabai Ranade, whom he subsequently provided with an education. After his death, she continued his social and educational reform work. He had no children.

Ramabai Ranade in her memoirs has stated that during his lifetime Ranade entertained a prominent Pune personality, Vishnupant Pandit at his home because Pandit had married a widow. This behaviour of Ranade was not liked by his orthodox father who decided to leave Ranade's home in Pune and go to Kolhapur. It was only after he, Mahadev G. Ranade, told the father that he would resign from his government job that the father relented and canceled his plans to go to Kolhapur. Ranade decided never to do any such thing in the future.

Keshav Sitaram Thackeray,

Keshav Sitaram Thackeray commonly known by his pen name **Prabodhankar Thackeray**, was an Indian politician, social activist and author. He was one of the key leaders of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti which successfully campaigned for the linguistic state of Maharashtra. He was the father of Bal Thackeray, who founded Shiv Sena, a Marathi Hindu regionalist party. He is also the grandfather of Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray.

Keshav Thackeray was born on 17 September 1885 in Panvel. In his autobiography, Keshav Thackeray writes that one of his ancestors was a kiladar of the Dhodap fort during the Maratha rule. His great-grandfather Krishnaji Madhav ("Appasaheb") resided in Pali, Raigad, while his grandfather Ramchandra "Bhikoba" Dhodapkar settled in Panvel. Keshav's father Sitaram adopted the lastname "Panvelkar" as per the tradition, but decided to give his son the surname "Thakre", which was apparently their traditional family name before their ancestors moved to Dhodap. An admirer of the India-born British writer William Makepeace Thackeray, Keshav later anglicized the spelling of his surname to "Thackeray".

When Keshav was still a teenager, his father died in a plague epidemic, in 1902. Keshav was educated at Panvel, Kalyan, Baramati and Bombay (now Mumbai). Outside the Bombay Presidency, he studied at the Victoria High School in Dewas (Central Provinces), and later, at the Calcutta University. He finally settled in Bombay.

Keshav Thackeray wrote in the Marathi language. He started a fortnightly magazine named *Prabodhan* ("Enlighten"), which is the origin of his pen name Prabodhankar. His other Marathi language works include the following:

Autobiography

- Mazhi Jeevangatha ("My autobiography")

Historical research

- *Pratapsingh Chhatrapati and Rango Bapuji*
- *Gramanyachya Sadhyant Itihas Arthat Nokarashiche Banda* (A Comprehensive History of Rebellion or the Revolt of the Bureaucrats), published by Yashwant Shivram Raje in 1919, at Mumbai
- *Bhikshushahiche Band*
- *Kodandacha Tanatkar*

Opinion

- *Dagalbaaj*
- *Devalacha dharma aani dharmaachi devale*

Translation

- *Hindu janancha rhaas aani adhapaat*
- *Shanimahatmya*
- *Shetkaryanche Swarajya* (The self-rule of the farmers)

Plays

- *Khara Brahman*
- *Sangeet Vidhinishedh*
- *Taklele Por'*
- *Sangeet Seetashuddhi*

Biographies

- *Shri Sant Gadgebaba*

- *Pandit Ramabai Saraswati*

Collected Articles

- *Uth Marathya Uth* (Arise Marathi People Arise; This is a collection of his 12 articles which appeared in the weekly 'Marmik', following the establishment of Shiv Sena, first published in 1973, it will be published again in 2013 by 'Navta Book World')

Social activism

Keshav Thackeray is often described as a social activist or social reformer for his rejection of caste system. He campaigned against the dominance of the upper-caste Brahmin community in the society, calling it *bhikshukshahi* ("the rule of the bhikshus").

When the prominent Marathi historian VK Rajwade contested the upper-caste Kshatriya status claimed by the Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu (CKP) caste in a 1916 essay, Thackeray became one of his fiercest critics, and denounced his research as casteist. He wrote a text outlining the identity of the CKP caste, and its contributions to the Maratha empire. In this text, *Gramanyachya Sadhyant Itihas*, Thackeray talked about the discrimination suffered by other communities at the hands of the Brahmins during the Maratha rule. He was not much concerned about the ritual caste status, but sought to prove that many non-Brahmin communities (specifically the CKPs) had played a major role in the history of the Maratha empire. He wrote that the CKPs "provided the cement" for Shivaji's swaraj (self-rule) "with their blood", and supported him even before the Kshatriyas of Rajput origin joined him.

Keshav Thackeray played an important role in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement aimed at establishing the linguistic state of Maharashtra. He joined the movement in 1951, demanding the inclusion of the Dang district in Maharashtra instead of neighbouring Gujarat state. He was one of the founding members of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, which campaigned for the formation of Maharashtra and the inclusion of Belgaum and Mumbai in it.

Keshav Thackeray's wife was Rama Bai Keshav Thackeray. He had two sons, Bal Thackeray and Shrikant Thackeray (father of Raj Thackeray) and a daughter Sanjeevani. He also had two brothers named Vinayakrao Thackeray and Yeshwant Thackeray.