

## The Role Of Intellectuals In The Making Of Modern India

**Prof. Rekha Chaubey**

*Department of Sociology*

*S.N. Sen B.V. P.G. College*

*Kanpur, U.P.*

**Abstract**

*Intellectuals are an essential component of an open society- who help to shape the ideologies of the future. India has a rich tradition of providing intellectuals who have contributed much to making modern India. The main objective of the paper is an analytical study of the role of intellectuals directly or indirectly playing a considerable part in the making of India. Here our main focus of analysis is based on the early years of independence (1947-1952).*

**Keywords**

*Intellectuals, Modern India and Making of Modern India.*

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

**Prof. Rekha Chaubey**

*The Role Of  
Intellectuals In The  
Making Of Modern  
India*

*RJPP Dec.22,  
Vol. XX, Special Issue  
pp.29-28  
Article No. 5*

*Similarity Check: 4%*

**Online available at :**  
[https://anubooks.com/  
journal/rjpp](https://anubooks.com/journal/rjpp)

**DOI:**  
[http://doi.org/10.31995/  
rjpp.2022v20iS.05](http://doi.org/10.31995/rjpp.2022v20iS.05)

## **Intellectuals**

The intellectual is a person working with his intellect, relying for his livelihood on his brain rather than brawn<sup>1</sup>

## **Modern India**

By 'modern India' we mean the period of development from 1947-1952.

### **The Making of Modern India:**

The making of Modern India is used as economic, social, and cultural transformation.<sup>2</sup>

## **Introduction**

### **The Role of Intellectuals in Early Years of Independence (1947-1952)**

The history of Independent India began when the country became an independent nation on 15th August 1947. Making modern India is the vision of not only one intellectual but a collective vision of many Indian intellectuals. A few of them are Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>3</sup>, Maulana Azad, C.Rajagopalachari, Subhas Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallbhbhai Patel, Madan Mohan Malviya, Dr. Rajendra Parsad, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Lal Bahadur Shastri, B.R. Ambedkar and others. We may now look at how these intellectuals translated their ideas into practice.

Both, the stay and departure of the British colonialists proved very costly for Independent India. During their long stay in the country, the British imperialists destroyed every fiber of the Indian social structure. And, even while leaving the country after transferring the power, they ultimately vivisected the limbs of the mother India and plunged her into an unprecedented disaster. And, the onus of tackling those problems came over intellectuals who took the reign of power. Let us look at some of the most precipitating problems and the way intellectuals confronted them.<sup>4</sup>

The most immediate problem was to contain the problems emanating from the vivisection of the country and the transfer of power. Throughout their rule, the British followed the policy of 'divide and rule.' On 15th August 1947. When they had to depart from India, they carved out two States of the subcontinent Hindustan and Pakistan. And, Pakistan was split into two parts, then separated by more than a thousand miles which could not survive the exigencies of time, and, finally, in 1971, broke into two more normal, state formations of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Following the partition of India, the people became uprooted from their native place. Riots erupted on a massive scale. Millions of people became victims of the communal rapine and carnage, especially in the areas through which the lines of partition ran, namely, Punjab and Bengal (and also Sind and Assam). There was a large-scale exodus and the price of the partition had to be paid by the common

masses with their untold suffering. The communal massacre and violent displacement of people culminated in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi-the Father of the Nation-by a fanatic Hindu Godse.<sup>5</sup> Although this shock pacified the nation's inflamed communal passion, the communal disharmony continued.<sup>6</sup>

This episode threw two challenges before intellectuals: the creation of communal harmony and instilling of a sense of reassurance among members of the Muslim minority in areas seriously affected in particular, and in the country as a whole in general. Here intellectuals played a dual role which led to positive and negative consequences. Positively, Constitutional protection was provided to the minority community, which created a sense of relief in it. But the constitutional provisions alone cannot uproot the problem unless translated into social reality. At the behavioral level, intellectuals failed to achieve the objective: the distrust between Hindus and Muslims continues. Intellectuals are responsible for the continuity of communal distrust and disharmony. The minority community has been considered a potential 'vote bank' and all the leaders representing different political parties, including the ruling one, have cashed it for their political gains. Intellectuals, thus, could not live up to the nation's expectations and contribute to the continuity of this distrust.

Linked with the transfer of power was the problem of rehabilitation of refugees, almost ten million of them, uprooted and hounded out from their ancestral homes on the other side of the border. Intellectuals did attempt to rehabilitate refugees, but due to poverty nothing substantial could be done. However, the people from Punjab could establish themselves. But Punjab remains one of the most problem-ridden States of India.

The third problem caused by the partition of the country was the problem of Kashmir. Pakistan lost no time in invading Kashmir after the partition on the plea that the division of the country had been done on communal-religious lines; that Kashmir was a Muslim-dominated area; and that Kashmir, despite its legal and popular accession, was a part of Pakistan. After a spell of bitter fighting following freedom, a truce was arranged in 1948, resulting in a de facto partition of Kashmir along the actual line of control. Even the internationalization of the dispute by the matter to the United Nations Organization (UNO) did not result in a mutually satisfactory solution. Until today, Kashmir remains the bone of contention between Pakistan and Hindustan and no solution is in sight. Kashmir remains a matter of anxiety and tension in the internal affairs of the country. Externally, there is always provocation for war from the other side of the border. Intellectuals have not succeeded on this front and a section of the fish in the troubled water from time to time. But on

5<sup>th</sup> August 2019, the Government of India issued a presidential order superseding the 1954 order, and making all the provisions of the Indian constitution applicable to Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>7</sup>

The next problem was that of international relations. This needed a viable foreign policy. When India gained Independence, the world was surcharged with cold war tempers. The post-World War II world was split into two superpower blocks. Following the war years, there was a liberation struggle waged by colonial people against their Imperialist masters. At this juncture, Independent India needed a viable foreign policy. In the beginning, intellectuals adopted inconsistent, vacillating, and pro-West foreign policy. But they were intelligent enough to realize their shortcomings. They soon abandoned that path and policy and adopted a foreign policy of non-alignment and peace combined with strong support to all enslaved peoples. and particularly, to those of Asia and Africa busy fighting for freedom from foreign foes. The famous Bandung Conference of 1955 may be considered as a high watermark of this foreign policy of non-alignment and friendship with both blocs. And, this policy paid dividends to India. Due to its foreign policy, India became the spokesman for the Third World nations on the international forums. This policy also helped India to get foreign aid from both superpowers. This very policy came to the rescue at the time of war with Pakistan in 1971, when India signed a timely friendship treaty with the U.S.S.R. and could contain the military threats of the U.S.A. siding Pakistan.

Another tricky problem before intellectuals was that of the integration of princely States. Note that these princely States were bereft of genuine State power but were preserved by the British imperialists as bulwarks against the rising national movement. <sup>8</sup> The princely States encompassed almost a quarter of the Indian population and covered almost a third of the Indian territory. And, these princely States ranged from petty principalities of a few square miles to vast areas like the States of Hyderabad, Mysore, and Kashmir. The British, as per their policy of 'divide and rule', tried to set them up as sovereign States against the newly Independent India during their last leg of withdrawal. One example of their nefarious tendencies is reflected in the Nizam's State of Hyderabad. These princely states successfully integrated the Indian union by persuasion, police action, mounting of people's movements such as Telangana and Tebhaga peasant movements, inducement of continued privy purses and other titular privileges, and even by political chicanery. Popularly known as the 'Iron man of India', Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel played a crucial role in overseeing the incorporation of more than 565 princely states into the union of India, thereby blocking the splitting of a county into miniature nations

after India gained independence.<sup>9</sup> Paying tribute to him, Nehru called Sardar the builder and consolidator of new India.<sup>10</sup>

After the British left India, a few pockets of foreign rule such as the French and Portuguese possessions continued. Liquidation of these foreign rulers was another challenge before intellectuals. And, they successfully tackled this problem. They first tried to oust these foreign powers through negotiations, political pressures, and persuasions but all these attempts bore no fruit. Then, the force was used in 1962 to dislodge these last remnants of foreign rule from Indian soil. And, they were ousted successfully.

The problem of law and order and administration was further threatening the integration of the country. The ruling government got the administrative and military machinery of the British more or less intact. The people had nurtured much hope from their hard-earned freedom and were reeling under the dead weight of poverty and unemployment. They thought their government would fulfill their expectations and aspirations. But this could not be possible. So they agitated for their just demands. The government crushed the people's demands with the same administration and military that they had created to oppress Indians for their just demands. Government within three years of Independence jailed a large number of people, used police and military force umpteen times, and even shot many dead. Here intellectuals failed to live up to the expectations.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, there were problems on the economic front. The partition disjointed the original unified economy. For instance, while textile industries remained largely located in India, the cotton and jute belts fell in Pakistan. This created economic imbalances/misbalances. The economy in general was already ruined by British exploitation. The outdated class structure was there to exploit the economy.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Concluding Remarks:**

In what preceded, we analyzed the role of intellectuals in power and close-to-power in the making of modern India. There was widespread illiteracy, malnutrition, and ill health on the personal social plane, little industrialization, low techniques of production in agriculture, caste hierarchy, untouchability, and poor status of women on the social plane. All these problems called for radical change and urgent action on the political, economic, and socio-cultural planes. It was around these demands that intellectuals struggled for and won. Intellectuals played positive and successful roles in rehabilitating refugees, tackling the problems of Kashmir, creating a viable foreign policy, integrating princely States, and liquidating the foreign pockets of power. They, however, failed in creating communal harmony, bringing the ruined economy on rails, and creating a law and order and administrative machinery suited to the temper of democratic machinery.

### **References**

1. Baran, Paul A. (1965). "The Commitment of the Intellectual". in Paul S. Baran (1910-1964): A Collective Portrait, edited by Paul M. Sweezy and Leo Huberman. Monthly Review Press: New York; Originally appeared in Monthly Review (May 1961).
2. Portes, Alejandro. (1976). "On the Sociology of National Development: Theories and Issues". *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 82. No. 1 **Pg. 55-85.**
3. Jawaharlal, Nehru. (1948). *The Discovery of India*. The Signet Press: Calcutta.
4. Pandey, Rajendra. (1990). "The Role of Intellectuals in Contemporary Society". Mittal Publications: New Delhi.
5. Brown, T.M. (1972). *A Gandhi's Rise to Power. Indian Politics 1915-1922*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Pandey, Rajendra. *ibid.*
7. The Hindu. (2019). Article 370 of the Constitution of India. 7 August.
8. Desai, A.R. (1959). *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*. Popular Prakashan: Bombay.
9. [m.timesofindia.com](http://m.timesofindia.com) On Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary, a look at his role in the unification of India.
10. <https://www.clearias.com> Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel– Biography, Facts, Life, and Contribution to Modern India.
11. Dutt, R. Palme. (1970). *India Today*. Granthalaya: Calcutta.
12. Bhatt, V.V. (1963). *Aspects of Economic Change and Policy in India 1800-1960* Bombay Allied.