
Ans: The Cambridge School
In the years following Indian independence, multiple interpretations developed in regard to the intricacies of India’s nationalist movement. One particular school of thought that emerged can be seen with the Cambridge movement. Cambridge scholars – known for their cynical approach toward the issue of Indian nationalism – offer a view that tends to reject accounts focusing on the supposedly idealistic and patriotic motives of nationalist development (Sarkar, 6). As historians Douglas Peers and Vandini Gooptu point out, early Cambridge scholars chose to focus their attention, instead, on “an alternative to the standard, eulogistic, and often starry-eyed…nationalist narrative” by questioning the personal motives and desires of Indian political leaders (including individuals such as Gandhi) (Sarkar, 6). Consequently, interpretations within this school of thought tend to present the nationalist movement as an elite-driven event that developed from the selfish desires of its political leadership (Sarkar, 6).

The implication that “selfish” motivations drove nationalism in India is important to consider, as it helps elucidate another aspect of the Cambridge school; particularly, their view that nationalist sentiment was both disjointed and fragmented in India. Because scholars (such as John Gallagher and Gordon Johnson) argue that the nationalist movement reflected the personal desires of politicians, Cambridge historians assert that the movement was neither unified nor cohesive in its overall development since politicians were constantly engaged in competition amongst themselves for both power and authority (Spodek, 691). According to these scholars, this sense of competition was driven primarily by local and regional rivalries that stemmed from British rule. Following “the external pressures of two world wars and an international economic depression,” historians such as Anil Seal argue that the “devolution” of British power encouraged Indians to play a more active role in politics (Spodek, 691). Rather than seeking independence or a greater “share of power at the national level,” however, Cambridge scholars argue that the nationalist movement “reflected local problems and contests for power rather than opposition to British rule” as villages and provinces devolved into factional strife against one another. Through the combination of local interests and a search for political allies, Cambridge historians (such as Seal and Lewis Namier) have argued that “national organizations” developed as provincial leaders used “exalted rhetoric” to gain support from the masses (Spodek, 691). While these historians acknowledge that calls for “the expulsion of the British” did eventually occur, they posit that these sentiments remained secondary to local interests and did not reflect an “ideological” basis for the nationalist movement to draw upon.

Subaltern School
Following the contributions of the Cambridge school, another group of historians dealing with the nationalist movement involved the subaltern field of history. This group of historians – with their focus on lower-class individuals of Indian society – offered a direct challenge to the elite-driven model proposed by Cambridge scholars; arguing that a level of separation existed between elites and the masses of India. Because of this separation, historian Ranajit Guha proclaims that no sense of cohesion existed in the nationalist movement as subaltern classes maintained values and beliefs that diverged significantly from the elites and Bourgeoisie of their society. Guha argues that this difference “derived from the conditions of exploitation to which the subaltern classes were subjected” to in the past. This is important to consider, he argues, since “the experience of exploitation and labour endowed this politics [subaltern] with many idioms, norms, and values which put it in a category apart from elite politics.

Guha also points out that elite and subaltern mobilization schemes were wholly different as well, with elites “more legalistic and constitutionalist” in their movements, while subalterns maintained a “more violent” and “spontaneous” stance in their reactions to political developments. Regardless of these differences, however, Guha maintains that elites often tried to integrate the lower-classes of Indian society into their struggle against the British, a clear “trademark” of subaltern history and its focus on the dialectic between political mobilization by the leadership and autonomous popular initiatives” (Sarkar, 8). Yet, Guha points out that “the braiding together of the two strands of elite and subaltern politics led invariably to explosive situations,” thus, “indicating that the masses mobilized by the elite to fight for their own objectives managed to break away from their control”. To a certain degree, this sentiment reflects elements of the Cambridge school since Guha makes it clear that elites (politicians) attempted to direct the masses for their own particular (selfish) wishes. Due to the absence of an effective leadership or the ability to control the masses, however, Guha argues that the nationalist effort was “far too fragmented to form effectively into anything like a national liberation movement” Because of this inherent fragmentation, historians Peers and Gooptu posit that subaltern accounts of India – such as Guha’s analysis – often fail to “explore nationalism as a category and, in turn, examine it as a series of “popular movements”

2. Write a note on economic nationalism with special reference to Indian thinkers.

Ans: India is an interesting case for analyzing economic nationalism. Since its independence in 1947 India has pursued, initially, a strong anti-imperialist economic policy by promoting self-reliance. Following the Leninist strategy of controlling the commanding heights of the economy, India’s Fabian-inspired Nehruvian socialism brought major industries under state control. Economic nationalism de jure was expressed by curtailing the expansion of private capital in certain critical sectors and protecting domestic capitalists from foreign competition. It established a basic industrial foundation and a technical-education infrastructure to sustain future growth but fell behind the global technology frontier due to increasingly autarkic and sometimes dysfunctional policies. Paradoxically, India witnessed persistent deficits in its international financial position, the very outcome that economic nationalism was expected to avoid. India was characterized by a slow-growing, high-cost economy with shoddy and scarce products. Hence, this ideological anti-capitalist, anti-globalization stance was short-lived as domestic politics combined with the rise of the Indian bourgeoisie eroded the practical feasibility of the more orthodox version of economic nationalism. Subsequently, since the 1980s,