
UNIT 10 POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*

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10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn the:

- nature of colonization in America,
- role of political and economic factors in American Revolution,
- nature of antagonism between the British Crown and American colonies, and
- nature of resistance and protest of the people in American colonies.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

As a significant event in American world and Atlantic history, the American Revolution has always aroused great interest. A huge amount of literature has been written on it. Some scholars viewed it as a precursor of the most important event which was the formation of the United States. It is thus a key episode in the development of American nationalism and the American state. Some other scholars see the American Revolution as part of a larger age of revolutions and also see it as arising out of global contexts and having major consequences as a major episode in the birth of the modern world. Most of the events that led to the American Revolution and the War of Independence itself are well known, but their interpretations differ. The liberal historians tended to see the American Revolution as having mainly political rather than socio- economic consequences. The Progressive school sees the American Revolution as a broader social-economic upheaval and not merely as a political revolt, akin to the French and

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the Russian Revolutions. Whatever interpretation is accepted, significance of the event cannot be denied. The ideal enshrined in the Declaration of Independence regarding the equality of all men and the 'inalienable rights' of man electrified the atmosphere in America and outside. Thomas Paine, one of the founders of the United States, also participated in the French Revolution. By its example, the American Revolution inspired many revolutionaries across Europe later in the 19th century. It encouraged Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Central and South America to rebel and gain their independence. However, the main accomplishment of the American Revolution was in laying foundation of a republic. This republic was, however, not truly democratic. The right to vote was limited. The Blacks, most of them still slaves, indigenous American Indians, and women had no vote. Election laws in all states favored men of property for many years. But progress towards democracy had begun.

10.2 BACKGROUND OF THE REVOLUTION: NATURE OF COLONISATION IN AMERICA

In 1607 The Virginia Company of London, an English trading company, started the first enduring English settlement in North America at Jamestown. The life of these first settlers was not easy, apart from harsh climate, wild untamed land, the settlers had to face diseases, starvation and the hostility of indigenous population. The successful establishment of this colony was an important achievement in those difficult times. The Virginia Company functioned under a royal charter which was, granted by King James I, which assured the original settlers they would have all liberties, franchises and immunities as if they had been "abiding and born within England."

One of the main reason behind indigenous people's hostility to European settlers was their different perspectives regarding property that you can see from text box -1 below.

Indigenous American Perspective :
"No tribe has the right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers...Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the great sea, as well as the earth? Didn't the Great Spirit make them all for the use of his children?"

European Perspective : "A right to property is founded in our natural wants, in the means with which we are endowed to satisfy these wants, and the right to what we acquire by those means without violating the similar rights of other sensible beings."

The Virginia Company failed and Jamestown became a royal colony (owned by The British Crown) in 1623. However, the operation and settlement of colonies in America from the very beginning shows how the nature of colonialism was so different to our own experience of colonial rule. The Virginia Company allowed colonists to own their own land (property ownership) and created the House of

Burgesses, a group of elected representatives who made decisions and passed laws for the colony (which means a kind of self-rule permitted to settlers), and naturally they protested when the king eliminated the House of Burgesses.

By 1760, England and Scotland had united into the Kingdom of Great Britain and her settlements in North America had grown to thirteen thriving colonies with strong cultural, economic, and political ties to the mother country. Each colony enjoyed a certain amount of self-rule. The ties which bound Great Britain and her American colonies were many. These colonies could be divided into following three categories.

1) New England colonies: New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut (These were formed mostly by religious dissenters, (people who disagree with orthodox existing view.) The colonialists in them were relatively wealthy, skilled and educated and based in cities and towns. The economy of these colonies was subsistence economy producing only enough to feed urban centres. They engaged in fishing, fur trade, timber, iron works and shipping. There were no big plantation farms and so there was no need for slavery. They were self-governed and made their own laws separate from England.

2) Middle colonies: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware. Originally founded by the Dutch, but later conquered by England, these colonies were ideal for farming with rich soil and mild winters but they did not rely heavily on slave labour. Here, even poor immigrants became wealthy landowners with passage of time. The main resources here were fur, cattle, grain, tobacco, iron, ships, and timber. These colonies were marked by religious and ethnic diversity with a mingling of English Quakers, German Lutherans, French Protestants, etc.

3) Southern colonies: Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia. These were based on Tobacco and rice industry and largely rural colonies. The plantation farming on fertile soil with year-round crops required labor-intensive techniques. It required slaves or indentured servants (people who worked for a set time without pay in exchange for free passage to America). About 68% of the 235,000 African slaves lived in the South and made up nearly half of the entire South's population. But still there was no religious persecution.

Rich and wealthy men in the colonies, such as George Washington, used British trading companies as their agents to conduct business. Young men from prominent families, like Arthur Lee, went to Great Britain to obtain education. Colonial churches received services of ministers who were educated in Great Britain. Many of the brightest men in the colonies, such as Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, James Otis of Massachusetts, and Peyton Randolph of Virginia, served the British government as appointed officials. What then caused these strong ties to be shattered after 1760? What caused the American colonists to revolt against their mother country in 1775? Though not recognized by most people at the time, economic and political forces beginning in 1760 on both sides of the Atlantic reshaped the relationship between Great Britain and her American colonies.

10.3 INTERFACE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The establishment of colonies in America provided an outlet to surplus population at home. Under the economic doctrine of mercantilism, the colonies and their economies were also supposed to promote British shipping and commercial interests. The trade in products such as tobacco, wood, and sugar had grown. Despite providing some degree of autonomy to these colonies, the mercantilist thinking of the age believed that colonies should be for the economic benefits of the mother country. So Britain tried to impose trade restrictions from the very beginning on the colonies. There were ways and means by which American colonies and its traders evaded trade control. Navigation Acts of seventeenth century, which were a series of laws passed by England to guarantee profit for itself, sowed the seed of first resentment against England in American colonies. Under these laws, all goods had to be carried on English ships or on ships made in the English colonies. They permitted European imports to the colonies only through English ports and officials were to tax any colonial goods not shipped to England. The Acts led to smuggling and piracy on a large scale to evade the provisions of the Acts.

The Seven Years War (1756-1763), which was a war between a coalition of Great Britain and its allies against a coalition of France and its allies, resulted in expansion of British colonial possessions in America. Financing the administration of these new colonial possessions was a vital problem faced by the British government. The war had been a costly affair and at the end of the Seven Years War, England's national debt stood at over £122 million and even annual interest payment on this debt was nearly £4.5 million. Compounding Britain's financial troubles, the government faced growing protests for tax relief after increasing taxes for war at home. A series of attempts were made to raise more revenue from American colonies and impose strict control over them and their economy. The American colonial resistance found political articulation in opposition to the economic and administrative measures imposed by Britain in the wake of Seven Years War. This found expression in the slogan of "*No taxation without representation!*" which became the political justification of the American revolutionaries. In 1767, patriot merchants throughout the colonies were signing non-importation agreements. In other words, they planned to boycott goods produced in the mother country— especially goods that were being taxed without the colonists' consent. The idea was both novel and brilliant. If the patriot merchants succeeded, they would severely affect the prosperity of English merchants who benefited from trade with the American colonies. Patriots believed that if revenue from the colonies dried up, the English merchants would pressure Parliament to repeal the Townshend Acts, and reestablish free trade with the colonies. John Dickinson wrote a series of twelve letters and published them under the title, *Letters from a Farmer in Philadelphia*. In the Letters, John Dickinson railed against the unconstitutionality of the taxes Parliament was imposing on the colonies. He cited the fact that the revenue collected from the taxes would pay the salaries of royal officials. Previously, it had been the responsibility of each colony's legislature to raise money to pay the royal officials, now that right had been taken out of their hands.

The 'triangular trade' connecting Africa, the New-World plantation-zone and Britain was a central motor of the 'Atlantic economy'. The markets created by the African slave-trade and the plantation-economies for British manufactured goods as diverse as iron, textiles, glass, and china were important stimuli for the growth of industrial capitalism in Britain. Scholarly discussion of plantation-slavery and economic development has produced two broad interpretations. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, argue that, despite the un-free legal status of slave-labourers, plantation-slavery was a variant of capitalism. The planters' ability to organize their slave-labourers in a centralized labour-process allowed the planters to maximise profits in the production of staple-crops, sugar, tobacco, cotton, etc. for a competitive world-market. On the other hand, Eugene D. Genovese argues that the slaves' un-free legal status gave rise to a number of social-institutional hindrances to the development of capitalism. For a variety of reasons, but most importantly the slaves' supposed lack of motivation and the resulting need for their close supervision in simple, repetitive and unskilled tasks, slavery was an obstacle to technical innovation in agriculture. But, despite having a significant presence on the social map of American South colonies, this particular issue found no resonance in the political discourses of the contemporary times.

10.4 THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEVEN YEAR WAR

The Seven Years War (1756-1763) was a war between a coalition of Great Britain and its allies against a coalition of France and its allies. The war escalated from a regional conflict between Great Britain and France in North America and spread to other colonies and Europe too. George Washington, a wealthy Virginia planter and an officer in the Virginia militia, served under British General Braddock in the early years of this war. The Seven Years War ended in a resounding victory for Great Britain and its allies and a crushing defeat for France and its allies. France lost to Great Britain most of its North American colonial possessions, known as New France. This included Canada and all of its land east of the Mississippi River, including the Ohio Valley. Despite a big military victory, Great Britain faced a number of serious geo-political and financial problems after the war. The first difficulty faced by the British government was how to govern and control vast territories won during war. In North America, the British now had liability for protecting lands acquired in Canada and the areas east of the Mississippi River. These former French colonies included thousands of Indians and many French-speaking Catholics who had no desire to become subjects of the British crown or to live under English common law. This posed the problem of getting consent of the governed in a legitimate manner. Great Britain also had gained control over East and West Florida which Spain, an ally of France, was forced to cede to Great Britain at the end of the war. Financing the administration of these new colonial possessions was a vital problem faced by the British government. The war had been a costly affair and at the end of the Seven Years War, England's the national debt stood at over £122 million and even annual interest payment on this debt was nearly £4.5 million. Compounding Britain's financial troubles, the government faced growing protests for tax relief after increasing taxes for war at home.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss the nature of colonization of America. How do you think it was different from the colonization of India?

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- 2) How the Seven Years War can be seen as a major catalyst for the American Revolution?

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10.5 GROWING ANTIPATHY BETWEEN THE BRITISH CROWN AND COLONIES IN AMERICA

During the Seven Year War, Britain and the colonies fought side by side. Americans in colonies supported Britain in its war efforts. However, when the war ended, troubles started rising. Britain wanted to govern and control its 13 original colonies and the newly acquired territories as a result of victory in the war in a uniform way. So the British Parliament in London imposed new laws and restrictions and obligations on the colonies. Previously, the colonies had been allowed a fair degree of self-governance. The first of Parliament's enactments was the **Proclamation of 1763**. It did not allow the settlement of the colonists in the west of the Appalachian Mountains. Britain wanted this land to remain in the hands of its indigenous people. There were tensions between Indian tribes (indigenous people) and Great Britain already at the end of the Seven Years War. The Indian tribes living in the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes had traded with the French for years, few French settlers without taking over their lands. After defeat of France in war, British settlers began crossing the Appalachian Mountain and moving westward (a system of mountains in the Eastern North America) in large numbers looking for good farm land. The actions of Major General Jeffrey Amherst, the British Commander of British forces in North America, also contributed to the tense relations between the British and the Indians in the final years of the war. During the war, the British and the French both tried to gain the support of a number of Indian tribes by giving their chiefs generous gifts. As military operations in North America came to an end, General Amherst decided to discontinue the practice of giving gifts to Indian chiefs and decided to cut back on trading gunpowder to the Indians. This annoyed Indigenous chiefs further. In May 1763, Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, led a number

of Indian tribes in the area of the Great Lakes in an uprising against British forces and settlers along the frontier. Many British soldiers were killed, and numerous settlers were forced to flee from the region. The Pontiac's Rebellion lasted until 1764. Though peace returned, the possibility of further conflicts with the Indians strongly affected Britain's decision to leave a standing army in America after the Seven Years War.

The proclamation of 1763 enraged colonists who had hoped to move to the fertile Ohio Valley. Many of these colonists had no land of their own. It also upset colonists who had bought land as an investment. The Proclamation affected the rich and powerful social group of American colonies as they had made investment in companies in the hope of making long-term huge profits. Some of these real estate companies were the Ohio Company (established in 1747), the Loyal Company (organized in 1749), and the Mississippi Company (1763). These companies wanted to earn big profits and their modus operandi was to get land at cheap rates from the British and resell the land to new people who wanted to settle in lands beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Some of the men who invested in these companies were big names of American history like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and Arthur Lee of Virginia and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania. Unable to obtain title for the land from the British government, the land companies could not make sales. Though agents of the companies were sent to London to argue on behalf of the land companies, the British government refused to reverse its position. The powerful and rich men who had invested in these companies suffered significant financial losses.

King George III, the British monarch, wanted to enforce the proclamation and also keep peace with indigenous Indian tribes. To do this, it was decided to deploy 10,000 soldiers in the colonies. This was done through the passing of the **Quartering Act** in 1765 by the British Parliament. Under the provisions of the Act, the colonies were required to maintain the British soldiers. This was to be done by people of colonies by providing them with residence in their houses and food and other necessities to them. So, it cost nothing to British and the upkeep of their army became an obligation of the colonies. General Thomas Gage, commander of these forces, put most of the troops in New York. Britain had incurred a huge debt from the Seven Year War and was not in a position to maintain its troops in the colonies. By making the colonies pay for its troops stationed there, British Parliament has designed a financial strategy to have the colonies pay part of the war debt. It also wanted them to contribute toward the costs of frontier defense and colonial government. Against the well-established conventions of the past, the colonial assemblies were advised by the King raise new taxes through which military operations in the colonies can be financed by the colonies themselves without burdening the already strained British Government's finances. This time, however, Parliament voted to tax the Americans directly.

An attempt was also made to forcefully implement Britain's trade laws with the American colonies. Smuggling and piracy had made it difficult to enforce Navigation laws. But now, with a substantial presence of the British Navy it was possible to curb colonial smuggling and enforce trade laws more effectively. To obtain this objective, the British government also increasingly began to use an instrument called **Writs of Assistance**. A Writ was a type of search warrant which authorized government officials to look for contraband, such as smuggled goods,

both in private homes and business premises. The writs also placed no limits on the time, place or manner of a search. In 1761, sixty-three Boston merchants challenged the legality of the process. James Otis, Jr., an attorney who had formerly represented the royal government, argued the case for the merchants. Though they lost their case, the surrounding publicity fueled anger within the merchant classes of Boston against the British government.

In 1764, Parliament passed the American Revenue Act of 1764, which came to be popularly known as the **Sugar Act**. The Act replaced the existing Sugar and Molasses Act (1733) under which the rate of tax was six pence per gallon on molasses which was imported from the French West Indies or the Dutch West Indies. Molasses was an important ingredient in the manufacture of rum which was one of New England's most important emerging industry. The purpose of the enactment was not to generate revenue bill but it was designed more as a means to regulate trade. The main objective of the Act was to support imports from the British West Indies and discourage imports from the French and Dutch West Indies. Due to wide-spread smuggling and bribery, the tax on molasses from the French and Dutch West Indies was rarely collected. So, on April 5, 1764, the British Parliament replaced it with the American Revenue Act of 1764. While the new act cut the tax on molasses in half, Britain's Finance Minister Grenville anticipated that more forceful collection of the duties would bring in more revenue. The act further empowered customs officials to have all violations of the law tried in Vice Admiralty courts rather than general courts. Vice Admiralty courts had jurisdiction over maritime issues, while general courts handled criminal cases in the colonies. Vice admiralty courts, unlike general courts, did not use juries, and Grenville recognized that colonial juries were often very considerate to popular local merchants involved in smuggling. The Sugar Act would meet with major resistance in New England where the manufacture of rum from molasses had become a major industry. Colonial leaders such as James Otis claimed that British Parliament had no legal right to raise revenue in the colonies, since people living in the American colonies had not a single representative in that Parliament. As Otis exclaimed, "Taxation without representation is tyranny!" British ruling circles disagreed. They maintained that the people of American colonies were subjects of Britain and enjoyed the protection of its laws. So, it was legitimate to tax them.

The British had their own financial compulsions as they needed more revenue for military operations in America and more troops were to be deployed in order to maintain its controls over the colonies. In order to pay the expenses involved in this military deployment in North America, Grenville proposed a **Stamp Act** (1765) for the colonies. A stamp duty was in existence in England since 1694 and proved useful in collecting revenues. Under the provisions of the Stamp Act, a tax was imposed on all legal documents. Items such as commercial contracts, newspapers, legal wills, marriage certificates, diplomas and degrees, pamphlets, and even playing cards — all were taxed in the American colonies. The Stamp Act was the first direct tax used by the British government to collect revenues from the colonies. Though there were some objections in British Parliament to imposing a stamp tax to collect revenue from the colonies, it appeared a natural law to most members of British Parliament. Another economic step passed by Parliament was what came to be known as the **Currency Act (1764)**. Bills of Credit were, like currency notes, were also issued by the government and they were in circulation as a kind of alternative currency. This act outlawed the use of

bills of credit as a medium of currency or as an alternative mode of payment by the American colonies. Bills of credit was a local answer to the shortage of silver and gold currency in the colonies. These instruments were supported by the credit of the government in a colony which issued them. Now the American traders and businessmen could not make payment and transactions with their British counterparts through this mode. This was in favour of British businessmen because the value of these bills of credits has declined in the market over the years. It led to widespread economic malfunction because now the British businessmen demanded payment only in silver and gold currency. This was unjustified because the bills of credit were also issued by the British Government and they represented accumulated credit of the American colonies.

While many colonists blamed the Currency Act for causing the downturn in the economy, there were not any extensive protests over this measure in the colonies. It was perceived by many viewed the act as an extension of those earlier power of the British Parliament. The resentment against the Sugar Act were also fairly low-key affairs as it did not affect common people though trading community especially in the New England colony was upset. Samuel Adams, who was a popular leader in Boston area especially among political clubs that had sprang up there recently, was opposed to the move and organized a movement against the imposition of Sugar tax. He, further, attempted to plead with the Massachusetts General Assembly to move in the same direction. Some Boston merchants agreed to boycott the purchase of British luxury goods in reprisal. Thus began the boycott of British goods, as a tool of colonial protest. A five member Committee of Correspondence was appointed in June 1764 in Massachusetts to coordinate action and exchange information with other colonies.

10.6 COLONIAL RESISTANCE ERUPTS: REACTIONS TO STAMP ACT

The Stamp Act was a new kind of tax for the colonies. The Stamp Act was a new tax applied within the colonies. It fell directly on all colonists. Even more, the colonists had to pay for stamps in silver coin— in a scarce thing in the colonies. Colonial leaders vigorously protested its one-sided imposition. They believed that were being taxed without their consent by a Parliament in which they had no voice. The resistance was speedy and passionate. The first official opposition to the stamps came from the Virginia House of Burgesses. On May 29, 1765, the House of Burgesses passed five resolves proposed by Patrick Henry. The Virginia Resolves tied the liberties and immunities enjoyed by Virginians in 1765 to the first two royal charters granted by King James I in the early 17th century. The third resolution boldly stated:

“That the Taxation of the People by themselves, or by Persons chosen by themselves to represent them, who can only know what taxes the people are able to bear, or the easiest Method of raising them, and must themselves be affected by every Tax laid on the people, is the only Security against a burdensome Taxation....”

The fifth resolve, the most radical of the five resolutions passed by the House, stated that only the General Assembly of Virginia had the power to lay taxes on its inhabitants. This declaration reflected the growing principle in the colonies that there could be no taxation without representation. These radical, although

expunged from the official records later by political alliance of moderate and conservative elements. Other colonial assemblies followed Virginia's bold lead. Shortly after Virginia's action, the Massachusetts lower house proposed a meeting of representatives from all of the colonies. This meeting, known as the Stamp Act Congress, met in New York in October 1765. A Stamp Act Congress was organized in New York in which delegates from nine colonies took part. This was one of the earliest instance when the colonies combined together in protest. Delegates prepared a petition to be sent to the king as a sign of protest against the Stamp Act. The petition affirmed that the Crown had no right to impose tax on the people of colonies, rather it could be done only by the colonial assemblies. The right of the British Parliament was challenged. Colonial assemblies and newspapers proclaimed—"*No taxation without representation!*". In addition to protests by colonial legislatures, mobs in numerous cities violently demonstrated against the Stamp Act. Many of these crowds often went by such patriotic names as the Sons of Liberty and the Liberty Boys. These secretive and volatile groups, often composed of printers and artisans, were led by some of the most powerful men in the colonies. Samuel Adams led the Sons of Liberty in Boston. In addition to mob violence, other groups organized efforts to boycott the British goods. Parliament finally saw that the Stamp Act was a mistake and repealed it in 1766. But at the same time, The British Parliament was ready with another legislation which was named as the 'Declaratory Act'. This piece of legislation affirmed the supreme authority of British Parliament in matters of governance and taxation. The Americans celebrated the revoke of the Stamp Act. They ignored the new legislation as simply without the real substance because they had successfully challenged the right of British Parliament in concrete manner and the Declaratory Act made no difference. A war between the British Parliament and the colonies had begun.

10.7 THE TOWNSHEND ACTS AND CONTINUATION OF PROTEST

After the political upheaval over the Stamp Act, Britain wished to avoid any further clash with colonies. Even so, it faced financial compulsions and was in need of revenue generating avenues to pay for troops and cost of administration in America. Charles Townshend, the new Finance Minister of Britain proposed three new measures that became known as the **Townshend Acts**. These consisted of the Revenue Act of 1767, the Suspension of the New York Assembly Act, and the Board of Customs Act. The Revenue Act laid new taxes on the colonies. As a measure of raising more revenue, it imposed new import duties on commodities like lead, glass, paints, and tea. The New York Assembly Act suspended the New York Assembly until it agreed to obey the Quartering Act. The American Board of Customs Act established a Board of Customs Commission in Boston to enforce the duties imposed by the Revenue Act and created new Vice Admiralty courts in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston.

However, the colonies immediately protested the imposition of Townshend duties. They had developed organizational networks and learnt mass mobilization techniques after the Stamp Act protest, the colonies quickly moved again by boycotting British goods as an effective tool of protest. Though the opposition to the Townshend duties was not as violent as the mob protests over the Stamp Act, the colonists resorted again through sending their petitions. Apprehensive

of another big upheaval, the British Parliament rescinded all of the Townshend duties in 1770 except the tea tax which was maintained as a token to demonstrate Parliament's supremacy over the colonies.

10.8 THE BOSTON CARNAGE, THE BOSTON TEA PARTY, AND THE INTOLERABLE ACTS

Nevertheless, the troubles were not over, there continued to be confrontations between British soldiers and colonists. The colonists were also angry about the writs of assistance. Many believed that the writs went against their natural rights and felt that the Townshend Acts were a serious threat to their rights and freedoms. Continued enforcement of British trade laws and the presence of British soldiers in several major port cities remained a perpetual source of these conflicts. On March 5, 1770, one such incident occurred when British soldiers in Boston fired into a mob, killing five people. The incident became known as **the Boston Massacre** and received wide-spread publicity throughout the colonies. Though there was a general outcry throughout the colonies to the Boston Massacre, the British government allowed the soldiers to be tried in Massachusetts. Six of the eight British soldiers on trial were acquitted while the remaining two were convicted of manslaughter. Many on both sides of the Atlantic felt the soldiers received a fair trial.

To protest the Townshend Acts, colonists in Boston announced another boycott of British goods in October 1767. The driving force behind this protest was Samuel Adams, a leader of the Boston Sons of Liberty. Adams urged colonists to continue to resist British controls. The boycott spread throughout the colonies. The Sons of Liberty compelled shopkeepers and traders not to sell British imported goods. The Daughters of Liberty called on colonists to weave their own cloth and use American products. As a result, imports from Britain declined sharply.

Then, in 1773, the British Parliament passed the **Tea Act** to safeguard its own interests. Tea had become a popular drink in the American colonies and large amount of it was imported illegally from Holland. The Tea Act was an attempt to put the British East India Company in command of the American tea trade so that it can tide over its financial difficulties. Under this act, the tea imported by the East India company was made duty-free and it could directly export tea to American colonies. Even though the company's tea was still subject to the Townshend tax, but allowing duty-free arrival of the East India Company's tea made it possible to sell its tea cheaper than the tea coming from Holland. It was like granting sole right to import tea to the East India Company as now only its ships carried tea to the ports of colonies and only the merchants of East India Company sold it in American markets. Earlier the consumers in Colonies had been enjoying tea coming through traders from Holland. Since most of it arrived in America illegally they did not have to pay any tax on consumption of such tea. Now even the cheaper British tea became costly as this has to pay Townshend tax on it too. Soon protests against the Tea Act took place all over the colonies. It spread to South Carolina, New York City and Philadelphia. In Boston, the Sons of Liberty organized what came to be popularly known as the **Boston Tea Party**. On the evening of December 16, 1773, a group of men boarded three tea ships docked in Boston Harbour and destroyed huge amount of tea. Some colonial leaders offered to pay for the tea if Parliament would repeal the Tea Act. Britain rejected the offer. It not only wanted compensation for the loss, but it also wanted

the men who destroyed the tea to be brought to books. The British response to the Boston Tea Party only helped in spreading the protest to other colonies, and soon all places were in flames of rebellion. It ended any hope to reconciliation with the British Crown. The British government the episode of the Boston Tea Party as a senseless destruction of private property by a group of hooligans. Instead of appeasing the colonies by repealing the Tea Act, the British government decided to punish Boston and the people of Massachusetts with a series of repressive acts which became known as **the Intolerable Acts**.

The first of these measures, the Boston Port Act, was passed in March 1774. This act provided for the closure of port of Boston and full compensation to the East India Company for the damages incurred by it and a payment to the British Government equivalent to the loss of custom duty in American colonies. The second of these measure was the enactment of the Administration of Justice Act (1774). Under this law, if any British official was found involved in a crime that was committed while performing his duty of enforcing law and order or helping in controlling a riot, then British government could allow a change of venue to another British colony or to Great Britain, instead of an American colony, for trials of such officials. The third of the Intolerable Acts, better known as the Massachusetts Government Act, was a law to done away with the popularly elected upper council of the colony and to replace it with a 12-36 nominated member council, with all its members to be nominated by the King. The fourth of the Intolerable Acts was the Quartering Act. This law was passed on June 2, 1774. Like the preceding Quartering Act, the revised rule allowed a colonial governor to make provisions for British soldiers to be housed in vacant houses and barns.

Mass protests in the colonies followed the passage Intolerable Acts. There were protests in legislatures of colonies and mass constitutional and extra-constitutional mobilization soon followed. In July 1774, George Washington, now a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, and his neighbor, George Mason, drafted the Fairfax Resolves. These resolves listed many common grievances against the British rule, called for boycott of British goods, demanded an end to the slave trade, and urged the calling of a general congress of representatives of all colonies which would make draft of a petition to the King on behalf of all colonists. George Washington carried the Fairfax Resolves to the Virginia Houses of Burgesses which took up the matter on August 1, 1774, as the First Virginia Convention, the revolutionary body which governed Virginia until 1776. Across the thirteen colonies, local groups were adopting similar resolutions to protest the Intolerable Acts.

10.9 ROAD TO REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The British goal of isolating and making an example of the people of Boston and the Massachusetts colony using the Intolerable Acts completely failed. Instead of isolating Massachusetts from the other colonies, it united the colonies against The British power. More and more people joined into the ranks of the patriots. The number of loyalists, people who supported the British government, declined considerably. This congress, known as the first Continental Congress, met briefly in Philadelphia from September 5 to October 26, 1774, to consider ways of redressing colonial grievances and became a symbol of national unity. Delegates

to this convention included George Washington and Patrick Henry of Virginia and John Adams and Samuel Adams of Massachusetts. The Congress constituted a body called The Continental Association. This body worked for implementing a public boycott of British goods in the American colonies. The Congress also gave consent to an open 'Declaration of Rights' of American citizens. It denied the British right to impose taxes in American colonies and stoutly affirmed that people of America could be taxed only by their own representative and legislative bodies.

By late 1774, provisional governments, some of which came to be known as 'Committees of Safety', took control of administration in some of the American colonies. Local militias fully armed and trained in use of arms were formed in many places to assist these provisional governments. In September 1774, British General Thomas Gage, the newly appointed as the governor of Massachusetts, took control of the guns and other weapons stored in garrisons of Charles Town and Cambridge and also began to fortify his position in the city of Boston. The British Parliament declared Massachusetts in a state of rebellion in February 1775 and authorized General Gage to use force to crush the rebellion. On April 14, 1775, General Gage was ordered to make British government in the area safe by disarming all rebels and arresting main rebel leaders. British troops left Boston on the night of April 18, 1775, to seize the munitions stored by the patriots in Concord. Patriot spies gave warning of the movement of British troops, and minutemen assembled along the road from Boston to Lexington. The conflict the next day between the British soldiers and the New England minutemen (local militiamen who can be available in a minute for military service) in Lexington transformed into a full-fledged war. Meanwhile the second Continental Congress reconvened in Philadelphia and authorized the creation of the Continental Army and, on June 15, 1775, appointed George Washington commander of the American revolutionary forces.

Some people still wavered and hoped for a peace. But finally, on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted a document that proclaimed independence—the Declaration of Independence. The core idea of the Declaration was that people have unalienable rights, or rights that If not recognized by a government then it lose the right to govern people. This is how Jefferson explained it. The people then have the right to overthrow that government and use of force for that purpose was justified. They also have a right to establish a government of their own that would recognize their rights and protect them. When Jefferson spoke of "the people," however, he had in his mind only free white men. Women and slaves were denied any rights so the Declaration was restrictive in the sense that not all people were treated equal. The Declaration gave the reasons for breaking ties with Britain and declaring colonies free and independent.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the process of growing antagonism between the British Crown and its American colonies.

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- 2) Examine the nature of resistance to of the people of American colonies against the British Crown.

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10.10 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have seen how the nature of colonies in American differed from the rest of the world, allowing them a degree of autonomy and self-governance. The relationship between changed after Britain's Seven Years War with France. The financial troubles that arose in the wake of this great war, gradually led to growing antagonism between the British Crown and the American colonies. The ethnic and religious composition of the colonies provided a uniqueness to this antagonism. This was the background of the protest and resistance that evolved in American colonies. This eventually led to a revolutionary war and final creation of United States of America. Although a republic was born after the American revolutionary war, the birth of this republic bore the imprint of social hierarchies of the day and it was in reality a republic of propertied white males. A limitation against which the democratic and civil rights.

10.11 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 10.2
- 2) See Section 10.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 10.5
- 2) See Sections 10.6, 10.7 and 10.8