

Lessons for India from

By Suchita Malik

SCOTS vote for home rule. This is the latest news on this front. Yes, the Scots overwhelmingly voted to have their own Parliament, for the first time in 290 years. *Devolution* was a major plank in the Labour election manifesto, and its sweeping victory in Scotland has clearly spelt out the preferences.

Some people in Scotland and Wales demanded complete independence from the UK for their countries. Others believed that Scotland and Wales should have their own legislature to deal with laws that directly affect their "countries". Still others favoured no change in the relations between

Scotland and Wales and the rest of the UK. So the process under which Scotland and Wales is to receive more control over their affairs is called *devolution*.

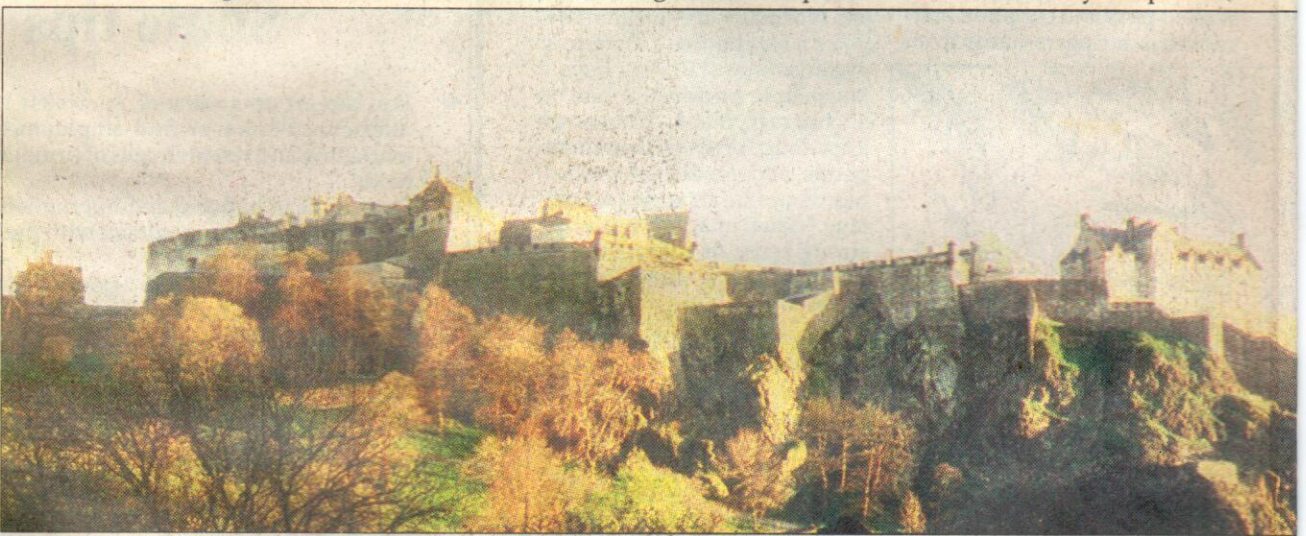
"Home rule" in case of Scotland may sound weird to many, especially those who are either not the students of English history or who have not been keeping themselves abreast of the events in what we call the United Kingdom of Great Britain. (Most of us in north India, especially Punjab, use England, Britain, UK to

mean the same thing.) But the perception of events would be altogether different in the case of a person who has had a recent opportunity of spending a good year's time in the cultural capital of Scotland — Glasgow.

"Home rule movement" is peculiar to the 20th century Indian history; it was the demand for a home rule by the Indian nationalists seeking to get out of the clutches of

in Scotland have been able to complete the process of assimilation in the mainstream. It is like an Indian Prime Minister — Indira, Rajiv or Gujral — wearing Naga or Mizo dresses and headgears to exhibit that attempt at assimilation of the far — north-eastern states. But has it happened? All of us know the answer. Likewise, the beautifully plaited 'kilt' and the bag-pipes still remain the strongest motifs represent-

groups and rulers. People owed their loyalty to a duke, king, emperor or even to the supreme religious head. The advent of Renaissance left people much more inquisitive and conscious of their rights and there was a sudden spurt of people's sense of belonging together as a nation. It included such feelings as loyalty to the nation and pride in its culture or history. In politics, it



The famous Edinburgh Castle

British colonialism. We were under the British. But are the Scots under the British? A reply in the affirmative would raise many eyebrows; one in the negative would make the event of 'devolution' look as if it's shrouded in mystery. Then, what is it? — Well, it is a clear manifestation of what we could safely term as 'regional nationalism'.

Scots have always considered themselves a nation-state. No amount of Kilt-wearing by Prince Philip or Prince Charles during their sojourns

ing Scottish nationalism.

India, as a country, is experiencing a 'nationalistic' fervour these days on account of the 50 years of Independence "phenomena". We have come a long way along with other nations of the world. There perhaps existed a timeless utopian world where bohemian instincts ruled and the words and emotions like 'nationhood', 'nationalism', 'nation-state' hadn't invaded the minds of people.

Middle ages saw the rise of loyalties among different

was represented by the belief that the government should be based upon a group of people called a nation. Gradually, a political unit called the nation-state developed along with the rise of nationalism. A nation-state existed if the nation and the state had the same boundaries. By the 1700s, England, France, Spain and several other countries had become nation-states.

Many people, on the other hand, believed that a national group had the right to form its own state. Known as the doc-

My Reading

Scottish experience

...ne of national self-determination, this belief caused many nationalistic revolutions in Europe. For example, Greece won independence from Turkey in 1829 and Belgium became independent of the Netherlands in 1830. New feelings of nationalism united the Italians and then the Germans in western Europe. Both had been divided into many states and they combined to form one country.

The unification of Italy was completed in 1870 and Germany became a nation-state in 1871. However, 20th century saw the rise of nationalism in the ancient of Asia and Africa.

'Nationalism' may be defined as a state of mind in which the individual feels that everyone owes his supreme secular loyalty to the nation-state. Nationalism inspires people to make sacrifices for their motherland; it gives them a sense of pride and an identification with their native soil. On the other hand, it produces rivalry and tension between the nations. Desires for national glory and military conquest may lead to war. Extreme form of nationalism can result in racial hatred and persecution of minorities.

The spirit of nationalism is more intense within smaller

area boundaries and the strength of this intensity lies in common identity factors such as languages, culture, theology, natural boundaries etc., or a combination of any of these. In case of larger nations like India, there has to be some common string which keeps these regional entities bound together by some common motif — like the very word *Bharat*. But when the assimilation of north-eastern states in the Indian mainstream is minutely analysed, we find a striking absence of any thing that establishes a sense of commonness between India up to Assam and the India beyond Assam. But these regionalist nationalistic feelings are much more prominent in the case of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

For most of us in India, the UK and England are co-terminus. We hardly ever, in common parlance, give its constituents of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the status they enjoy or they wish to enjoy the hegemony of the Union Jack — the Union Jack which itself was adopted by combining the cross of the patron saints of England, Scotland and Ireland on the blue ground of the banner of Saint Andrew — representing an assimilation of these nationalities. It is only after one stays on the British Isles and goes around that one realises that Great Britain of the UK has hardly ever been a single unified nation. It is more of a conglomeration of various nationalities e.g. Scots, Irish and the Welsh.

A one-year sojourn in Scotland was helpful in gain-

ing insights into these 'nation identities' — especially the way the Scots feel about the English.

It's so evident in their day-to-day life. For the first time I was caught into understanding this behaviour was at the time of final football match between Scotland and England. Tempers ran as high as these would manifest themselves in case of a final India-Pakistan hockey match. It was probably the single most important event that warranted

law and order arrangements on such a largely scale. The supporters of two teams clearly saw themselves as if the two nations were at war. It was from this event that one started picking up the threads.

The Scottish hostility towards the English is apparent even in their day-to-day

life and functioning. The stiff upper-lip, white collar approach of the English is certainly

no match for the warm, friendly and down-to-earth exuberance of the Scottish people. Their innate innocence, easy gullibility and readiness to believe others at their face-value makes them much more approachable and humane. The difference becomes all the more sharp and apparent if you are observant enough while travelling in

the underground trains of London and of Glasgow. An Englishman would maintain a stiff, calm, indifferent demeanour amounting to snobbery and arrogance. His Scottish counterpart, on the other hand, would give you a warm smile, wish you a good day and even chat with

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An exhibition in Glasgow