



NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

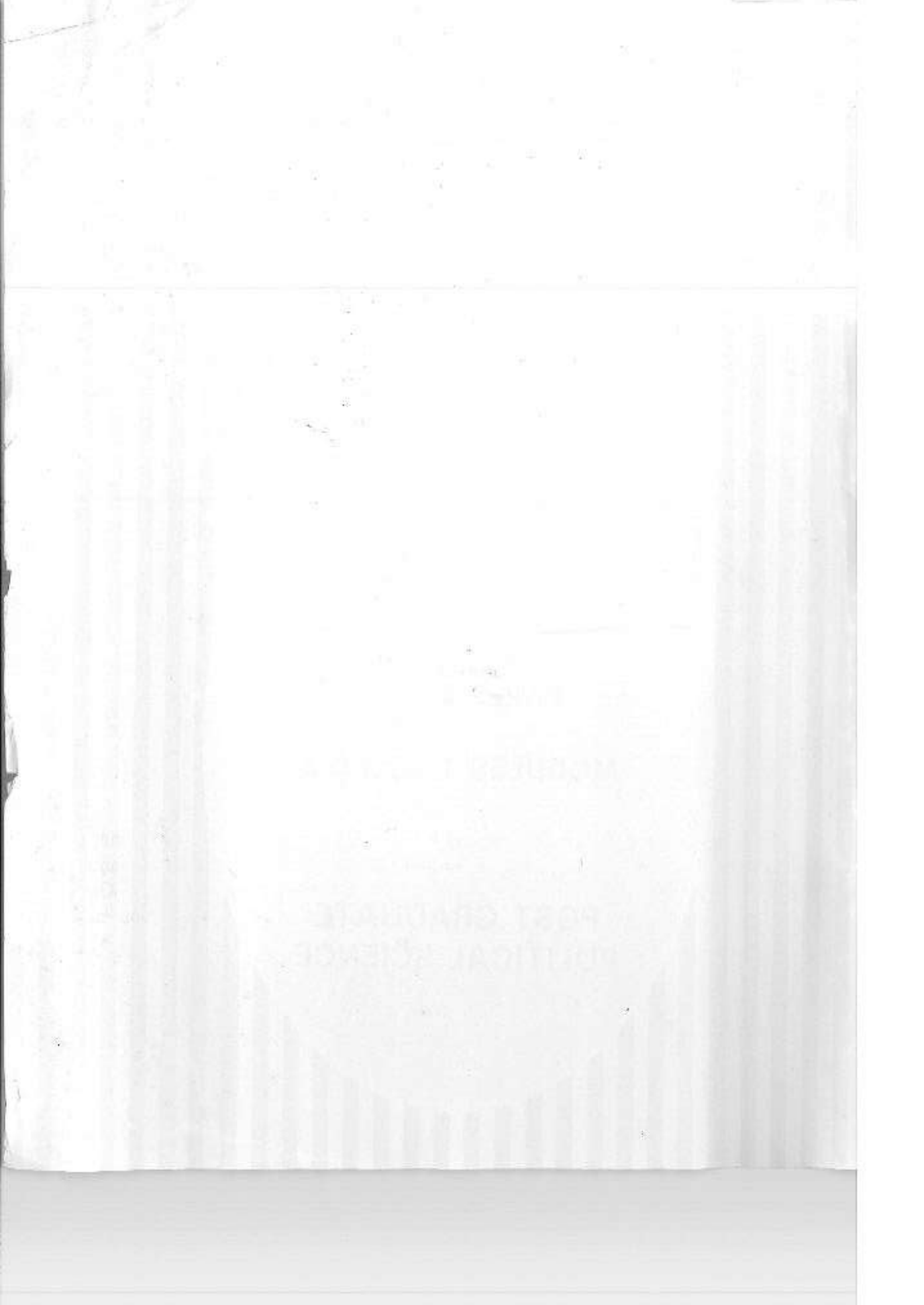
STUDY MATERIAL

PG : POL. SC.

PAPER II (Eng)

MODULES 1, 2, 3 & 4

**POST GRADUATE
POLITICAL SCIENCE**



PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post-Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post-Graduate course in subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post-Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analyses.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of proper layout of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in invisible teaching. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials, the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to the larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great part of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

PREFACE

The book is a result of the efforts of the Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, which has been instrumental in the development of the book. The book is a result of the efforts of the Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission, which has been instrumental in the development of the book.

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First Edition — May, 2015

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Printed in accordance with the regulations and financial assistance of the
Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission.

Subject : Post-Graduate Political Science

[PG : Pol. Sc.]

New Syllabus (w.e.f. July, 2015)

Paper : II

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Professor (Dr.) Debesh Roy
Registrar

Subject: Post-graduate Political Science

(PG - Pol Sci)

New syllabus (w.e.f. Jan., 2015)

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POLITICAL SCIENCE

Section I

1. Explain the concept of 'Political Science' as a discipline.

2. Discuss the scope of Political Science.

Section II

3. Explain the concept of 'Political Science' as a discipline.

4. Discuss the scope of Political Science.

5. Explain the concept of 'Political Science' as a discipline.

Course Working

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Topic

Unit 1-1

Introduction to Political Science

Unit 1-2

Political Science as a Social Science

Unit 1-3

Political Science as a Science

Unit 1-4

Political Science as a Discipline

Unit 1-5

Political Science as a Profession

6. Explain the concept of 'Political Science' as a discipline.

7. Discuss the scope of Political Science.

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Unit. 1 Concepts and Approaches in the Study of Indian Politics

Structure

1.1 Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 The Institutional Approach

1.4 The Behavioural and Structural-Functionalist Approach

1.5 The Marxist Approach

1.6 The Pluralist Approach

1.7 Cultural Studies and the Critical Approach

1.8 Conclusions

1.9 Sample questions

1.10 Bibliography

1.1 Objectives

- To impart knowledge about the different viewpoints adopted by scholars to study political structures and processes in Post Independence India.
- To take note of the evolving approaches towards an understanding of Indian politics since Independence
- To compare and classify these approaches from a historical perspective and
- To underline the major features, merits and demerits of these approaches and to analyze the points of continuity and divergence in the viewpoints represented by them

1.2 Introduction

A variety of approaches and concepts have been introduced by scholars, both Indian and foreign, to analyze and explain political realities in India. Each of these highlights certain specific issues and problems pertaining to the role of the state, various other political institutions and individuals who are major actors in Indian politics. Some of them adopt an institutional perspective and focus on the role of laws, customs, constitutional procedures and institutional arrangements which are legally stipulated to ensure smooth functioning of the government. Others focus on the actual actors on the political scene and their behavior and political orientation. They also look into the behaviour of distinct groups and communities which count more than discrete individuals in the functioning of political institutions in India. There are scholars who emphasize the pluralist socio cultural make-up of the Indian polity. They look into the diversities and regional variations which dot the political canvas in India. The Marxists look into the socio-economic foundation of the Indian state which historically evolved from a colonial to a post colonial political economy with the emergence of new social classes enjoying control over state power. While the Marxist approach lays more emphasis on the economy and the formation of social classes in particular, some new approaches have emerged in recent years with a shift of focus from the economy to the cultural aspects of social life in India having an immediate bearing on politics. While all these approaches are used by scholars in isolation from one another, there can be no denying the multiple points of intersections among those. These are also to be viewed as historically evolving at different points of time either separately or in unison. In the following, we propose to take up some of these approaches for a critical overview of their features and the historical context of their emergence.

1.3 The Institutional approach

After the initial phase of historical and politico economic discourses on the emergence of the post independence Indian State through a long and sustained battle against colonial rule through the writings of R.P Dutt, A.R.Desai, D.D.Kosambi and others, the legal-institutional approach came to dominate the study of Indian politics. Now the focus was primarily on the Constitution of India looked upon as a unique legal document which would contain an answer to each and every problem connected with administering a huge Nation-state that India represented. An elaborate study of the Indian Constitution, chapter and article wise, would highlight the composition and functions of the three branches of legislature, executive and judiciary at both the union and the state levels. A study of the

constitution would also throw light on the distribution of power and functions between the centre and the states and define basic rights and duties of the citizens of India. Another important feature of the constitution of India is the provision made in it for the protection of socio-economic, educational and cultural rights of socially disadvantaged groups and religious and cultural minorities. Scholars like D.D. Basu, M.V. Pylee, Morris-Jones and others wrote in details about the novelty of the Indian constitution and the smooth functioning of parliamentary democracy in India through the implementation of this constitution. Any deviation from strict adherence to the provision of the constitution would involve judicial intervention as a remedial measure. Interpretation of the constitution and judicial discourses would provide important insights into the nature of functioning of political institutions in India in a democratic direction. The institutional approach was further elaborated by a large number of American political scientists like Myron Weiner, Paul Brass, Rudolph and Rudolph, S.P. Huntington and others during the 1960s and 1970s. After a brief interval, when this approach came under attack from both the behavioural and the Marxist schools, it has been revived from the late 1980s onward by scholars like Atul Kohli and others. The institutional approach is primarily concerned with the role of various institutions, laws, legal and judicial pronouncements and interpretations which together constitute the core area for the study of Indian politics. Since post-independence Indian rulers have opted for a democratic form of government following the westminster model, the state is bound to be administered by the rule of law by the chosen representatives of the people periodically elected and held accountable to the people for their acts of omission and commissions. Besides, the judiciary has been given the power to protect and uphold the rule of law and thereby provide necessary checks to probable infringements of the rule of law by arbitrary actions on the part of the law-makers, supposedly sovereign in a parliamentary form of government. How effective the democratic institutions are in performing the roles assigned to those is a measure of the efficacy of the post-colonial state in India in coping up with the pressures and challenges thrown up by the rising expectations of the people of a problem-ridden country like ours. The institutional approach explores the probable areas of inadequacies in the institutional mechanisms and arrangements made in post-independence India pointing to the state's crisis of legitimacy and governability from time to time. In recent years, focus on the political institutions of the state has been revived in the wake of globalization and the rise of new demands for more effective institutionalization of the norms of a democratic way of life, from contending social classes with diametrically opposed interests and aspirations.

1.4 The behavioural and the structural-functionalist approach

From the late 1960s, under the influence of behavioural research in social sciences in the United States, a number of scholars, both Indian and western, like Rajni Kothari, Basiruddin Ahmed, Elders Veld, Marcus Franda and Osgood Field introduced this approach to the study of Indian politics. They would focus on the dynamics of individual and group behavior in shaping and reshaping political institutions and processes in India. Kothari would highlight the significance of caste as an important socio political category behaving like a pressure group in the political system, and determining the electoral outcomes in different regions of India from time to time. It was to be viewed as a dynamic social force playing a modernizing role in Indian politics. Morris-Jones would highlight the different idioms in which political practices are couched in India classifying those into traditional, modern and saintly. A series of studies on electoral behavior of the citizens were undertaken in different parts of India by individual scholars or Social Science Research Institutions located in India and abroad. The behavioural approach was basically aimed at analyzing the existing state of political affairs in the country through rigorous empirical exercises without being in a position to comment on the long term possibilities of democracy in India, exposed to so many structural and ideological challenges, particularly, from the late 1970s onward. After the crisis of the Indian state engendered by the emergency proclaimed in 1975, the behavioural approach lost much of its charm and gave way to a whole series of new approaches and perspectives. The behaviouralists were opposed to the reification of the institutional paraphernalia of the post-colonial state in India and concentrated, instead, on the dynamics of the political orientations and practices of the individuals and groups manning those. They were thus in a better position to grasp ground level political realities in all their diversities and variations than the institutionalists, missing the dynamics of the behavior of political leaders and activists. The behavioural cum functionalist approach avoided long term historical generalizations regarding the unfolding of political events and processes at the macro level and tended to ignore the role of ideology in shaping or reshaping important events in history as too abstract and metaphysical to merit the attention of scholars, richly endowed with scientific research tools and techniques with which to unravel all the mysteries of human nature and there by resolve all the paradoxes and puzzles of Indian politics. This approach, therefore, was more descriptive than evaluative, more preoccupied with the ground for stability and less concerned with the historical possibilities of socio-political transformations.

1.5 The Marxist approach

The Marxists have built up a long and rich tradition of explaining the dynamics of Indian politics through the study of the evolving mode of production of the Indian economy and consequent changes in the correlation of class forces in India. This approach, being both historical and dialectical, examines political changes in India through the dynamics of class struggle. The Marxists have always concentrated on the class essence of the Indian state. In the colonial era, British imperialism dominated the behavior of the colonial state in India. After the transfer of power from colonial to native ruling classes, the Indian state has been dominated by an uneasy coalition between the landlords, the native capitalists and the owners of foreign capital who are constantly penetrating into the Indian market. The state has been ruled by major all India parties either single handed or through coalitions decisively looking after the interests of the above mentioned classes. Studies made by R.P. Dutt, M.N.Roy, A.R.Desai, Bipan Chandra, K. Seshadri, Amiya Bagchi, Prabhat Patnaik, I.P. Desai, Randhir Singh and many others have shown how India had evolved as a class state from the colonial to the post Independence era. The working class, the peasants with or without land holding and a large number of working people in the unorganized sector of the economy, have continued to suffer from socio economic exploitation and repression by the state machinery. The ongoing struggles of these under classes throw up major challenges to the state causing chronic political instability and crisis. The Marxist approach emphasizes the forces and processes of political change more than those accounting for the tenuous stability of the post- colonial state. Unlike most other approaches, the Marxist tradition has survived a much longer span of time. It came under clouds following the debacle of socialism in Russia and the resurgence of global capitalism from the 1990s. But the basic premises of the Marxist approach to politics are no less valid now than before in so far as building up a critique of the injustices of capitalism is concerned. Besides, contemporary proponents of the Marxist approach to politics in India have started revisiting their approach of class determinism by adopting a multi causal analytical view of politics in an attempt at indigenizing Marxism.

According to Partha Chatterji, Marxist accounts were better able to explain conflicts and the repressive use of state power as systemic features of Indian democracy. However, much of the literature, especially from theorists working within rigid frameworks laid down by party programmes, was dominated by a sterile debate over what was called the class character of the state. More nuanced accounts, which tried not only to describe enduring structures of class power but also specific changes in political processes and institutional

practices, began to emerge only in the 1970s. The key idea was that of a coalition of dominant class interests. Even though the constitutional form of the new Indian Republic was that of a liberal democracy, its character was necessarily different from that of the advanced capitalist democracies of Europe or North America. This was because the Indian capitalist class did not have the social power to exercise hegemony. Hence, it had to share power with other dominant classes including the traditional landed elites. Marxist, or more generally political economic, accounts were often strong in describing the central structures of state power and their relations with dominant organized forces in Indian society, but when it came to connecting such an account with local societal institutions and micro-level political practices, they were on much less sure ground. The dominant class coalition model, as a variant of the classical Marxist approach to Indian politics, was given a robust theoretical shape by Sudipta Kaviraj in an essay written in 1989 in which, by using Antonio Gramsci's idea of 'the passive revolution' as a blocked dialectic, he was able to ascribe to the process of class domination in post colonial India its own dynamic. Power had to be shared between the dominant classes because no one class had the ability to exercise hegemony on its own. However Sharing was a process of ceaseless push and pull, with one class gaining a relative ascendancy at one point, only to lose it at another. Kaviraj provided a synoptic political history of the relative dominance and decline of the industrial capitalists, the rural elites and the bureaucratic-managerial elites within the frame work of the passive revolution of capital. Following the new turn in the global capitalist economy from the 1990s, the correlation of classes in post-colonial societies like India underwent a substantial transformation which would be reflected in the unstable behavior of the Indian State. The Marxist approach now had to grapple with new problems and challenges faced by the working class and the peasants. As the state gave up much of its welfare activities providing relief to the various segments of the exploited classes while counting on their electoral support for the coalition of ruling classes to stay in power, chronic political instability and crises of diverse magnitudes engulfed both state and society in India. The upshot was the emergence of new social cleavages disrupting erstwhile mobilization of the downtrodden along class lines. Society was now being increasingly fragmented into discrete identity groups based on caste, religion, language, region and ethnicity working at cross purposes with the homogenizing appeal of class. A simple, class based analysis was found to be inadequate in explaining all the new conflicts and tensions arising between and among all such groups. Marxists have now to find new ways of analyzing the coexistence of the pulls and pressures of globalization with those of a resurgent parochial culture afflicting the rulers no less than the ruled.

1.6 The Pluralist approach

As a rejoinder to the Marxist approach which is viewed as mono causal because of its over emphasis on political economy and class, the pluralist approach to Indian politics referred to a whole range of factors shaping political institutions and processes in India like caste, community, tribe, religion, region, language and others. The pluralists lay stress on the diversities in the socio cultural make up of India and relate the same to the specificities of the behavior of the Indian political system. Authors like Kothari, Brass, Rudolph and Rudolph, Frankel and Rao, Weiner and Iqbal Narain have touched upon the theme of plurality and diversity of India in a number of their writings. They are of the view that politics in the Indian context is a multi faceted phenomenon which can be explained and understood only through a multi causal approach probing not only the economic basis of society but also the most complex cultural dimensions of life in India. In other words, according to this perception, the super structure, far from being dominated by the economic base in India, might go a long way to determine the same. Much of contemporary studies on Indian politics tend to be influenced by the pluralist tradition of scholarship. The pluralist approach highlights the fact that Indian political culture is marked by elements of both tradition and modernity happily coexisting both temporally and spatially. Traditional bonds of family, kinship and caste refuse to die under the spell of various modernizing institutions and ideas. Sometimes, these act as modernizing elements in the new political set up upholding secular, western and cosmopolitan norms and values. Politics in India in its modern democratic forms is played out more at the regional and local levels than at the national one. The pluralist perspectives lay stress on the dynamics of state and regional politics which decisively shape the outcome of political processes at the national level. Most of the All India Political Parties derive their support bases and legitimacy from the responses they get from the people of the different provinces and also from localities within each province. They have to cater to the political aspirations of their followers at the regional level so that they would be able in the long run to amass enough clout at the national level. Explaining the electoral success of the Indian National Congress during 1947-67, Rajni Kothari argued that it was basically the coalitional character of the party that had enabled it to gather support from diverse segments of the Indian society represented by caste, class, religion, ethnicity and other identities. Once the congress started giving up its coalitional character and becoming more regimented and centralized leaving behind its regional moorings, it came to be rejected by the people. In its quest for unlimited power at the center, the congress had to give up its democratic pretensions and

opt for an authoritarian regime. But given the plurality and the diversity of the cultural mosaic of Indian society, such a regime would only be short lived and soon to be replaced by a more fluid and flexible political formation that was to give due weightage to the local and the regional pressure groups offering them a share in the exercise of power at the all-India level. According to the proponents of the pluralist perspective, India has remained a vibrant democracy for more than six decades mainly because of there being so many voices of dissent and so much of cultural dissonance. Any attempt at homogenizing political culture in India through the invocation of any symbol or ideology, be it religious or secular, is bound to be counterproductive in the long run. It is for this reason that the idiom of either liberalism or Marxism in its western form is inapplicable to the Indian situation. Rather, a more flexible and multi causal approach should be adopted to capture the many-sided wonder that India happens to be.

1.7 Cultural Studies and the critical approach

Following the pluralist point of view, a new genre of writings have emerged in recent years focusing mainly on the ways cultural norms and values are constructed and deconstructed through a variety of institutional and discursive practices in a multi cultural society like ours. Such practices involve the play of power creating a social hierarchy and legitimizing the same through a continuous process of marginalization of a large chunk of people who are made to remain subjugated to a few. This approach is mainly borrowed from Foucault who in his study of governmentality has shown how power is exercised in the modern world through the use of language, social texts and various cultural practices which relegate the basic social structures to the background. This approach, also defined, arguably, as post-structural or post modernist, gained currency in the academic world following the collapse of socialism and the advent of the era of globalization. In the new context, politics appears to be inexplicable with reference to any grand theory or what may be called a meta narrative. The focus is now shifted to the regional and local aspects of the use or abuse of power through various forms of discursive manipulation while the national or global aspects of politics are left unexplained. Study of marginal groups, tribal or gender minorities who have so far been neglected in the grand theories of politics now takes the central stage while exploitation and oppression of subjugated classes are overlooked. The concepts and categories used by the proponents of this approach have not yet become sufficiently intelligible to ordinary students of Indian politics.

1.8 Conclusion

The concept and approaches so far analyzed for the study of Indian politics are not exhaustive; nor are they mutually exclusive. The basic concern of most of the approaches is to examine the nature of the Indian state that has been evolving overtime and undergoing various challenges thrown up by the multi cultural social milieu and also the economic problems confronting the state and the people. So far as the broad general philosophical viewpoint is concerned, the approaches we have discussed belong to either the liberal or the Marxist traditions. But there are considerable amount of ramifications in both these traditions. The liberal approach underwent transformations from a liberal-modernist stand point to a pluralist-behaviourist position and finally it has drifted to what can be described as a post modernist perspective. Similarly, the Marxist approach shifted overtime from a mono causal, political-economic perspective to a more comprehensive analysis of the socio cultural bases of politics taking the factors of caste, gender, tribe and environment along with class into consideration. It also began to focus on the relative autonomy of the post colonial state in India. The major concerns of most of the approaches remained the exploration of the interrelationships of state, class, community and the nation as these have been imagined by statesmen, politicians and the common people. A major problem with most of the approaches is their western and what following Edward Said can be defined as the orientalist bias that is responsible for distortion and misrepresentation of Indian realities. Only recently some attempts have been made by scholars and thinkers to develop a non western perspective on social and political life in India passing through the experiences of both the colonial and the post colonial institution building processes with considerable amount of ambiguities and ambivalences.

1.9 Sample questions

1. *Broad questions :*

- (a) Discuss some of the major concepts and approaches to the study of Indian politics.

2. *Short-essay type questions :*

- (a) Comment on the institutionalist approach to the study of Indian politics.
- (b) Analyze the evolving nature of the Marxist orientation to the study of Indian politics.

3. Short questions :

- (a) Discuss the major points of the pluralist viewpoint on Indian politics.
- (b) Do you notice any change in the views of Rajni Kothari regarding Indian politics during the post 1977 period?

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Unit 2 □ Institutionalizing Democracy

Structure

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Background
- 2.4 Features of democratic institutions
- 2.5 Institutionalizing social equality and justice
- 2.6 Institutionalizing democracy in practice
- 2.7 Conclusion
- 2.8 Sample questions
- 2.9 Bibliography

2.1 Objectives

- To gather an idea about the evolution of democratic institutions and practices in India since Independence
- To understand the social and political back-drop to the emergence of democracy following India's Independence
- To highlight the role and significance of the Constituent Assembly of India formed in 1946 towards institutionalizing democracy through the making of the Indian constitution
- To critically observe the role of newly created political institutions in building up a democratic polity in India over the years

2.2 Introduction

India is arguably regarded as the largest political democracy in the world. It emerged as a sovereign, democratic nation- state in 1947. The functioning of this state called for a suitable institutional arrangement whereby power should be exercised on behalf of the

people of the post colonial state. The exercise for institution building in the new state was started even before India had achieved its long awaited freedom. In 1946, the Constituent Assembly of India came into being as a brain child of the Cabinet Mission for the purpose of framing the constitution of India. Its members were drawn from the provincial assemblies and the princely states. The draft of the constitution was finalized in 1949 after prolonged deliberations amongst the members. The constitution became operative on and from 26th January 1950. The constitution has since passed through a series of amendments over the last six decades to keep itself adequately responsive to the changing needs of time. Apart from the constitutional exercise, various other institutional innovations have been made by policy makers in India from time to time.

2.3 Background

The constitution of India, the largest written legal document of the 20th century, marked the emergence of India as a sovereign, democratic, republic bestowing all power of law making in the hands of the representatives directly elected by the people. In fact, the constitution itself was regarded as a document prepared by the representatives of the people in colonial India. The members of the Constituent Assembly chosen by the provincial legislatures were supposed to represent one million people each. To them was added another 93 members nominated by the princely state. It also ensured representation of the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs as three distinct religious communities, Proportionate to their respective population. Of the major political formations in India at the time of independence, the Indian National Congress, the communist party of India and some independent members finally joined the Constituent Assembly as representatives of the people of India. The objectives of the constitution were placed in the form of a resolution by Nehru and would be subsequently incorporated in the text of the constitution as its Preamble. The constitution lays down the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice as the major pillars of democracy in India. It also gives due weight age to the principle of upholding the nation's unity in diversity. It pledged to protect religious and cultural rights of various minority groups. The Constituent Assembly was unanimous in its choice of universal adult franchise for periodic election of the representatives of the people in both the union parliament and the state legislatures. It envisaged a democracy that would be federal in structure with suitable distribution of power and resources between the union and the states. Another important feature of the constitution was its upholding the principle of both separation of powers and coordination of functions among the three branches of the government namely the legislature, executive and judiciary. Although the constitution of

India did not confer the power of judicial review on the Supreme Court of India, it nevertheless provided ample scope to the judiciary to ensure that law making by the legislature would not be at cross purposes with any of the provisions of the constitution. In other words, the judiciary was to be looked upon as the guardian of the constitution.

2.4 Features of democratic institutions

The institutionalization of democracy in India pre-supposes the supremacy of parliament following the Westminster model of Great Britain. This is confirmed by the constitutional provisions for the election of a republican head of the State in the person of the president of India who is indirectly elected by the representatives of the people in the union parliament and the state legislatures. The powers and functions of the president of India as the head of the state are also clearly laid down by the constitution and to be duly observed by him or her in the discharge of his or her responsibilities. During the tenure of Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the first President of India, a controversy arose regarding the authority of the president vis a vis the Prime Minister. Nehru as the then Prime Minister of the country categorically observed that in a parliamentary democracy like India the President should not claim any independent executive authority and must abide by the advice of the council of Ministers, directly elected by, and also accountable to, the people. Another significant institutional feature of India's democracy is its adherence to the norms and practices of secularism. The term secular did not figure in the text of the constitution at the time of its adoption. It came to be incorporated in the preamble to the constitution only in 1976 by a constitutional amendment. The spirit of secularism as understood by the framers of the constitution and also the people in general is tolerance for all existing religions without any discrimination and also the state's refusal to recognize any religion as sponsored or promoted by the state. The right to propagate and practice any religion has been recognized as a fundamental right of all citizens of the country. The significance of this right is to be understood in the context of there being so many minority religious groups in India, in a situation where the Hindus constitute more than 80% of the total population.

2.5 Institutionalizing social equality and justice

The concern for social justice is an important institutional requirement for democracy in India. As social inequality based on caste, class, gender and ethnicity is rampant in Indian society afflicting the lives of millions, suitable institutional mechanisms to remove such inequality is called for. The constitution took note of the practice of untouchability and proclaimed its abolition in all forms through suitable legislation to be made by parliament

from time to time that would declare it an offence and decide the magnitude of punishment for such practice. Accordingly, the parliament passed an act in 1955 which however failed to achieve the desired objective and a new law under the title of protection of civil rights act was promulgated in 1976. For the protection of members belonging to the backward communities including the scheduled castes and tribes, a number of laws have been enacted from time to time including constitution of commissions for periodic review of their socio economic conditions as per directives of the constitution. In recent years, as democracy in India has come under new challenges with various marginal groups raising their voice against oppression and injustice, a number of measures, both legislative and administrative, have been undertaken by the state to mitigate the sufferings of such groups. The national human rights commission, national commission for women and the commission on minorities are some of the major institutional exercises undertaken to strengthen the institutional basis of India's democracy. Commentators and critics have often pointed out that India has championed the ideal of democracy right from the days of anti colonial movements but in the post colonial era institutional practices of democracy in India leave much to be desired. More innovations to transfer political power and economic resources to the social underdogs are called for to ensure the success of democracy.

2.6 Institutionalizing democracy in practice

Democratic institutions have survived the various onslaughts of paternalism, dynastic despotism, casteism and communalism to see through as many as sixteen elections to the Lok Sabha and formation of duly elected representative governments. Judiciary in India has been agile and active, army and bureaucracy sticking on to the 'steel frame' as their inheritance from the colonial state. They have not dabbled in the electoral and parliamentary political processes on their own without overt or covert prodding from political parties the legitimacy of which is subject to periodic contestation. The centralizing symptoms of Indian democracy notwithstanding, state power is more inter cursive than integral, autonomy of the constituent units of the Indian federation (the constitution calls it 'a union of states') and local self-governing institutions is guaranteed along with protection of cultural rights of minorities and backward communities through the provisions of the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Here again, the 90s brought about some remarkable innovations through constitution of a number of commissions for women, minorities and one on human rights. The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts passed in 1992 harnessed decentralization of rural and urban development as a prelude to good governance. Empowerment of women and the disadvantaged segments of society

also have been institutionalized around the same time. Since 1991, single party dominance at the center became a thing of the past, until the recent parliamentary elections which have brought about an overwhelming majority for the BJP and reduced the opposition to near insignificance. The BJP, however, continues to uphold the coalition under the banner of NDA and thereby keeps alive the tradition of coalition politics. As observed by Partha Chatterjee in a recent interview to a National Daily, the combined strength of the BJP and the Congress in the present Lok Sabha amount to 327, only three seats more than it was in the previous election while non-Congress, non-BJP members account for 216 seats. The BJP gained more seats in the last election at the cost of the Congress but the overall pattern of party pluralism remained a dominant feature of the 16th Lok Sabha as before.

India has firmly entered the era of coalition politics. This seems to suggest that since the Lok Sabha election held in 1991, the hold of a monolithic party structure on the levers of state power has ceased to characterize India's democracy and a process of political churning cutting across caste, class, region and religion has begun to unfold itself. Thus neo-liberal orthodoxy's de-recognition of the state as the march of universal reason has precipitated, willy-nilly, a process of decentering and fragmenting politics wherein the region gets the better of the nation. Scanning electoral data of the last six elections to the Lok Sabha during 1991-2009, one is struck by the gradual erosion of electoral support of the two major all India parties, i.e., the Congress and the BJP. Regional political parties deciding the shape of the coalition government at the center mostly fill in the void. For instance, in 2004 the 14th Lok Sabha elections witnessed a clear sign of loss of credibility on the part of the two major all India parties, leading two grand coalitions, namely the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) respectively. While the BJP contested 364 seats and won only 138 securing 22.16 % of valid votes polled, the Indian National Congress contested 417 seats, won 145 and secured 26.53 % votes. Taken together, the two enjoyed the electoral support of less than half the country's electorate. Regional and state level parties on the other hand secured nearly 33% of votes polled and 174 seats. In 2009 also the same trend persisted with the ruling UPA coalition led by the Congress just managing to hold power with 10 seats short of an absolute majority and depending on support from parties outside the coalition. Hence, the politics of black mail, corruption and chronic vulnerability of a fragile coalition to all sorts of regional pressures has been the order of the day. The BJP led coalition, dreaming in the meanwhile to stage a comeback is no better in strength, either numerical or moral. And the left, after years of ideological ambiguity and equivocation has received a bad drubbing in the 15th Lok Sabha elections, temporarily being reduced to political insignificance within the

corridors of parliamentary politics. Such weakening of India's centralist state has inadvertently facilitated the federalizing process in recent years, with instances of central intervention into the affairs of constituent states getting minimized. After the sixteenth Lok Sabha elections, the political scenario has changed decisively with the present ruling coalition enjoying an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. However, going by electoral support of individual parties, the BJP had only 30% of the total electorate supporting it in the last election.

Regional political forces are thus in a position now, than ever before, to thwart all attempts at arbitrary exercise of power by either of the blocks, NDA or UPA ruling at the center against various state governments. Students of Indian federalism have pointed out that instances of central intervention into the affairs of duly elected state governments through imposition of President's Rule, are gradually on the decline. Whereas between 1952 and 1987 (the year of publication of the Sarkaria Commission's report) such instances numbered 75, between 1987 and 2002, there were 25 such instances. And it has gone down further since then. One can feel the presence of regional parties as the key players at central level under the changed scenario, epitomizing a change in 'the rules by which the center-states game has been played for the last fifty years'. This might facilitate broadening the democratic space in India, presently undergoing much social turbulence and upheavals. Mohanty looks upon these 'as the mark of a creative society where hitherto subdued contradictions have come out into the open', being 'the result of the activities of deprived groups, or sections among them, struggling for the realization of their democratic rights'.

While all these augur well for India's democracy in the new millennium, the practice of democracy leaves much to be desired. Poverty, illiteracy and ill health still remain unattended to by the power that be, at all levels of government—union, state and local. Violence perpetrated against dalits, women and children by both the state and society virtually excludes the nation's majority from the benefit of majority rule. The new global economic dispensation has caused further marginalization of retrenched workers, evicted slum and forest dwellers and farm laborers alienated from land. While an increasing concern is being expressed for protection of human rights and environment, denial of both is embodied in the ongoing practices of democracy.

Dreze and Sen inform us that there are about 30 million cases pending before courts in India. 'On an average it takes twenty years for a dispute to be resolved, unless real estate or land is involved in which case it takes longer. If present rates of disposal continue and there are absolutely no new cases, it will take 324 years for us to clear the present backlog. The conviction rate is only around 6 pc'. All the democratic aspirations generated

by the hype of judicial activism have to be viewed against the crucible of concrete practices geared to protecting and honouring citizen's rights. It will not be out of place to mention in this connection that as many as 18,110 civilians have been killed in Kashmir by security forces during 1990-2005. Going by Home Ministry reports, around 6,000 of them were supposed to have links with foreign terrorist groups. Even the remaining 12000 deaths in 15 years in a single region of the country, inflicted in the name of combating terrorist menace, speak volumes against glimmering hopes of a so called creative society, imagined into existence by India's post- globalization democracy. Dreze and Sen make a more sober appraisal of the current situation with the observation that 'there is much scope for making institutionally democratic India more effectively democratic'. Experiences of people inhabiting the northeastern region of the country are no better as current media reports would testify from time to time. Atrocities against helpless women perpetrated by the keepers of law make a mockery of our much-vaunted democratic practices. If to these are added the communal carnages merrily overlooked, if not overtly instigated by democratically chosen representatives of the people belonging to major political parties, democracy assumes a terrorizing image in India, notwithstanding the assertion of civil society and new social movements which are supposed to slim down the all pervasive nation-state in an era of globalization. The practice of Indian democracy in recent years amply demonstrates that 'the logics of democracy and capitalism' are not 'fully congruent' under all circumstances as rightly noted by Kaviraj.

2.7 Conclusion

To have a more objective and dispassionate view of democracy, the linkages of its three dimensions as an ideal, an institution and also a form of practice in the specific context of Indian history and society must be addressed. In a sense, living democracies anywhere in the world have an aura of uniqueness about them. American democracy with its deep anguish for civil liberties and human rights, which it vowed to protect in Iraq and Afghanistan even by means of their extinction, if necessary, earned the distinction of having the largest prison population of the world (more than 2 million at present). Soviet democracy, with promises of bread and freedom for all, failed by the 1980s to deliver either and collapsed in 1991 as a house of cards. Whether our democracy is better than either may be debated but that it is different from either in more ways than one is indubitable and this may be the starting point for exploration of our democracy in the post-cold war global context since 1991.

In the 90s, our democracy has been hamstrung by the siamese twins of globalization and communalization. Paradoxical though it may sound, we are becoming more communal while going global. The ascendancy of the Hindu right from late 1980s which is being counter balanced by a global upsurge of Islamic fundamentalism and fanaticism, has made the putative 'clash of civilization' look like real. Secularism in the multi cultural context of our society was founded on religious tolerance and syncretism unlike in the West which did not have to face the challenge of a multi-religious culture in preaching and propagating its secularism. Our democracy had been called upon to preserve and promote secularism as a civilizational principle and not as mere state craft since independence. It is amusing to note that we were more secular at a time when the term 'secular' did not formally exist in the text of the Constitution than we are after the inclusion of the same in the Preamble to the Constitution of the land, following the 42nd Amendment Act in 1976. Political elites of various ideological strands have read too much in the western idiom of secularism in their haste to transform the post-colonial Indian state into a replica of the liberal-democratic West without much innovative thinking. This has sharpened religious divisions contrary to the principle of unity in diversity embedded in our tradition. Globalization, through forcible homogenization of culture facilitated by the market and the media, has caused further assault on our indigenous cultural ethos and deprived India's post-colonial democracy of the benefits of multiculturalism. As western democracy becomes increasingly disfigured in a homogenizing world, the challenge of building up newer forms of democracy rather than duplicating what in the West has already lost its shine becomes inescapable. It is in this new global context that we have to revive our 'argumentative' tradition as suggested by Professor Amartya Sen, bearing in mind his aphorism that 'silence is a powerful enemy of social justice'. Our democracy to be different, but vibrant nevertheless, has to overcome 'silence' while meeting the challenges 'from the theology of the market place to theocracy'.

2.8 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Discuss the processes of institutionalization of democracy in India since independence.
- (b) Assess the role of the constituent assembly of India.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) Did the constituent Assembly truly represent a democratic character? Argue your case.

(b) Comment on some of the major shortcomings of democratic institutions in India.

3. Short questions :

(a) What are the institutional mechanisms for promoting social justice in India?

(b) What are the basic features of Indian democracy?

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Unit 3 □ Communalism and Secularism in India

Structure

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 The meaning of secularism in historical context
- 3.4 Causes for the spread of communalism in contemporary India
- 3.5 Conclusion
- 3.6 Sample questions
- 3.7 Bibliography

3.1 Objectives

- To define and analyze the concepts of communalism and secularism in the specific context of political institutions and practices in post independence India.
- To present a broad historical overview of the emergence of communalism as a modern phenomenon in colonial India and the movements for secularization of politics during both the colonial and the post independence periods.
- To trace the factors responsible for communalization of politics in recent years and identify political trends towards secularism.
- To find out a non western meaning of the concepts of both communalism and secularism suitable to the cultural experiences of India

3.2 Introduction

The nexus between religion and the state was the hallmark of mediaeval Europe. Loosening of ties between the two marked the advent of modernity and the process of secularization followed. Religion was to be the marker of community identity but was not to interfere in the determination of citizenship rights vis-à-vis the state. Theorists of modernity and modernization described religious loyalties as primordial and parochial and as incompatible with secular loyalty to the nation state. The dichotomy derived from a

Eurocentric wisdom was naively universalized and the marvels of science and technology securing ever more control over the forces of nature reinforced the belief in the dichotomy. The optimism, so generated, about secularization of politics has, however, been belied by political experiences, both in the East and in the West. Anti-Semitism in Germany and Russia was counterbalanced by Zionism in Israel during the last century. Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan and Afghanistan had its counterpoise in the consolidation of Hindutwa in India, a self-proclaimed secular state. Palestine has been a perennial victim of political terrorism resorted to by fanatic-Jews and Muslims frantically in search of roots. From the search for fundamentals of religion, as the basis for community to the articulation of religious fundamentalism, making use of the devices of the global, electronic media, is the new trajectory of political discourse in our post modern times.

It will be futile to trace bigotry and dogmatism in this or that particular religion or to identify this or that community as the *bete noire* for modern civic culture. Contrary to impressions created by protagonists of religious fundamentalism of all hues, faith in God is on the decline all over the world. In place of the pre-modern practices of 'thick religion', what we have is a 'thin religion' happily co-existing with modern science and technology and sometimes even pressing the 'secular' state in its service as rightly put across by Sudipta Kaviraj. To keep religion and politics in place is not always possible in such a fuzzy situation, as we learn at our cost from the experiences of south Asia where much of the political battle for control over state power is fought on the issue of secularism vs. communalism. Since religion as a basis for articulation of group-mind is common in this region, political processes integral to state and nation building have been mediated by the consolidation of religious identities through ages. Politicization, initiated from above by the nationalist elites, has, willy-nilly, politicized the religious ethos of South Asian countries, leaving a wide space for interaction between religion and politics cutting across various sites of both the state and civil society. Secularism and communalism in such a historically and culturally specific context became overlapping categories more continuous than discrete. The root of the confusion lies precisely in the fact that secularism as an ideology 'has emerged from the dialectic of modern science and Protestantism, not from a simple repudiation of religion and the rise of rationalism', as rightly contended by T.N. Madan in a very perceptive article. Madan further observes that theorists of modernization prescribe the transfer of secularism to nonwestern societies without regard for the character of their religious traditions or for the gifts that these might have to offer. Such transfers are themselves phenomena of the modern secularized world: in traditional or tradition haunted societies they can only mean conversion and the loss of one's culture, and if you like, the

loss of one's soul. Even in already modern or modernizing societies, unless cultural transfers are made meaningful for the people, they appear as stray behaviouristic traits and attitudinal postures. This means that what is called for is translation, mere transfer will not do. In a different context, Andre Beteille underscores the same point while probing the complex relationship between religion and politics in a pluri-cultural society like ours. He writes 'if civil society is pluralistic and tolerant in its very nature, then it would be absurd for it to wish to expel religious institutions from its fold or to denigrate its beliefs as a form of false consciousness. Our constitution is based, I believe wisely, on the separation between religion and politics and on their mutual toleration. Civil society must find ways of creating and nurturing secular institutions but that objective is likely to be hindered rather than helped by the adoption of a militantly secular ideology'. It is this problem of translatability of 'secularism' and not its mechanical transfer to the alien cultural soil of India, marked by diversity and pluralism that haunted Nehru till the end of his life. The apostle of the Indian version of a 'secular' state, Nehru was struggling to define it. The concept of Dharma Nirapekshata failed to accommodate the multi-religious ethos of Indian society. The idea of Sarbadharma Samabhav appeared to be a closer approximation, keeping the Indian context in view. But this entailed the Knotty Problem of dragging the Indian state since independence from a position of equidistance to one of equi-proximity vis-à-vis all religions. Concern for power and pelf and consolidation of vote banks in a multi-party parliamentary democratic system opened the floodgates for all parties openly bashing and / or appeasing religious groups with impunity. The secular-communal divide turned into a conceptual nonsense in the process. Self-styled secularists attribute the guilt of communalism to this or that specific community, counted numerically as majority or minority to keep their conscience clear. Thus we have such funny coinages as Hindu communalism, Muslim communalism, Majority communalism and Minority communalism, freely resorted to even by the Marxist left in India. What these self-styled dispensers of truth and reason fail to cognize is that the ordinary Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists inhabiting India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and wedded to the religious mode of articulation and expression of their socio-cultural lives find little sense in the western conception of secularism. That, however, does not deter these so-called community minded, pre-modern and non-westernized people from the course of offering whatever semblance of resistance one witnesses against communalism in these countries, even at the cost of their lives. A series of micro studies of communal violence undertaken by scholars in recent years will testify to this. The misplaced search for communalism in politics in the hold of religion over the public sphere in the South Asian context has been put under scanner by Rajni Kothari, Asish Nandy and Madan. In their views, irreligiosity rather than the religious basis of

communalism is to be made the target of any intelligible anti-communal discourse in the culturally specific context of South Asia. The focus on religion as the foundation of communal politics, axiomatic to the reason of colonial power with its universalizing discourse of modernity, but appropriated by the main stream national popular ideology in this region as well rather naively, has served the diametrically opposite purpose of throwing religious minded people to the communal wolves.

3.3 The meaning of secularism in historical context

The sharp difference of perception about religion between Gandhi and Nehru brings out clearly how inter-religious understanding can be a mightier force to combat communalism than confused secularism. Gandhi refused to divorce politics from religion and used religious idioms and symbols without any inhibition. But he stood firmly against all attempts at communalization of politics through continuous invocation of India's syncretic culture engulfing the lives of her illiterate, rural, poverty stricken masses. The message of religious tolerance that Gandhi inherited from Nanak, Kabir, Mccrabai, Sri Ramkrishna and Swamiji was a more formidable guarantee against communalism as Gandhi had proved at the cost of laying down his life. Nehruvian secularism appears hollow, compromising and at times pandering to communal forces for narrow political gains, in contrast. It will suffice to mention here the political imbroglio in Kerala during 1957-59 when the first communist Ministry was formed and subsequently unseated by the Congress Government at the centre with Nehru at the helm and Smt. Indira Gandhi as the President of the All India Congress Committee. The issue around which the communal campaign was launched against the communist government in Kerala concerned mainly the two secular bills on land reforms and primary education respectively. As the two bills were passed in the assembly with popular mandate, extra-parliamentary means had to be adopted by the communal forces with overt prodding of the Congress leadership in 1959. The ministry was ultimately dismissed through the use of Article 356 of the constitution. Nehru was not found to be much perturbed by such communal power game undoing India's much vaunted secularism.

The elite perception of secularism in India is marked by an innate sense of superiority and cultural arrogance aiming towards secularization of the recalcitrant communities through an official discourse meant for the 'public' space. The language, symbols and practices engendered by this discourse repel the collective commonsense of an overwhelming majority of people inhabiting the interiors of civil society. Amartya Sen, the renowned philosopher- economist who claims himself to be an unreformed secularist, takes note of

this widespread uncasiness about the official discourse of secularism and observes, 'secularist intellectuals in India tend to be somewhat reluctant to debate on this rather unattractive subject' and rely 'on the well-established and unquestioning tradition of seeing secularism as a good and solid political virtue for a pluralist democracy'. And this is so despite the fact that there are multifaceted forms of skepticism expressed by scholars and intellectuals cutting across the ideological spectrum against the politics of secularism in India. It may be recalled that scholars from Marx, Tagore and Gandhi to Rajni Kothari in more recent times have, irrespective of the divergence of their views, pointed to the marginality of the state in India where society had its own mechanisms and institutions for resolution of social conflicts and a whole series of ideas and values operating independently of the state. This age-old autonomy was assaulted by the post colonial state, marginalizing that very segment of society for which the state only existed marginally before the onslaught of modernization had begun. The cultural dissonance thus brought about through the appearance of the state as the 'source of all goods' has engendered some paradoxical consequences. It has replaced 'pre-modern community bonds by a rational, calculating bond of unity seeking privilege if the community is numerically large and preferential treatment from the state, if it is small in number. To this may be added the other major factor of the emergence of the second generation, vernacular elites in post-independence India, who are, according to Sudipto Kaviraj, more conversant with indigenous cultural ethos, including manipulation of religious symbols and practices, and at the same time adept in the competitive power game of parliamentary democracy. Together, these have contributed significantly towards communalizing all spheres of social life and invading all religious groups. Understanding between communal groups, easily arrived at now replaces interreligious understanding in the short sighted and unethical strategies of political coalitions which give free reins to communalism of all hues. Armed with an ill conceived notion of secularism, the Indian state has failed miserably to contain the communal power game. Thus demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 with the Congress in power at the Centre and the near genocide in Gujarat in 2002 when the BJP dominated NDA had been ruling the country show starkly the Nation State's vulnerability in the face of communal assault on its secular fabric.

The left in India has failed to clear up the conceptual muddle centering round secularism. Given its antipathy to all pre-modern institutions and ideas, it has not gone beyond the Nehruvian conception of rationalism and secularism and found itself unreconciled to the homespun cultural vision of Gandhi or even Tagore. Once the working out of this inadequate perception of secularism, in practice, compromised with post-modern

communalism as testified by the large number of communal riots breaking out in urban areas and their fringes in a number of Indian provinces with overt or covert prodding of the arms of the state as in Ayodhya or Gujrat in 1992 and 2002 respectively, fresh thinking was called for. Notwithstanding the many heroic and uncompromising battles fought by the left in India most valiantly against the menace of second-generation communalism, it failed to work out a theory of secularism, more indigenous than either the pseudo secularism of the Congress or the communalism of the BJP-Jamaat-Muslim League vintage. On the electoral front the left has lost the battle to both and can hardly derive any comfort from the fact that the BJP has wooed the voters away from the Congress at the hustings and that the Congress in retaliation is helping a non-BJP combination to out-manoeuvre the BJP with neither side having any foreknowledge of the stands of their allies on the issue of communalism. Besides, the two dominant communist parties, together with their Marxist allies refused to acknowledge the fact that the electoral battles they are so deeply entrenched in at the moment, scratch only the surface layer of politics leaving the interior of the civil social space open to communalizing forces. It is this vast terrain that has so far eluded penetration by either the liberal nationalist discourse or a fully indigenized Marxist discourse and hence remained the helpless victim of manipulation by communal ideology—a false consciousness but very real nevertheless. Malini Bhattacharjee rightly points to the gap in the thinking process of the left in India. She writes ‘the struggle for the left in the area of culture today is a struggle for the recovery of its own independent language, i.e., its own independent perception of social change. To think of culture as a mere ancillary of politics has on occasions been a failure of the left’.

3.4 Causes for the spread of communalism in contemporary India

Constitutionally speaking, all political parties are secular in India by self-proclamation. Since, most of these parties contest elections and take part in parliamentary democratic practices as parties in power or in opposition they have to embrace the credo of secularism. Ironically, it is the same competitive electoral politics of the vote banks that propel most of the political parties to embrace, willy-nilly, the agenda of communal bashing or communal appeasement. This was anticipated way back in 1936 by Jawaharlal Nehru in the thick of the national movement when he said, ‘it was not religious difference as such but its exploitation by calculating politicians for the achievement of secular ends which had produced the communal divide. Nehru was candid in his admission that communalism was

the means deployed to achieve 'secular ends' and that it was a political strategy resorted to by 'calculating politicians' and not an acting out of blind faith in any religion. Students of Indian political thought have brought into bold relief the secular underpinnings of communalism by comparing the political biographies of Lajpat Rai and Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Lajpat Rai had his initial education in Urdu. He knew very little about Hindi- Hindu-Hindustan throughout the period of his upbringing. Hindu cultural nationalism, the essence of Hindu communalism according to Savarkar, Golwalkar and their contemporary drummer boys in the BJP-R.S.S. Shiv Sena-Bajrang brigade, had failed to catch his imagination. It was, in his own admission, the loaves and fishes of colonial education and job opportunities that led to communalization of nationalist politics at the dawn of the 20th century, through the almost simultaneous founding of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League – the self-styled spokesmen for the Hindus and the Muslims respectively. Both the outfits had, for obvious reasons, a very poor track record as nationalists. The associations were also least concerned with the well being of their respective community people. One may refer to Lala Lajpat Rai's comments, demystifying communalism in this context. He writes, 'it is certain that as long as government services and the profession of law continue to be the mainstay of our educated countrymen, the antagonism between the Hindus and Mohammedans, which is economic in its basis, will not close. It is a fight for loaves and fishes. It begins with educated men (and now also women as witnessed in Gujrat during the communal genocide in 2002) and then filters downwards by a natural process to the masses.' Jinnah, the apostle of Pakistan, arguably the chief protagonist of the two-nation theory and a hardcore Muslim communalist to that extent, also had little fidelity to Islam, very poor knowledge of Urdu and strong penchant for the western way of life. He presented a stark contrast with the antics and idiosyncrasies of the Mahatma and came closer to Nehru ideologically in terms of his political pragmatism and rationalism. For him, to play the Muslim card in nationalist politics was a secular device to avoid biting dust as junior partner of the Congress. This communal strategy of Jinnah would be replicated by Smt. Indira Gandhi during the 1970s in the Indian sub-continent through building up a political alliance of the Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims – known as the KHAM. The KHAM would constitute Smt. Gandhi's vote banks in elections both country wise and state wise.

The Hindu Mahasabha, at the time of renovating itself into the Bharatiya Jana Sangha in October, 1951 under the maverick leadership of Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, also was basically striving to work out a right of the centre political coalition opposed to both the

Congress and the Indian left- predominantly represented by the Communist Party of India. Tracing the evolution of the Jana Sangha from early 1950s to its metamorphosis into the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in April, 1980, B.D.Graham observes, 'under Mookherjee's leadership, the Jana Sangha had remained in touch with the main currents of liberal opinion, but henceforward it would be much more closely identified with the severe Hindu nationalism of the RSS. In the process, it would become more defensive, more provincial, and more responsive to the attitude of the lower middle class of the northern towns and cities. Since the days of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, the face-mask dichotomy has been skillfully manipulated by the leadership of hindutwa politics to reap electoral dividends. Balraj Madhok writing in 1973 underscored the ambiguities arising out of this dichotomy between the face and the mask of the Jana Sangha and the destabilizing impact this had on the organizational make-up of the party. In his words, 'the organizing secretaries who happen to be the real power in the Jana Sangha, having been conversant only with the working system of the RSS want to run Jana Sangha on the same lines. They have nothing but contempt for democratic forms, norms, and conventions. Dissent of any kind is anathema to them. They want to suppress all dissidents in the name of discipline. They are interested more in control than in growth of the party. That is the real problem and dilemma of Jana Sangha which will have to be resolved one day. The sooner it is resolved the better it would be for the RSS, the Jana Sangha and the country'. How could what is good for the RSS also be good for the country is anybody's guess! Be that as it may, the dilemma Madhok had in mind concerning the two-faced monstrosity of his party was sought to be resolved during the 1990s by a two-pronged strategy of the BJP to woo voters cutting across caste, class, race, gender and ethnicity through a flexible choice of regional allies abiding by the compulsion of coalition politics on the one hand and whipping up mass hysteria around swadeshi, Hindutwa and cultural / vernacular nationalism on the other. That the BJP could outrun the Congress in the strategy of coalition building is demonstrated by the remarkable electoral dividends it could procure in the various elections held during the 90s. This period was also marked by all round degeneration and decomposition of the Congress coupled with its aversion to share power with regional parties through coalitional strategies and the consequent opening up of larger spaces for the BJP to trample. The rise to power of the BJP first in 1998, followed by its second stint for a term of five years between 1999 and 2004 can't be explained away as wanton communalization of the political space in India's democracy. It was caused by the decline of the Congress and the success of the regional partners of the BJP in the National Democratic Alliance. Electoral support for the BJP actually declined from 28 P.C. in 1998 to 25 P.C. in 1999. Surprisingly, for the Congress there was a downslide in the number of seats won but with

an increase in popular votes. The difference between the Congress and the BJP has been most cogently depicted by Satyabrata Chakraborty as one between 'Confused secularism' and 'competitive communalism'. Referring to a series of communal imbroglios in Punjab, Kashmir, U.P. and Ladakh in one broad sweep and probing critically into the Indian state's complicity in the process of communalizing politics overtly or covertly, Chakraborty shows how both the parties and by implication all others in the electoral fray, pandered to 'majority Hindu communalism' with an eye on the vote banks and then followed it up by a policy of appeasement of the Muslim or the Sikh minorities, making a mockery of the much vaunted Principle of secularism. In the light of such analysis, it is better to look upon communalism as a principle of group mobilization, instilling a greater sense of group solidarity and group identification. Communal groups take part in the secular domain of politics, as so many pressure groups with specific politico-economic demands and their accent on communal identity depends on rational political calculations informed and influenced by such factors as rural-urban differential, ideological divide and class interest and class consciousness. This is as true of the Hindus as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and other religious communities inhabiting India. It is not surprising that the BJP contested the 16th Lok Sabha election with the slogan of development without invocation of the ideology of Hindutwa in any form in its efforts to win over the Muslims who had lost all faith in the credo of secularism as propagated by the Congress over so many years. The success of the BJP in its electoral campaign was achieved only at the expense of the Congress and of parties which had stood by the ideology of confused secularism of the Congress. Parties opposed to both the BJP and the Congress recorded better performance in the electoral battle. The AITC, AIADMK, BJD are cases in point.

3.5 Conclusion

Let us conclude the discussion with a brief interrogation of globalization as aiding or abating the growth of religious fundamentalism and inter community hostilities in recent years. The question is often raised in the light of recent happenings in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Palestine, India and Pakistan as to whether by going global we are becoming more and more communal. It will not be out of place to refer to Joseph Stiglitz, the author of *Globalization and its Discontents*, in this connection. Commenting on the costs and benefits of globalization, he observes, 'if in too many instances, the benefits of globalization have been less than its advocates claim, the price paid has been greater, as the environment has been destroyed, as political processes have been corrupted, and as the rapid pace of change has not allowed countries time for cultural adaptation. The crises that have brought

in their wake massive unemployment have, in turn, been followed by longer term problems of social dissolution – from urban violence in Latin America to ethnic conflicts in other parts of the world, such as Indonesia'. The arrogance of power on the part of those who could lay hands on most of the resources delivered by globalization, depicted so poignantly by Noam Chomsky in his *Peering into the Abyss of the Future*, has given rise to communal hatred, community bashing, and ethnic cleansing. Attacks on the colored people in London, Protestant-catholic strife in Northern Ireland, tension between the English and the French in Quebec, ethnic hatred against immigrants in France, communal divide between the Turks and the Greeks in Cyprus, between the Christians and the Muslims in Lebanon, communal and ethnic strifes in Africa and the Far East, conflict between the Jews and the Muslims in Palestine and the communal imbroglio involving Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and other minority groups in India reaching its nadir in the massacre of thousands of innocent Sikhs in Delhi in 1984, consequent upon the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya on 6 December, 1992 followed by mass hysteria and communal atrocities and the carnage in Gujarat in 2002 leading to mass rape, arson, loot and murder of innocent people with active connivance of the BJP led state government, are cases in point. The orgy of violence and dehumanization in Gujarat has finally sensitized most of the Indian citizens to the fact that after globalization 'whether the world has become small or not, man has become small and communalized increasing tension and violence'. Old community centric communalism of the feudal era has now been replaced by the market oriented communalism under prodding from the owners of finance capital. The Viswa Hindu Parishad has its headquarters in U.S.A. and its leaders enjoy clouts in the foreign policy circles in that country in rabidly propagating anti-Muslim venoms. It openly advocated India's support to U.S. aggression against Iraq in return for crumbs it could utilize in organizing communal propaganda and ethnic cleansing at home. The All India Sikh Students Federation- another communal outfit had its head quarters in Canada. Pakistan has been a safe sanctuary for many Islamic organizations perpetrating terrorist attacks in different parts of the world, including primarily India. Thus globalization has appropriated communalism or religious fundamentalism in its stride. In the changed political ambience the world over, modern communalism employs new techniques of violence and propaganda and makes calculated selection of sites, targets and perpetrators. The carnage at Gujarat both Godhra and post Godhra is an eye opener in this respect. It unfolds a new discourse on capital, community and class at a time when capitalism in India has been desperately striving for accommodation into the global economy by committing hara-kiri at home while

the working class being badly let down by both their trade unions and the governments both at the centre and in the states, including even those ruled by the Marxist left parties, is regrettably non-resistant.

In the new millennium, the working class in India betrays a mood of abject submission and surrender in places, which had been its strong holds the other day. Booming townships in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, U.P. and Delhi, under the magic spell of market friendly economic reforms and recipients of huge amount of foreign funds, are the sites of communal violence and ethnic cleansing under the new dispensation. The rich and the upper middle class, known for perpetrating violence against their own community people, the poor, the marginal and the women, to be more precise, are now up in arms against 'other' communities becoming their easy prey. Globalization has acted as a facilitator of this refined and sophisticated process of defacing a civilization that was suffused with a human spirit through thousands of years.

3.6 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Discuss the historical background to the emergence of communalism as a modern phenomenon.
- (b) Elucidate the major problems in the way of secularization of politics in post independence India.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) What, according, to you are the major factors responsible for the resurgence of communalism in recent years?
- (b) How will you define secularism in the Indian context?

3. Short questions :

- (a) Define communalism.
- (b) How far is it correct to identify India as a secular state?

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Unit 4 □ State and Nation Building in India

Structure

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Historical background
- 4.4 State and Nation building following independence
- 4.5 Conclusion
- 4.6 Sample questions
- 4.7 Bibliography

4.1 Objectives

- To present a broad overview of the emergence of nationalism in India.
- To analyze the points of similarity and contrast in the emergence of the nation state in the western countries and in India.
- To identify the major problems of both state and nation buildings in post independence India.
- To highlight the importance of imagining India more as a civilization than as a nation state.

4.2 Introduction

India emerged as a modern nation state in the wake of its independence in 1947. This historical fact was preceded by more than a century of the struggle of the Indian people against British colonialism. The concept of nationalism in the Indian context, is, therefore, bound up with the various turns and twists of this protracted anti colonial movement. Besides, the very idea of India as a nation has remained problematic during both the colonial and the post independence periods of its history. In a sense, India is still 'a nation in making' following the ideology and political practices of the democratic state that came into being after independence. According to many observers of the political scene in India,

the process of nation-building in India only began after the arrival of the post-colonial state unlike in great western countries like France, England and the U.S. where nationalism had been the outcome of major social revolution led by the new anti feudal, enterprising classes which were the spokesmen of the idea of nationalism as a historical prelude to the formation of large, democratic states. Historically, in their case the nation preceded the state. In case of India, a vast civilization surviving several millennia, the historical trajectories of nation and state buildings were quite different. It is therefore necessary to underline the basic features of the Indian civilization from a historical standpoint.

4.3 Historical background

Before the mid nineteenth century, there was hardly any reference to nationalism in India. As it comprised a large number of communities with hardly any common religion, language or culture, one could only refer to so many different identities marked by discrete symbols and practices. The Indian civilization was known for its diversity which could only occasionally be overruled or accommodated by great empires during the ancient and medieval periods of history. The first attempts at unification of India both as an administrative unit and also a composite, pluri-cultural entity began in the 19th century as the outcome of a two-way process of building up of a colonial state by the British rulers on the one hand and initiatives of socio cultural reforms and regeneration of the traditional community centric social life in India at the behest of a number of social reformers and educationists, on the other. The introduction of the print medium along with setting up of several industries in various parts of India together with the emergence of a small group of western educated elites in such places acted as a catalyst for the initial momentum of nationalism. This put India into a very tricky situation. The Indian elites with the newly conceived imagination of the nation came in conflict with the colonial rulers who would like to use the idea of India to represent a strong and centralized colonial state having its hold deeply ingrained in all parts of the geographical territory that they could lay hands on. This conflict of vision between the colonizers and the natives had its manifestations in various spheres of life and also an important bearing on the future course of state and nation building in India.

The exposure to western education on the part of the small number of Indian elites generated in them new aspirations to recreate the western experiments in nation-building in their native land. This would however entail confrontation with the colonial state interested in strengthening its hold on the diverse regions and people inhabiting the colonial space. Particularly after the sepoy mutiny of 1857, the colonial state became more apprehensive about the intentions of the native elites and consequently embarked on a

policy of dividing their potential rivals through the typical colonial carrot and stick policy. The people of the country came to be identified increasingly through community markers. As the nationalist minded elites tried to form an organization in the shape of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the colonial state began to pamper the two dominant religious communities of the Hindus and the Muslims by rotation to weaken the efforts of the former. The great thinkers of India like Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Tagore, Bankim Chandra, Swami Vivekananda, Nauraji, Gokhale, Tilak and Ranade who had been striving for the unity of India amidst its enormous diversities had to grapple with this colonial policy at their respective points of time. One probable way out for them was to invoke the idiom of Hinduism as an all encompassing religion that would act as a binding force in the overall anti colonial mobilization. The other option was to invoke the syncretic cultural tradition of India cutting across religious divisions that would ultimately forge unity of the Indian people amidst bewildering diversities of language, region and culture. As Indian nationalism began to work out a political programme directed against the colonial state, differences in approaches cropped up between those who would adopt a policy of compromise with colonial rule in order to gain a partial share in state power and those who would go for an all out attack against colonial domination. Historically, these two groups of nationalist came to be known as moderates and extremists. Neither of them did however try to carry the battle to the level of the common people of the country, particularly the peasants, the tribes, the dalits and the women, not to speak of a nascent working class that had already arrived on the political horizon. The communal divide between the Hindus and the Muslims remained a permanent blot on the rise of militant nationalism in India. It alienated a large number of rational minded people from the course of the movements because of their communal overtones. This would be partially resolved with the advent of Gandhi on the Indian political scene with a new mantra of political mobilization of all segments of the Indian people cutting across caste, class, region, religion and gender through invocation of the idea of truth and non violence. Perhaps it would not be wrong to suggest that the first major attempt at nation building in 20th century India was started by Gandhi. The 1920s saw further escalation of the nationalist movement with the large scale involvement of the working class and the peasant masses. Various segments of the socialists and the communists came to supplement the initiative of Gandhi in organizing a major anti colonial struggle. The period from 1920-47 witnessed large-scale mobilization of the masses for the nationalist cause but the same could not over rule the multiple cleavages of the Indian society fractured by caste, class, community and religion, above all. The nationalist elites, notwithstanding their noble intentions, could not win the confidence of all segments of society driven by the impulse of autonomy of their respective identities after the withdrawal

of the colonizers. Sections of the Muslim elites began to propound the two-nation theory that would secure complete autonomy to the Indian Muslims through the creation of a separate nation-state for them. The depressed classes or the untouchables among the Hindus were equally apprehensive of the domination of the upper-caste Hindus in post-colonial India in the absence of adequate legal-institutional measures adopted to safeguard their discrete identities, if not also their socio-economic interests, in the post-colonial state-building exercises. They were persuaded to withdraw the demand for a separate electorate in the 1930s through considerable amount of political manoeuvres by the leadership of the Congress. They were assured of the benefits of the constitutional provisions for reservation of seats for them in the elective bodies, proportionate to their population along with educational and job opportunities through the introduction of the quota system, following the provisions of the Constitution of India Act, 1935.

4.4 State and Nation building following independence

The end of the colonial era brought along with it the partition of the nation and the agenda of a united Indian nation state so dear to the dreams of Tagore, Gandhi, Subhas Chandra, Maulana Azad and Nehru remained unrealized. Far from obliterating all forces of disunity and disruption, the post colonial Indian state had to grapple with a whole series of violent movements challenging the very basis of the Indian nation. The newly emerged state embarked on a policy of all round development of all the different regions and segments of people through the successful operation of democratic ideas and institutions. Nehru as the architect of both the post colonial nation and the post colonial state conceived development along the lines followed by the modernized West as the panacea for all the ills of the new nation state. The task of nation building would hence forth be borne by the state following the Nehruvian vision. The intervention of the post colonial state, therefore, altered the trajectories of nation building in India. Sovereignty and security of the state would be accorded priority over giving due recognition to differences and diversities which would demand a more flexible and decentralized state machinery. The outcome of state centric development would gradually become counterproductive with the churning of new social groups hitherto left outside the purview of the post colonial nation state. Another point to be noted in this connection is that India has long remained a multinational society caring less about an all pervasive state. Some scholars want to view India as a nation-state and not the nation-state *per se*. According to observations made by the Anthropological Survey of India, there are as many as 4635 discrete communities in India providing the basis of an integrated nation-state. Needless to say, such plurality cannot be adequately

represented by an over arching state. Both Tagore and Gandhi were aware of the difficulty of transplanting the western model of state and nation building artificially into the Indian soil. While Tagore penned a sharp critique of the very concept of nationalism as borrowed wisdom, Gandhi laid stress on village based models of socio economic development through harnessing popular initiative from below rather than taking up large scale state sponsored development projects with least involvements of people at the grass roots level. The project of state and nation building in India following Independence overlooked the vast terrains of diversities and differences marking a wide array of identity formation, each claiming due recognition and also a set of rights to be conferred on them by the state so that the ultimate objective of building up a viable nation may be accomplished without hurting the sentiments of any such group. As many scholars have pointed out, India is a land of minorities and migrants with no particular group or community ever in a position to attribute to itself the sole authorship of the nation. State and nation-building, to be meaningful exercises in a vibrant democracy that the Indian state would imagine itself to be, has to take care of the rights and opportunities of its teeming millions living in fields and factories, forests and hills facing all sorts of difficulties and disabilities, notwithstanding the fact that they fought heroic battles in the colonial days just for the realization of those very rights which are now being withheld from them by the post-colonial elites in their umpteen manoeuvres towards state and nation-building in post-colonial India.

4.5 Conclusion

Elite perception of politics in India presents a blissful indifference to the question of rights which they consider to be the exclusive domain of discursive practices rooted in western modernity. India with nearly 80 p.c of her population qualifying as citizens since independence but hardly considered right bearing ones as in the west can't be logically part of this discourse of modernity. Mainstream literature on politics in India, therefore, does not mumble over rights of workers in both organized and unorganized sectors, agricultural labourers, poor peasants, women workers and unemployed (?) housewives, dalits, adivasis and socio-economically marginalized minority groups, leaving this exercise to the care of social activists. Political activists are worse suspects as their field level experiences, memoirs and pamphlets churned out by them from time to time do not qualify for being serious academic stuff to be delivered in the classroom. Let us take up an extreme case of the rights of prisoners detained without trial in post independence India's prisons. In his autobiography, published recently, Jolly Mohan Kaul, a communist whole timer during 1940s- early 1960s, recounts his experiences in jail during '1948-1951 to show how even

rights which were protected by the colonial state would be withdrawn with impunity by the post colonial state boasting of its emergence as the largest democracy under the sun. He writes: 'The British, when detaining 'terrorists' without trial had, however, been forced to give them certain facilities: cots, bed sheets, pillows and blankets. The exact specifications were laid down, including the clothes to be provided... The quantum of food was specified and included fish and meat in reasonable quantities as well as rice and rotis or bread. More importantly, prisoners were allowed newspapers and books of their choice. Certain types of books such as those preaching violence were proscribed however. Further, those who had been working and had families were sanctioned a family allowance so that their families could survive while the earning members were in prison. These rights had been won by the prisoners in the Andamans and other jails after prolonged struggles and hunger strikes during which many lives had been lost.... We were being given none of the facilities that detenus under the British regime enjoyed. Apart from the food that was at par with what Division II under trials were given, there were none of the other privileges; not even newspapers and books of our choice. It was clear that sooner or later we would have to start a struggle for these facilities. It was evident that our period of incarceration would be long and books would be essential. Those who had been earning as employees or as self employed persons, and had families were concerned about ensuring that their families did not starve.'

This suggests a remarkable continuity between the subject status of a political prisoner under colonial rule and his citizenship rank in the post colonial dispensation. This despite the fact that ordinary Indians had a long history of struggle for rights under protracted colonial rule and hence, they were conversant with the nature of diverse rights they would be called upon to protect and preserve. Adivasis in India fought for their rights over forest for earning their livelihood during last 250 years. Lower caste groups fought many battles against upper caste domination beginning from pre colonial days in order to assert their economic and cultural rights- pre-eminently their right to live with dignity. Women from lower caste-class origin, considered easy prey for sexual gratification of the upper caste, propertied men through centuries, fought against the patriarchal norms and values that would confer on them the status of 'fallen' women. The history of colonial rule marked more by savagery than 'governmentality' à la Foucault provided unwittingly the nursery for Indian people's taking lessons on rights, both individual and community rights. Even the constitutional exercises made by our nationalist leadership through the Indian National Congress or through mass organizations of workers, peasants, women, students and youths expressed concern for and unleashed initiative in drafting a series of rights considered

essential for the subjugated colonial people. The nature of the rights underlined by such exercises was three fold. There were rights demanded from the colonial state as the legitimate institutional agency to fulfil its obligations to the subject people. Then, there were rights claimed against this state in the form of the right to resistance-rights most unlikely to be fulfilled by an oppressive state. Finally, there were rights claimed by individuals and communities against an oppressive society governed by rigid principles of hierarchy, patriarchy and inequality. In most instances, such rights were recognized by the laws of the state but derecognized in prevailing social practices and intercourse. The point to be noted in connection with this long history of Indian people's movement for rights during both pre colonial and colonial periods is the prevalence of a discourse on rights, long before it would be offered as a gift of western modernity to the subject people of the colonies. Perhaps, the only right which is conspicuous by its absence from the pre modern discourse on rights in India is the right to private property! It had to wait for recognition till the advent of colonial legality, pre-cminently the introduction of the provisions of the permanent Settlement Act of 1793. Women were sensitized about their right to life, education, even gainful employment and involvement in public life by social reformers like Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Panditia Ramabai, Iravati Karve and by nationalist leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas Ch. Bose, Sarojini Naidu and a whole genre of socialist and communist leaders during the 20th century struggle for freedom. Peasant movements from the days of Wahabi and Farazi movements, the Moplah revolt in the south, Tebhaga and Telengana peasant uprisings during the fag end of the anti-colonial struggle championed the cause of the peasants' right to till the land and have a fair share of the produce from land along with the right to use water resources for irrigation free of cost. The small industrial work force that emerged from the mid nineteenth century struggled hard for years to clinch the right to form associations and place demand for suitable wages and better living conditions before the employers. The trade Unions Act was forced into existence by the Indian working class in 1926, following formation of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920. A long history of working class movements preceded these two land marks. Orientalists, not only in the west but also in India, gloss over this history of the Indian people's concern for rights and their long drawn struggle both during pre-colonial and colonial days for securing many of these rights individually or through community initiative. L. Rudolph has, in a critique of Lucian Pye's book entitled Asian Power and Politics raised the question 'does the urge for freedom, anger at oppressive old regimes, and the desire for justice and equality really reside only in the west?' Rudolph concludes his critique with the following observation.

Pye's version of oriental despotism leaves one at a loss to account for national transformations in Asia over the last forty years. Can narcissistic leadership and servile subjects account for the purposiveness and great accomplishments of Chinese and Indian planning and politics, and for the creation, in India, of a self-reliant agrarian and industrial economy and a viable democracy?'

Orientalist discourse has from Hegel to Lucian Pye followed an episteme that projects the people of India, the Orientals as passive object of knowledge of the orientalist knower, represented as per the latter's imagination, without any right of imagination of their own. This perspective, barring the honourable exceptions of Gandhi and Tagore who have received a marginal space in the main stream scholarship on society and politics in post colonial India for obvious reasons, has informed the nationalist and even the Marxist radical interpretation of Indian politics both colonial and post colonial and has been transmitted across generations to courses of studies in political science in India. The point is now to change this epistemic practice. So far, all attempts at nation building through the intervention of the post colonial state in India marked by glaring indifference to the enormous heterogeneity of the socio cultural mosaic of the country have resulted in more separatism, divisiveness and cultural conflicts posing a threat to national integration. The instances of Jammu and Kashmir, the north-east, the Jharkhand and occasionally of Punjab testify to the potential for disintegration built into all such state building exercises marked by forcible and even repressive homogenization. Linguistic and regional aspirations of different communities often raise their voices for suitable accommodation in a federal and highly decentralized form of state building truly representing the spirit of diversity in unity lack of such spirits as manifest in the functioning of a centralized state has been a major impediment to nation building in post independence India.

4.6 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Bring out the major issues related to state and nation building in post independence India.
- (b) What are the basic problems regarding formation of India into a nation?

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) What are the major constitutive elements of the Indian nation in making?
- (b) Elucidate the role of the state in nation building in contemporary India.

3. Short questions :

- (a) Indicate the major points of difference in the process of nation-building between India and the West.
- (b) Elucidate the contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru in the process of nation building in India.

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Unit 1 Federal System and Independence of the States

Structure

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Definition of Federation
- 1.4 Indian Constituent Assembly and the Federal System
- 1.5 Evolution of the Indian Federation
- 1.6 Nature of the Indian Federal System
- 1.7 Conclusion
- 1.8 Sample questions
- 1.9 Bibliography

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the unit is to understand to very nature the federalism in India as it has evolved in its post-independence years with emphasis on its recent friends.

1.2 Introduction

The nature of the Indian Federal System is a debatable issue and there is a difference of opinion amongst the political scientists whether India can be called a Federation or not. Paul Apple bee defined India as 'extremely federal' (Applebee, Public Administration in India, 1953; 51, D. D. Basu, 1999 : 69) whereas Santhanam and other political scientists regarded 'India has practically functioned as a Unitary State...' (Santhanam, Indian-State Relations in India, 1960 : vii, 51, 59, 63, D. D. Basu, 1994 : 69). Let us start with a short introduction of the nature of Indian federation without further going deep into this debatable issue.

1.3 Definition of Federation

Definition of Federation is a debatable matter. Much have been discussed about

federation starting from Dicey and Birch. Without complicating the issue let's start with simple and short definitions of federation from the ancient to the present days.

The word federation has been derived from a Latin word 'foedus' which means covenant. It was first used in the Holy Book of 'Bible' to signify a 'partnership' between God and His people. Later on, political scientists used the word 'federation' in a different manner. It has been used to denote the inter-relationship between the central and state governments.

We get the traditional concept of federation from the writings of various political scientists like Dicey, Bryce etc. The main thrust of their discourse is that in the federal structure there are two types of government—the union and state which co-ordinate and yet are independent within their own spheres.

This dualistic concept of federalism has been criticized by the propounders of functional theory of federation who nullify the traditional belief that the union and the state governments co-ordinate and yet are independent within their own spheres. The functional theorists of federation give importance to the inter-dependence of the central and state governments.

The functional theory of federalism also lays stress on the concept of 'co-operative federalism'. A. H. Birch defines 'co-operative federalism' as "...the practice of administrative co-operation between general and regional governments, the partial dependence of the regional governments upon payments from the general governments, and the fact that the general governments by the use of conditional grants, frequently promote developments in matters which are constitutionally assigned to the regions" (A. H. Birch, *Federalism, Finance and Social Legislation in Canada, Australia and the United States*, London ; OUP, 1955 ; G. Austin, 1966/199 : 187)

Presently political scientists like Whites, Elazar etc., lay stress on different tenets of federalism. Here we will try to discuss two such principles very briefly. The two principles are shared rule and self rule. That is both the central and state governments rule to deliver the universal objectives and to uphold the unity of the country on the basis of power sharing between the two units. On the other hand to safeguard the interest of states self rule of the state governments have also been recognized. Many political scientists like Wheare etc., sight the example of United States of America as the best form of federation. However many political scientists believe that there is no ideal model of federation, for the same type of political structure cannot and has not been produced in different countries.

1.4 Indian Constituent Assembly and the Federal System

Let us now discuss about the different opinions of the framers of the Indian Constitution in regard to the evolution of the Federal System in India. India is a large state; so large that sometimes may be called a continent. Here people belonging to different culture and speaking different language like Bengali, Bihari, Gujrati, Marathi live side by side. The framers of Indian constitution thought the federation would be the most appropriate model for this multicultural state. With time changes have been incorporated to the initial structure of federation which the framers of Indian constitution envisaged.

Initially the framers of the Indian constitution wanted to build a federal structure in line with that of the United States of America. The proof of which we get from Jawaharlal Nehru's eight point suggestions in which Nehru demanded that the constituting states should be as autonomous units. (J. Dasgupta, 2001 : 53) Nehru also demanded that the residuary powers should belong to the state governments as that of U.S.A.

The original design of establishing federation in India can be traced back to the Freedom Movement. The Indian National Congress recognized the multicultural diversity yet at the same time wanted to enhance national unity of our country. Political Scientist Jyotirendra Dasgupta believed that Congress always tried to maintain a balance between central rule and regional powers (J. Dasgupta : 50-52)

However a different form of federal structure was established in India. When the Constituent Assembly was drafting the constitution, India was passing through a very bad phase. At that time India witnessed communalism, hindu nationalism, muslim separatism etc., which led to the division of the country into India and Pakistan. (Paul Brass, 2000 : 60-61). Due to such crisis the members of the Constituent Assembly decided to set up a federation in which the central government would be predominant.

1.5 Evolution of the Indian Federation

The history of the evolution of federal structure is not the same for every country. In United States of America thirteen independent states voluntarily signed an agreement to form a federation. This method is known as federation by aggregation or integration.

On the other hand the history of evolution of federal system in Canada is different. The different states of Canada were not independent from the colonial state of Canada. Canada was a unitary state and various states of Canada did not voluntarily sign an agreement to form a federation like that of USA. The British statute helped to form a federation in Canada and thus the constituting states got the right of self rule. This method of formation of federation is known as federation by disintegration or disaggregation.

The above mentioned method was followed to form a federation in India. According to Durga Das Basu, the British statute, by the Government of India Act 1935 tried to establish a federal structure in India in the same way that have been followed in Canada. (Durga Das Basu, 1994 : 61) In 1858 the East India Company surrendered its powers to the British Crown and from that time onwards king's suzerainty was established all over India Starting from then till the promulgation of Government of India Act 1935 India had a unitary system of government. The Government of India Act 1935 tried to do away with the unitary system and provide a limited amount of self rule to the states. However near about 500 Princely States did not join in this scheme. During the time of independence majority of the Princely States joined the Indian Union and the framers of the Indian constitution tried to bring these Princely States under the umbrella of Indian federation.

1.6 The nature of Indian Federal System

To start with it may be noted that the word 'federation' is nowhere mentioned in the preamble nor in any article of the constitution. It is only stated, that Bharat would be a 'union of states' in the Article 1(1).

While submitting the Draft constitution, Dr. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, stated that "although its constitution may be federal in structure", the committee had used the term "Union" because of certain advantages. These advantages, he explained in the Constituent Assembly, were to indicate two things, viz., (a) that the Indian federation is not the result of an agreement by the units, and (b) that the component units have no freedom to secede from it.

The word 'Union', of course, does not indicate any particular type of federation, in as much as it is used also in the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States—the model of federation; in the Preamble of the British North America Act (which, according to Lord Haldane, did not create a true federation at all); in the Preamble to the Union of South Africa Act, 1909, which patently set up a unitary constitution; and even in the constitution of the U.S.S.R. (1936), which formally acknowledges a right of secession (Art. 17) to each Republic, i.e., unit of the Union.

We have, therefore, to examine the provisions of the constitution itself, apart from the label given to it by its draftsman, to determine whether it provides a federal system as claimed by Dr. Ambedkar, particularly in view of the criticisms labelled against its federal claim by some foreign scholars.

First, Like all other federations, India too have two types of government. There is the central government to govern all over India and there is also the state governments to govern the respective states (presently 29).

Second, It follows that the very object for which a federal state is formed involves a division of authority between the Federal Government and the States, on the basis of a written constitution. Part XI and XII of our constitution deals with the distribution of legislative, executive and financial powers between the union and the state governments.

Third, Like all other federations, the Indian State too derives its existence from the constitution, just as a corporation derives its existence from the grant of a statute by which it is created. Every power—executive, legislative or judicial—whether it belongs to the federation or to the component states, is subordinate to and controlled by the constitution.

Fourth, The constitution of India is not rigid like that of the United States of America, however the part which needs to be rigid that is which upholds the federal structure is inflexible in nature. For example to amend executive powers of the centre (Art. 73), executive powers of the states (Art. 162), distribution of legislative powers (Art. 245-255), state list, central list and the concurrent list, needs the majority of the members of both the houses to be present and 2/3rd of them voting for the motion. After that atleast half of the legislative assemblies should support the amendment, which proves that the part of the constitution which deals with the federal structure is really difficult to change.

Fifth, The Supreme Court of the Indian state stands at the head 'our' Judiciary to jealously guard the distribution of powers and to invalidate any action which violates the limitations imposed by the constitution. This jurisdiction of the Supreme Court may be resorted to not only by a person who has been affected by a Union or State law which, according to him, has violated the constitutional distribution of powers but also by the Union and the states themselves by bringing a direct action against each other, before the Original Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Art. 131. It is because of these basic features that our Supreme Court has described the constitution as 'federal'.

But though our constitution provides these essential features of a federation, it differs from the typical federal systems of the world in certain fundamental respects :

First, constituting states of United States of America have separate constitutions. However there is no such provision for the Indian states except for Jammu and Kashmir. The central and state government derives its authority from one and only supreme law of the land that is our constitution.

Second, In the matter of amendment of the constitution, again, the part assigned to the states is minor, as compared with that of the union. The doctrine underlying a federation of the American type is that the union is the result of an agreement between the component units, so that no part of the constitution which embodies the compact can be altered without the consent of the covenanting parties. This doctrine is adopted, with variations by most of the federal systems.

But in India, except in a few specified matters affecting the federal structure, the state need not even be consulted in the matter of amendment of the bulk of the constitution, which may be affected by a Bill in the Union Parliament, passed by a special majority. For example the Union Parliament has the authority to form a new state, change the name of the existing state or change the boundary of the existing state by a simple majority. The concerned state have no role to play.

Third, The way power is distributed between the centre and state, it enhances the predominance of the centre—(1) The Union list consists of important and more in number items (2) In certain special circumstances the Union government can legislate on items in the state list (3) In India residency powers are vested on the hands of the central government. However in case of USA and many other federations it rests with the state governments.

Fourth, the supremacy of the central government is also upheld in regard to the amendment procedure of our constitution. An Amendment Bill can only be placed in the Union and not in the State Legislative Assemblies. In majority of the cases the Amendment bills are passed by both the houses (Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha) of the Union Parliament by a simple majority (majority of the members voting in favour of the motion) or by a special majority (majority members of both the houses present and 2/3rd of its members voting in favour of the motion). In these cases the consent of the State Legislative Assemblies is not necessary. However for Article 54 and 55, Art 73 and 162, Art. 245-255 etc., the consent of majority of the states are required after it is passed by both the houses of the parliament. On the other hand the opinion of both the union and State Legislatures is important for USA.

Fifth, Not only the constitution offer no gurantee to the states against affecting their territorial integrity without their consent,—there is no theory of 'equality of state right' underlying the federal scheme in our constitution, since it is not the result of any agreement between the states.

One of the essential principles of American federalism is the equality of the component states under the constitution, irrespective of their size or population. This principle is reflected in the equality of representation of the state in the upper house of the Federal Legislature (i.e., the senate), which is supposed to safeguard the status and interests of the states in the federal organization. To this is superadded the gurantee that no state may, without its consent, be deprived its equal representation in the senate (Art. v)

Under our constitution, there is no equality of representation of the states in the Council of States. As given in the Fourth Schedule, representation from various states varies from 1 to 34. In view of such composition of the upper chamber, the federal safeguard against the interests of the lesser states are being overridden by the interests of the larger or more

populated states. Nor can our Council of States be correctly described as a federal chamber insofar as it contains a nominated element of twelve members as against 238 representatives of the states and Union Territories.

Sixth, The executive head of the constituting states is the Governor. Again, the Governor of a state shall be appointed by the President of the Union and shall hold office 'during the pleasure' of the President (Art. 155-156). These ideas are repugnant to the constitution of the United States or of Australia, but are to be found in the Canadian Constitution.

Seventh, While the federal system is prescribed for normal times, the Indian Constitution enables the federal government to acquire the strength of a unitary system during the time of emergencies. While in normal times the Union Executive is entitled to give directions to the State Governments in respect to specified matters, when a proclamation of Emergency is made, this power is enhanced. Moreover during the time of Emergency the Central Government can legislate on matters included in the State List. (Arts. 353, 354, 357) The wisdom of these emergency provisions has been demonstrated by the fact, that during the Chinese aggression of 1962 or the Pakistan aggression of 1965, India could stand as one man, pooling all the resources of the states, not with standing the federal organisation.

Eight, If we study the financial relation between the centre and the states, then also the supremacy of the centre is established. In accordance to the constitution, the source of finance for the state is limited, Hence the states has to depend on the centre for help, grant, loan etc.

Ninth, An American is a citizen not only of the state in which he resides but also of the United States, i.e., of the federation. Under different conditions both the federal and State Governments, each independent of the other, operate directly upon the citizen who is thus subject to two Governments, and owes allegiance to both. But the Indian Constitution, like the Canadian, does not introduce any double citizenship, but one citizenship, viz,— the citizenship of India (Art. 5), and birth or residence in a particular state does not confer any separate status as a citizen of the state.

Tenth, As regards officials, similarly, the federal and state governments in the United States, have their own officials to administer their respective laws and functions. But there is no such division amongst the public officials in India. The majority of the public servants are employed by the states, but they administer both the Union and State laws as are applicable to their respective states by which they are employed. Our constitution provides for the creation of All India Services, but they are common to the Union and the States (Art. 312). Members of the Indian Administrative Service, appointed by the Union, may be employed either under some Union Department (say, Home or Defence) or under a State Government, and their services are transferable, and even when they are employed

under a Union Department, they have to administer both the Union and state laws as are applicable to the matter in question. Presently there are three All India Services namely Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Forest Service (IFS). In short All India Service officials have the opportunity to serve both the union and state governments.

Eleventh, In USA there is a bifurcation of the Judiciary between the Federal and State Government. Cases arising out of the Federal Constitution and Federal laws are tried by the Federal Courts, while State Courts deals with cases arising out of the State Constitution and State laws. But in India, the same system of courts, headed by the Supreme Court, will administer both the union and state laws as are applicable to the cases coming up for adjudication. The government of India Act 1935 set up a unitary judicial system headed by the Supreme Court followed by the different High Courts and other lower courts.

Twelveth, To conduct the union and state election, the machinery for election is also integrated. The Election Commission conducts the election for the President, Vice-President, Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha and Bidhan Parisad and Bidhan Sabha. (However by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 the State Election Commission is empowered to conduct the elections for corporations, panchayats and other organs of local government).

Thirteenth, The machinery for accounts and audit is also similarly integrated. The Comptroller and Auditor General is empowered to maintain the accounts and audit for both the central and state governments.

Fourteenth, while the federal system is prescribed for normal times, the Indian constitution enables the federal government the strength of a unitary system during the time of emergencies. The 18th Schedule of the Indian constitution empowers the President to proclaim three types of emergencies (i) An emergency due to external aggression or internal disturbance (Art. 352); This may be referred to as 'national emergency' to distinguish it from the next category (ii) failure of constitutional machinery in a state (Art. 356) (iii) Financial emergency (Art. 360). During emergency the central government becomes powerful on the cost of independence of the states.

1.7 Conclusion

The object of the framers of our constitution was to avoid the short comings of the typical federal system as in the U.S.A. by modifying it so as to secure the strength of a unitary structure as much as possible ; but the resultant is an abnormal feature according to the traditional federal principle. B. R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the constitution Drafting

Committee commented that the political system adopted in the constitution could be "both unitary as well as federal according to the requirements of time circumstances."

A foreign critic, Prof. Wheare observes that the Indian constitution provides "system of government which is quasi-federal...a Unitary State with subsidiary federal features rather than a Federal State with subsidiary unitary features." [K. C. Wheare (1951, D. D. Basu (2008 : 60)]. Prof. Alexandrowicz has taken great pains to combat the view that the Indian federation is 'quasi-federation'. He wants to say that "India is a case 'sui generis'". Political scientist Durga Das Basu agrees with him and observes that "the constitution of India is neither purely unitary but is a combination of both. It is a Union or composite state of a novel type. It enshrines the principle that in spite of federalism the national interest ought to be paramount" (D.D.Basu, 60).

Granville Austin, a constitution specialist believes that the Indian Federation is, "a new kind of federalism to meet India's peculiar needs" (Austin 1966/1999:186). He prefers to call it as 'cooperative federalism' which "produces a strong central...government yet it does not necessarily result in weak provincial government that are largely administrative agencies for central policies. Indian federation has demonstrated this" (Austin, 187)

Joytirindra Dasgupta in his article 'India's federal design and national construction' published in a book named 'The Success of India's Democracy' edited by Atul Kohli commented that there is a centralizing tendency within the Indian political framework. But at the same time it is flexible enough to fulfill the regional and sub-regional demands from time to time. Democracy too enhanced the process since on the basis of democratic structures the regional forces created pressure on the central government to fulfill their aspirations and demands. For example it was due to regional demands that the states were reorganized on the basis of language.

It is believed that the Indian political structure is mainly federal with certain unitary characteristics. It should be remembered that India is a large country with people speaking different languages live side by side. Therefore the framers of our constitution has incorporated certain essential features of federal structure. As a result the central and state government govern in their respective spheres. Moreover by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 local self government has been established. By with the executive power is divided into central, state and local government and the Indian citizens have faith in this framework.

Despite facing certain problems the federal structure still persists in India. We can conclude by saying that India is a federation having certain unitary features.

1.8 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Analyze the nature of Indian federation.
- (b) Discuss the typical features of the Indian federation.
- (c) Do you agree with Austin Granville's opinion that a 'Co-operative Federalism' have developed in India.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) Was the Indian federation formed by the of disintegration or disaggregation?
- (b) State how India have been described in Article I of our constitution.
- (c) What is the reason behind calling India a 'Union of States'.
- (d) In which articles of the Indian Constitution the distribution of legislative, executive and financial powers have been mentioned.
- (e) Are the important features of a federation found in India?
- (f) State three typical features of the Indian federation which is not found in any other federations.
- (g) State B. R. Ambedkar's opinion regarding Indian federation.
- (h) State Durga Das Basu's opinion regarding Indian federation.
- (i) State K. C. Wheare's views regarding Indian federation.
- (j) State Austin Granville's opinion regarding Indian federation.
- (k) How have political scientist Jyotiindra Dasgupta analyzed the nature of Indian federation.
- (l) How do you analyze the nature of Indian federation.

3. Short questions :

- (a) State the traditional concept of federalism.
- (b) State the functional theory of federalism.
- (c) What is known as the co-operative federalism?
- (d) Presently, two principles are believed to be pillars of federalism. Discuss these two principles.

- (e) What type of federal structure did the members of the Constituent Assembly tried to establish initially?
- (f) Do you think, that the original design of the federal system was influenced by the nationl movement?
- (g) State the reasons why the present federal structure is different from the original design.
- (h) What do you mean by centralizing tendency in a Federal System?
- (i) What do you mean by federation by disintegration or disaggregation?

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Unit 2 □ Party System, Electoral Process and Coalition Politics

Structure

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Party System in India
- 2.4 Evolution of the Party System
- 2.5 Electoral process
- 2.6 Electoral Politics in changing time
- 2.7 Coalition Politics
- 2.8 Summary
- 2.9 Sample questions
- 2.10 Bibliography

2.1 Objectives

After learning this unit, you would be able to :

- Understand the nature of party system in India.
- Identify the stages in the evolution of the party system.
- Understand the electoral process and electoral politics in India.
- Address the emerging issues centering around coalition politics.
- Have a better understanding of the functioning of India's democracy.

2.2 Introduction

The success of India's democracy for nearly six decades and more is an interesting study. This is so because India has retained its democratic model even in the face of adversities and challenges, when many more democracies in the developing world have faltered. In a world where stable democracies have been

associated with developed industrialized countries of the West, India's democracy make an interesting paradox. This, because for centuries Indian society was based on hierarchy and authority, Indian economy poor, stagnant for long and polity having no place for popular representation.

As India gained independence from colonial rule in 1947, a modern nation-building process was set in place, much like that of the developed countries of the West. Representative democracy provided space for institutional mechanisms such as political parties that enable citizens to participate in the political process in various ways. The nature and arrangement of the parties remain key to the relations between society and politics. The party system is shaped and coloured by the interest and ideas of groups in society. This in turn contributes significantly to shaping the character of the whole political system. Since the relations are not one dimensional, it is important to remember that there are number of ways in which the complex web of issues influence the party system and vice versa.

2.3 Party System in India

Multiple parties are hard to find in the developing nations. At the onset of independence from British colonial rule, India was not an exception to this rule. To understand India's parties and party system from independence, it is pertinent to explain the 'Congress System' or 'dominant party system' from the accounts provided by Rajni Kothari and Morris-Jones. Their views though developed independently, are similar to a large extent. The Congress System according to them was the pivot around which the party system revolved. It was a system in which Indian National Congress enjoyed the dominant position, being the ruling party in terms of number of seats it held in Parliament and state legislative assemblies. The party was also the only national party in terms of its immense organizational strength. The superiority of the Congress Party did not merely depend on its ability to form the government at the national and state level as the single largest party. The other significant aspect of its superiority was its formidable organizational strength. The legacy of this organizational power came naturally to the Congress party as it started as a national movement fighting British colonialism. It was also an umbrella organization that mobilized popular support for a common cause.

The Indian party system was also described as the 'one dominant party' system because despite the system allowing free competition among parties, the Congress party enjoyed an overwhelming dominance. Interestingly the party system was characterized by dominance that co-existed with competition that was devoid

of conflict within the Congress party as well as conflict or altercation with other parties.

India's party system at independence and thereafter till about mid 1960's was a unique competitive party system in which the competing parties played dissimilar roles. The ruling Congress party was 'a party of consensus' and the opposition parties were working on the margin as 'parties of pressure'. This was a unique scenario where the opposition was not in the electoral game of providing an alternative to the Congress party, but only functioned by influencing sections within the Congress. This made Congress assume the role of opposition parties, maintain a democratic party structures that could accommodate the views of the dissidents openly by reflecting on the ideologies and interests of other parties.

The Congress party was therefore a 'party of consensus'. The most unique dimension of Congress dominance during that period was that major conflicts on issues did not take place between the Congress and the opposition parties, but within the Congress party. The party accommodated every shades of opinions and groups that mattered in Indian politics. The party also had skilled operatives who could bargain between different social groups. The strength of the Congress's organization was represented in its power and ability to bind the society and the state. Congress was more important than all the formal organizations of the state.

The Congress party occupied the centrist position in the political spectrum and by doing so absorbed much of the left and the right as well. As a result of this, both the parties on the left and right had to resort to rigorous ideologies and strong organization in order to save themselves from extinction.

Another important factor that helped the Congress party to retain its dominance was its ability and skill at allotting patronage. This allowed the Congress to co-opt within itself such diverse groups that would otherwise have led to the creation of opposition parties.

It must also be noted that when one spoke about the weakness of non-Congress opposition parties to pose any formidable challenge to the Congress dominance, it was never manifested in terms of combined electoral votes. Because, even before 1967, non-Congress candidates polled more than half the votes in the Lok Sabha elections. Non-Congress parties fared better in the elections to the state assemblies. This was because local issues and personalities played more important role. In India's first -past-the -post electoral system, division of opposition votes gave Congress a natural edge. Hence, the weakness of other non-Congress parties was by and large a consequence of their multiplicity. The nature of heterogeneity of Indian society also lend support to the fact that party fragmentation outside the dominant party was a natural phenomenon.

2.4 Evolution of the party system

To understand the evolution of India's party system since independence, we can divide the main phases as follows:

1. First phase from 1947 - 1967 coinciding with the 'dominant party system' we discussed in the preceding section.
2. Second phase 1967 - 1977
3. Third phase from 1977 - 1984
4. Fourth phase 1984 onwards

The second phase marked a watershed in the study of Indian politics. In sharp contrast to the first phase that witnessed a stable Congress dominance under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime-minister of India after independence, the second phase was marked by a gradual erosion of Congress hegemony after Nehru's death. It extended from 1967 with Congress party's defeat in election in as many as eight states to its defeat at the general election of 1977. The gradual decline in Congress dominance in the post - Nehruvian period was marked by certain tendencies within the party as well as the overall political system. Nehru's death brought out the leadership struggle and intense factionalism within the party. Dissidence and competition were too severe to be contained by party's internal bargaining and this eventually weakened the party. Anti-Congressism paved way for a number of opposition parties in the political arena. Competition also increased as opposition parties formed coalition governments in many states after 1967.

Defection from the Congress was another development after 1967. As Mrs. Indira Gandhi became the Prime-minister, the trend got even more pronounced. As she faced opposition from the 'old guards' within the Congress, she resorted to splitting the Congress in 1969, only to retain her loyalists within her fold. She also sprang subsequent surprises so as to consolidate her position both within the party and the government and also to project her as a national leader. The grand election victory of 1971 was largely the outcome of many such factors. However, defections that started in the aftermath of 1967 had two important traits. First, defectors flowed both ways, both coming into Congress and going out of it. Second, the parties to the far right and left tended to remain 'hard' by virtue of clinging on to their ideological positions and tight and disciplined organization.

As the Congress dominance was diminished after 1967, Mrs. Gandhi adopted a more confrontational attitude towards the opposition parties at the national level and also towards the states controlled by the opposition parties. She also initiated a 'new political process'

that was more personalized, centralized the decision making process both within the party and the government and weakened the democratic institutions. A major crisis in the system followed as the new political process was incapable of managing the tensions and cleavages emanating from a competitive party system operating in a heterogeneous society.

This created a situation when by 1974, Jayaprakash Narayan led a popular movement that acquired the momentum of an all India anti-Congress movement. In the face of such challenges, Mrs. Gandhi clamped emergency to silence the opposition. However, such attempts to subvert the democratic process only made her more vulnerable politically.

Third phase : 1977-84

This phase in the evolution of the party system was initiated with the defeat of Mrs. Gandhi's Congress and the formation of the first non-Congress Janata government at the centre. Janata party was actually a coalition of parties that held power between march 1977 and July 1979. It was a coalition experiment worked out hastily to defeat the Congress. The party contained different opposition groups like the old Congress (O), the Jan Sangh, the Bharatiya Lok dal, the Socialist Party and the Congress for Democracy. In terms of their ideological position, social base and leadership, there was hardly any common ground. Hence, it was but natural that given the heterogeneous composition of the Janata Party, the government was unable to carry through the coalition. One result was the loosening of ties between the centre and the states. Many a times this antagonism set the two at loggerheads on many important decisions.

As the parties that formed the Janata government finally split, the government disintegrated in mid 1979. In an era of confusing array of parties mostly formed by individual aspirants, once again the Congress (I) appeared to be the only national party capable of providing a stable government. The Congress (I) rode back to power in 1980 precisely because of strong popular reaction against a weird Janata experiment.

Anti-Congress parties could not make much headway in making a common cause and this persisted till about 1984. Mrs Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 1984 gave the party a massive electoral mandate riding on huge sympathy wave. Rajiv Gandhi was chosen the natural successor.

The dynastic character of the succession was too obvious and was the consequence of the transformation of the Congress party after the split of 1969.

It can well be argued that even in late 1984, India still had a multiparty system and not a 'dominant party system' in the real sense. Most of the elections at the national and state levels had led to alternations. Electorate in India had showed such maturity and awakening that re-election was increasingly difficult to achieve. In such a scenario, apart from the large number of regional parties that already were important players at the state level, there were some other opposition parties that possessed greater promise and substance i.e, parties like Lok Dal, CPI (M) and the BJP.

Third phase : 1984 onwards :

Since 1984 several changes taking place in our political system make the study of party system interesting in many ways. State politics have increasingly revolved around issues that pertains to regional issues. Caste, communalism, language, ethnicity and such other issues of identity politics are increasingly used by political parties, both national or regional, to mobilized the electorate. No doubt, Indian democracy has broadened its space of representation over the years. In such a situation the dynastic nature of the Congress party might not sustain it in the long run. It is clear that the party system in India has moved away from the one dominant party model over the past few decades. This has resulted in varied reconfiguration of political forces in India. We will discuss the changes taking place in electoral politics in the following sections.

2.5 Electoral Process

Introduction of the electoral process in India was a legacy of the British rule. The electoral principle was first introduced into local bodies in India in 1889 and then into provincial councils in 1892. As the British withdrew in 1947, they left behind a federal structure along with parliamentary institutions, representative government, electoral process and political parties. This was reconfirmed by the constitution of 1950. Representative democracy was based on universal adult suffrage. The constitution also provided that parliament and state assemblies were to be elected every five years. An independent Election Commission was created with the responsibility of conducting elections and all other election related functions such as, delimiting parliamentary and assembly constituencies, registering all eligible voters, recognizing national and state parties and symbols, establishing procedures for the nomination of candidates etc. The significant presence of thousands of registered but unrecognized political parties in the electoral arena is both positive and negative

in terms of their impact on the electoral process. On the positive side this would be reflection of adequate interest articulation and democratization. But on the negative side, this increases the likelihood of political instability and division of votes. These factors make the electoral process and electoral politics in India both complex and challenging at the same time.

2.6 Electoral politics in changing time

The changing outcome of the electoral politics in the last few decades may be seen as the reflection of a change in the terrain of politics in India. Competitive politics in India has witnessed major changes over the years. The change has been more clear around the 1990s. The electoral developments in the states point toward the emergence of certain bipolarities. But, at the same time, one can see the trends pointing toward more fluidity. The period since 1989 is characterized as a new electoral system. The most obvious characteristic of this new electoral system is the choice available to the voter. Contrary to the earlier election, where Congress party always stood out as defining voters choice, i.e, whether to vote for or against the Congress, that is no longer the case. This is so because now there are many non-Congress alternatives. In this sense, electoral politics in India is heading towards a post-Congress polity. The decisive stimulus of change between 1989 and 1991 was termed as three Ms of Indian politics i.e, Mandai, Mandir and Market. All these offered the possibility of creating new cleavages in Indian politics. There also emerged a new kind of political mobilization. This allowed a change of electoral system wherein several latent forces came to the surface of electoral politics. The rise of BJP and its expansion beyond Hindi heartland to include Gujrat, Maharastra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and even in some other states is very significant. Similarly, the vote for the left in West Bengal and Kerala had long ceased to be anti-Congress votes. The rise of BSP as a recognized national party, as also parties like Samajbadi Party, Samiata Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Nationalist Congress party, TMC of Mamta Banerjee, DMK, AIADMK and TDP in Southern states, have occurred at a time when all of them have proved to be game changers in Indian electoral politics. Though their political presence was state specific initially, their political vision has since moved more towards influencing political process at the national level.

More importantly, all these developments point towards the emergence of state as the most effective arena of electoral choice. Political loyalties, opinions and even

social identities are now formulated at the state level. Also the rising concerns of the people at large about issues of development and governance at the state and the local level, have also impacted the electoral performance of political parties. Political maturity shown by the electorate will have a long term impact on the electoral politics in the coming years.

2.7 Coalition Politics

The evolution of the pattern of fragmentation of the party system together with a changing era of coalition politics were significant markers of Indian politics after the 1989 elections and the state assembly elections in the early 1990s. The competition between the Congress party and the Janata Party in the 1970s, in a way, was the beginning of social mobilization of various segments of society. This also signified a more far reaching shift in the party system rooted in the changes taking place at support bases at the states. The result was a disaggregated party competition by the late 1980s. This also opened up the possibilities of a new coalition era. Coalition era was marked by intense party competition. At the centre, both national and regional parties came together to form government. Similarly, at the state level coalition governments involved both states as well as national parties. Over the past fifteen years or more, with the onset of the new coalition era, three distinct patterns of coalition have emerged, i.e, one around the Congress, the other around the BJP and third one loosely gathering around non-Congress, non-BJP front. The Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA), at the centre replacing the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), that came to power in 1998 striking tacit alliances with a range of state-based parties, and a third front of non-Congress, non-BJP coalition though not realized as yet, may be a distant possibility.

In most of the states bilateral party competition is taking place either between the two major political parties or between two major coalition of parties or between two state parties. For example, major political parties like Congress and BJP are generally competing in Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. Kerala and Tripura represent competition between Congress-led and left- led coalition. In Andhra Pradesh and Assam the contention is between a national party and a state party or their coalition and so on.

If one looks at the competitive party system in the states four different patterns can be discerned.

First, most state remained bipolar if not bipartisan. States like West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Maharashtra and Punjab fall into this category.

Secondly, states like Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa are states that collapsed into bipolarity due to newly formed alliances amongst the existing parties.

Third, there is presence of a significant third party in a number of apparently bipolar or bipartisan states, that cut into the vote share of the two main parties or alliances. This is the case of Assam, Orissa, Goa, West Bengal, Manipur etc. BJP and Bahujan Samaj Party are the rising third party in the states.

Fourth, Uttar Pradesh is a unique case where a four-cornered contest continues and each party appeals to caste coalitions in big way.

As various political parties with specific social bases emerged since 1990, political mobilization has taken place on the basis of dalit, OBC, religions, caste, linguistic, ethnic and such other social cleavages. As political parties have competed freely in the political arena along these lines, electoral politics has been highly segmented and competitive. The nature and trend of these political configurations have been the increasing importance of regional parties in government formation at the national level. Coalition politics has opened up the possibility of convergence of parties of all kinds. Interestingly we find a growing contraction of support base of all-India parties, making them 'regionalized' quite a bit. On the other hand regional parties are becoming 'federalized' due to their increased presence in government formation at the national level. This characterizes the nature of coalition politics in India.

10th Lok Sabha Election of 2014 has challenged much of our previous understanding of contemporary Indian electoral politics. BJP's Landslide has much to do with a positive mandate in favour of stability, good governance and development. One can also argue that perhaps the party is veering towards a secular and centrist space that the Congress party has vacated over the years, and seems unlikely to regain in near future. We are likely to witness reaching realignments in coming years. The success of the present dispensation will largely depend on Modi led BJP's handling of the historic mandate.

2.8 Summary

Evolution of the party system in India from a consensus based Congress system to a competitive one has been discussed at length in the foregoing sections. In the competitiveness of the contemporary scenario it is interesting to note that none of the prominent national parties i.e, the Congress and the BJP in particular are likely to hold on to electoral victory singlehandedly. The new electoral system has opened up possibilities of mobilization along multiple social cleavages and issues. Moreover, we have also entered an era of coalition politics marked by the elevation

of a large number of regional parties at the centre stage. In future government formations at the national as well as at the state level are likely to open up various possibilities of convergence of parties. The post-Congress reconfiguration of Indian politics is more competitive and provides more space for plural representation. Paradoxically, this may usher in an era of volatility and instability in the long run.

2.9 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

1. Give an outline of the 'Congress System' in India.
2. Explain the stages in the evolution of the party system.

2. Short-essay type questions :

3. Write a note on the electoral politics in changing time.
4. Analyze the nature of the fragmentation of the party-system during the era of coalition.

3. Short questions :

5. Point out the features of the 'new electoral system' since 1979.
6. Explain the nature and trends of party competition in the era of regionalization of parties.

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Unit 3 Parliamentary Sovereignty and Judicial Activism

3. (A) Debate on Parliamentary Sovereignty

Structure

3(a). 1 Objectives

3(a). 2 Introduction

3(a). 3 Meaning of Parliamentary Sovereignty

3(a). 4 Is the Indian Parliament a Sovereign body?

3(a). 5 Position of the Parliament in the Indian Constitutional System

3(a). 6 Debate on Parliamentary Sovereignty

3(a). 7 Conclusion

3(a). 8 Sample questions

3(a). 9 Bibliography

3(a).1 Objectives

The objectives of the submit it to comprehend to nature of parliamentary sovereignty as established in India and to acquaint ourselves with the debates centuring round the questions keeping is view the current trends.

3(a).2 Introduction

Parliamentary democracy has been set up in India like Britain. The council of ministers is responsible to the parliament specially to the lower house namely, the Lok Sabha. But is the Indian parliament an independent law making body like the British one? This is a debatable issue.

In the A. K. Gopalan versus Madras state case (1950) the Supreme Court justice, Mukherjee ruled that though the Indian Constitution have adopted many principles of the British parliamentary system yet it has not accepted the principle of supremacy of the

parliament in regard to law making. On the other hand in the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Indian Institute of Public Administration (1957) the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru Commented that "we have a parliament which is sovereign."

3(a). 3 Meaning of Parliamentary Sovereignty

Before analyzing this debatable issue, first we should understand what is the meaning of Parliamentary Sovereignty? Dicey in his book 'Introduction to the Law of the Constitution' wrote that the meaning of parliamentary sovereignty is that the parliament has the supreme authority to formulate and cancel any law and no other individual or constitution has this kind of authority in Britain.

3(a). 4 Is the Indian Parliament Sovereign?

The Indian Parliament is not sovereign in the same way or manner as the British parliament. **First**, The Indian Constitution is written. The power and functions of the Indian parliament is written in Chapter II, Part-V of the constitution of India. Thus the Indian parliament finds its origin in the constitution. **Secondly**, The Indian parliament cannot enact laws on any issue. 'Legislative Relations' in Chapter-I of Part-XI of the constitution has laid down the scope of the Indian parliament in regard to law making. **Thirdly**, The Indian Constitution has given the power of judicial review to the Supreme Court. In accordance to this, our highest court, i.e., the Supreme Court has the right to declare any law null and void if it feels that it is violating our constitutional laws or encroaching our Fundamental Rights. It is clearly stated in the constitution that "the state shall not make any law which takes away or abridges the rights conferred by this part (Fundamental Rights part) and any law made in contravention of this clause shall, to the extent of the contravention, be void" [Art 13(2)]. That is the Supreme Court has the authority to cancel any law which takes away or abridges our Fundamental Rights, declaring it to be unconstitutional. Thus the Indian parliament is not sovereign like the British parliament. Constitution Specialist granville Austin commented that, "It is not right to accept that...the Constituent Assembly was for parliamentary sovereignty. The member believed that the Constituent Assembly is of the highest honour and their manuscript should be the highest law of the land" (Austin 1966/1999 : 264).

3(a). 5 Position of the Parliament in the Indian Constitutional System

There is no doubt that the Indian parliament enjoys a special position being the highest

representative law making institution. It is entrusted with various kinds of functions and powers like law making, controlling the finance, the council of ministers is responsible to the Lok Sabha, the election and impeachment of the President, the power to amend the constitution etc.

3(a).6 Debate on Parliamentary Sovereignty

We have witnessed an institutional competition between the parliament and the courts from the promulgation of the Indian constitution. Political scientist Loyd Rudolph and Susane Rudolph calls this, debate on parliamentary sovereignty and judicial review. (Rudolph and Rudolph 1987 : 3rd volume). According to the Rudolphs a special aspect of this debate is the definition and limitations of the right to property (Lloyd and Lloyd, 109). We should try to analyze this aspect.

Before independence, the declared principle of the Indian National Congress was to abolish the Zamindari System and to uphold the interest of the farmers. After independence the Legislative Assemblies of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar passed the Agriculture Reform Law (or popularly known as Zamindari Law). The Zamindars lodged a case in their respective High Courts of the states, stating that the said law was infringing their Fundamental Rights especially, the Right to Property. The Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh High Courts ruled in favour of the law while the Patna High Court did not. When an appeal was made in regard to this issue the First Amendment to the Constitution was promulgated in 1951. In accordance to the amendment Arts 31A and 31B was incorporated to the 9th schedule which ruled out the interference of the courts in regard to land acquisition for bringing about agricultural reforms.

In 1955 by the 4th Constitutional Amendment the scope of Art 31A was extended. It was not only limited to agricultural reforms but enhanced to other areas like land acquisition for refugee rehabilitation and for setting up industries.

In the Sankari Prasad and Union of India case (1951) and the Sajjan Singh and state of Rajasthan case (1965), the Supreme Court of India ruled that the Indian parliament enjoys supreme powers in regard to constitutional amendment. That is the parliament enjoys absolute supreme power to amend any part and provisions of the constitution.

Political scientist Pratap Bhanu Mehta commented that from after the promulgation of the constitution in 1950 the picture we get in the last 17 years is somewhat like; the parliament enacts law; and the court has the power to nullify these laws stating that it is against the constitution. As a result the parliament amends these laws and then the highest court accepts it as being legitimate (Pratap Bhanu Mehta, 2002 : 183)

However in the Gopalnath versus Punjab state case (1967) this picture begins to change. Which means from this time onwards the power of the parliament in regard to constitutional amendment becomes limited. Rejecting the Shankari Prasad and Sajjan Singh case the Supreme Court in the Gopalnath case ruled that the parliament does not enjoy any power in regard to the amendment of our Fundamental Rights (Mehta 183, Raju Ramchandran 2000 : 111-112)

After this ruling of the highest court the pace of social and economic reform was halted to a certain extent. To do away with this difficulty the 24th and 25th constitutional amendment was passed in 1971 which brought about two important changes in our constitution. These were :

First, In Art. 368(i) of the constitution it was stated that the parliament had the power to add, change and abolish any article and thus amend the constitution. Secondly, Directive Principles of the state cannot be brought under the preview of judicial review.

In the Kesavananda versus Kerala state case (1973) the Supreme Court ruled that the parliament had the right to amend any part of the constitution including the Fundamental Rights. However the highest court abolished certain provisions of Art. 368 (incorporated by the 25th Constitutional Amendment) which infringed upon the judicial review stating it to be unconstitutional since the judicial review is one of the basic component of our constitution. The Supreme Court ruled that the parliament can amend any part of the constitution however it cannot change its basic structure. By this the Supreme Court limited the power of the parliament and enhanced the scope of judicial review (Ramachandran 2000 : 108).

To do away with this limitation upon the parliament, the 42nd Constitutional Amendment was promulgated by which subarticles 4 and 5 were added to Art. 368. Art. 368 (4) states that "no Amendment of the Constitution (including the provisions of Part III) made or purporting to have been made under this article whether before or after the commencement of section 55 of the constitution (Forty second Amendment) Act, 1976 shall be called in question in any court on any ground". Art. 368 (5) states that "for the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of this Constitution." Moreover Art. 31(i) states that "notwithstanding anything contained in Art. 13, no law giving effect to the policy of the state towards securing (all or any of the principles laid down in Part IV) shall be deemed to be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with, or takes away or abridges any of the rights conferred by Art. 14 or Art. 19, and no law containing a declaration that it is for giving effect to such policy shall be called in question in any court on the ground that it does not give effect to such policy."

In the *Minorva Mills versus the Union of India* case the Supreme Court ruled that—
— First, By the 42nd Constitution Amendment the basic structure of our constitution has been infringed upon since the scope of Directive Principles of the state has been enhanced resulting in the loss of balance between the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles.

Secondly, Art. 368 (4) and (5) is unconstitutional because it has infringed upon the basic structure of our constitution as it tried to restate the supremacy of the parliament in regard to Constitutional Amendment at the cost of judicial review. Moreover our highest court felt that both judicial review and limited power of the parliament, in regard to constitutional amendment, is the basic structure of our constitution.

3(a). 7 Conclusion

Eminent political scientist Prapat Bhanu Mehta commented that many political analysts believe that in accordance to the principle of basic structure the predominance of judicial review over parliamentary sovereignty has been established (Prapat Bhanu Mehta, 180). This has happened over the years, as from the 80's single party predominance has given way to coalition government. Mehta believes that in near future if a single-party forms the government, what will be the course of judicial review is very difficult to predict.

3(a). 8 Sample questions

1. Long Questions :

- (1) Is the Indian parliament sovereign like the British Parliament.
- (2) Analyze the debate on Parliamentary Sovereignty and Judicial Review.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (1) What is meaning of Parliamentary sovereignty?
- (2) Which part of the constitution deals with the law making power of the Parliament?
- (3) Does the Indian constitution gives the power of Judicial Review to the courts?
- (4) Can the parliament make any law infringing our Fundamental Rights?
- (5) State the view of Granville Austin in regard to parliamentary sovereignty.
- (6) State the position of Parliament in the Indian Constitutional system.
- (7) Why was the First and Fourth Constitutional amendment to the constitutional was brought about?

- (8) State the view of the Supreme Court in regard to constitutional amendment in Shankariprasad case.
- (9) State the view of the Supreme Court in regard to constitutional amendment in the Gopalnath case.

3. Short questions :

- (10) Mention the items which were amended by the 24th and 25th constitutional amendment.
- (11) State the view of the Supreme Court in regard to Constitutional Amendment in the Keshabananda Bharati case.
- (12) Mention what changes were brought about in the Article 368 by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment.
- (13) State the view of the Supreme Court in regard to Constitutional Amendment in the Minorva Mills case.
- (14) Has the dominance of Judiciary been established in India?

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Unit 3 Parliamentary Sovereignty and Judicial Activism

3. (B) Judicial Activism

Structure

- 3(b). 1 Objectives
- 3(b). 2 Introduction
- 3(b). 3 Meaning of Judicial Activism
- 3(b). 4 Meaning of Basic Structure
- 3(b). 5 Meaning of Public Interest Litigation
- 3(b). 6 Classification of Public Interest Litigation
- 3(b). 7 Characteristics and nature of Public Interest Litigation
- 3(b). 8 Summary of the discussion
- 3(b). 9 Criticism
- 3(b). 10 Conclusion
- 3(b). 11 Sample questions
- 3(b). 12 Bibliography

3(b).1 Objectives

The objectives of the unit is to understand the meaning of the term Judicial Review and its implications for Indian polity. The very nature and characteristics of Public Interest Litigations are also discussed in the following pages.

3(b). 2 Introduction

The debate on parliamentary sovereignty and judicial review clearly established the dominance of the court. In this light we will now try to analyze Judicial Activism in India.

3(b). 2 Meaning of Judicial Activism

Judicial Activism means that the Indian judiciary especially our Supreme Court is playing a super active role, which the framers of the Indian Constitution did not envisage. Prof. Upendra Bakshi (specialist on law) commented that the Indian Judiciary has developed two unique characteristics which have made it more active. These two characteristics are— (a) Concept of the basic structure of the constitution and (b) Public Interest Litigation (Upendra Bakshi, 1996 : 11).

3(b). 3 Meaning of Basic Structure of the Constitution

The idea of basic structure of the constitution is not found in any part of the constitution. Constitution specialist Durga Das Basu believes that "... it is a judicial innovation, introduced in 1973 by the Supreme Court in Keshavananda's case"* (D.D. Basu, 1996:223). While judging on the legitimacy of the amendment procedure, the Supreme Court ruled that the parliament can amend any part of the constitution including the Fundamental Rights yet it cannot change the basic structure of the constitution. The Supreme Court ruled that there are certain indispensable characteristics in the Indian constitution which is known as the Basic structure. Which cannot be changed. The basic structure is composed of supremacy of the constitution, Rule of Law, Federal System, Judicial Review etc. Thus this ruling of the Supreme Court limited the power of the parliament and enhanced the scope of judicial review. According to Raju Ramachandran, "In Keshavananda the Court assured for itself a new and imprecable role in the Constitutional politics of India." (Raju Ramachandran, 200 : 10)

3(b). 4 Meaning of Public Interest Litigation

Since Public Interest Litigation is a part of judicial activism we should try to study the evolution of Public Interest Litigation. Majority of the uneducated and poor people of India does not know about the scope of their rights enshrined in our Constitution and how to secure these rights. Thus these people are subject to various kinds of exploitation. For example, some people from the lower strata including a woman named Husainara Khatun was locked up in jail for many years without any kind of trial. Due to ruthless police torture 31 prisoner lost their eyesight permanently in Bhagalpur Correctional Centre. According to Art. 23 of our constitution bonded labour have been prohibited, yet it is practised in some parts of India.

To overcome this situation, to uphold the interest of these exploited class and to

establish social justice, a new type of litigation was evolved, which is popularly known as Public Interest Litigation by the end of the last century especially during the beginning of 1980's.

Now what is the meaning of Public Interest Litigation. According to Ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, P. N. Bhagwati, Public Interest Litigation means a "litigation undertaken for the purpose of redressing public injury, enforcing public duty, protecting social, collective, diffused rights and interests or vindicating public interest..." (A.I.R., 1982 : 192, B. R. Agarwal, 193 : 177)

How and who can file these Public Interest Litigations. Before discussing these aspects we should first try to understand certain related issues.

Part III of our Constitution deals with Fundamental Rights and to protect these rights we have the Right to Constitutional Remedies (Art. 32). This Provision gives us the right to appeal directly to the Supreme Court if any citizen feels that his/her Fundamental Right has been infringed upon. Moreover Art. 226 guarantees the right to move to the High Court, by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights.

Following appropriate proceedings a writ petition should be submitted at the court first. Now the question is, who can submit such petition. The answer is the person who thinks that his/her Fundamental Rights have been infringed upon can submit a petition. If a third person submits a petition for him it can be rejected on the ground that the third person does not have the right of locus standi.

However, the Supreme Court has relaxed the rules and procedures of the Public Interest Litigation from the end of 1970's. To secure the rights of the exploited classes, any socially aware individual or any organization can appeal in favour of the victim. The Supreme Court or the High Court cannot reject it. Moreover an appeal can be made by mail, telegram or by a report published in the newspaper. Prof. Upendra Bakshi calls this the epistolary jurisdiction of the highest court.

Prof. S. P. Mathe feels that the restrictions have been relaxed for the following reasons—First, to provide an opportunity to the poor, uneducated, exploited and weaker section of the society, to access courts. Secondly, an individual or any organization can expose any corrupt or incapable public servant and problems arising from it. Thirdly, to provide an opportunity to increase mass participation in the judicial system.

On 1st Dec, 1988 the Supreme Court issued an order which categorized the cases which can be brought under of Public Interest Litigation. Some of them are as follows—

- (a) To protect the interest of bonded labour.
- (b) To protect the interest of unorganized labour.

- (c) To protect the interest of prisoners.
- (d) To secure the interest of children, women, Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes against any kind of exploitation.
- (e) To irradiate adulterated food, medicine etc.,
- (f) To preserve environment and culture.
- (g) Any important issue which serves to protect the interest of the public.

3(b). 5 Classification of Public Interest Litigation

Desai and Murlidhar have classified Public Interest Litigation into four categories— (a) Human Rights (b) Judicial System (c) Environmental Pollution and (d) Good governance and Accountability. (Desai and Murlidhar, 168-176). Now we will discuss them in brief.

- (a) **Human Rights** : Public Interest Litigation was initiated to protect the rights of the weaker section of the society. While giving a ruling on cases of this aspect the Courts have interpreted Art. 21 of our constitution quite liberally, which guarantees life and individual freedom. The main theme of the analysis is that, the right to life and individual freedom means, to lead a life with respect and honour; not to live like any other animals. For this, other rights which are required for proper existence has been legitimized by the Courts. They are the right to food and clothing, rehabilitation of bonded labour, the right to minimum wage for the unorganized labour, full development of each and every child, right to unadulterated water and environment (D. D. Basu, 1996.).
- (b) **Judicial System** : Many cases were filed in the Supreme Court in the 1980's and 90's relating to the appointment and transfer of judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts and the role of Supreme Court in this aspect. Like S. P. Gupta versus Union of India Case (1982) and S. C. Advocates versus Union of India case (1993) (Raju Ramachandran, 2000 : 170-171; Lord Cook of Thornburn, 2000: 97-106).
- (c) **Environmental Pollution** : Many Public Interest Litigation have been filed to keep the environment clear and especially against those industries and factories which are polluting the environment. The Courts have issued order to all the concerned polluters to keep the environment pollution free.
- (d) **Good Governance and Accountability** : Many Public Interest Litigations have been filed against certain corrupt government officials to establish good governance and accountability. The court can give directives so that the C.B.I. (Central

Bureau of Investigation) C.V.C. (Central Vigilance Commission) etc. can work independently to stop all kinds of corruption.

3(b). 6 Characteristics and Nature of Public Interest Litigation

From the above discussion it is clear that Public Interest Litigation is one of the important feature of the Indian Judicial System. The nature and characteristics of these litigations are different from those of adversarial litigations. To understand the nature of Public Interest Litigations we should first understand its characteristics—

First, In most of the adversarial litigations there are two parties, involved, one is called plaintiff and the other is known as the defendant. Lawyers can defend their respective parties with evidential proofs. After much debate the judge pronounces the verdict where one party lose and the other party wins the case.

However for Public Interest Litigation there are no such parties and thus the question of winning and losing does not arise. While analyzing the nature of Public Interest Litigation, the court ruled in the Dr. Upendra Bakshi versus state of Uttar Pradesh case (1986) that “... public interest litigation ... involves a collaborative and cooperative effort on the part of the ... government and its officers, the lawyers appearing in the case and the Bench for the purpose of making human rights meaningful for the weaker section of the community” (Desai and Murlidhar, 167). Taking the recourse of Public Interest Litigation the bonded labour was freed and the interest of the unorganized labour secured.

Secondly, if the weaker section of our society is deprived of their rights due to negligence of certain public servants then the courts can issue positive directives to secure their interests. It should be noted that some people from the weaker section including a women called Hasainara Khatun was imprisoned on petty ground for a number of years. If tried and if they were found guilty, they would have been convicted for merely several months, yet they were imprisoned for a number of years. When this issue was brought under the notification of the Supreme Court, the highest court ordered quick trial and those who had already served their sentence was released. (Desai and Murlidhar, 168–169)

Thirdly, for adversarial litigations the burden of producing evidential proof rests on the plaintiff. However in case of Public Interest Litigations the plaintiff is relcaved of performing such a task. The court judging the importance of case can constitute commissions which would be entrusted of producing evidential proofs. The court can appoint district judges, lawyers, bureaucrats, jounalists and special organizations as commissioner. If a Public Interest Litigation comes up in the court involving environmental pollution the court relies on the opinion of The Central Pollution Control Board (P.C.B.)

Fourthly, in India a socially aware individual or an organization can write a letter or send a telegram or a report published in a newspaper can be considered on appeal by the court for Public Interest Litigation. The report published by the 'Indian Express' was considered as an appeal for Husainara Khatun versus state of Bihar case (1980).

Fifthly, in case of Public Interest Litigation the plaintiff himself or themselves can be physically present in the Court and air their opinion. Many a times they need the help of experienced lawyers of the Supreme Court for they know not the intricacies of the law and thus cannot place their opinion in an organized form. In many cases like bonded labour, police torture, governmental accountability etc., the experienced lawyers of our country have played a very active role.

3(b). 7 Summary of the discussion

From the above discussion it is clear that through of the basic structure of the constitution and Public Interest Litigation the Indian judiciary has taken steps to stop the misuse of power in the democratic framework of India. However the question is how do we do this?

Upendra Bakshi believes that "like keshavananda which sought successfully to limit the tranny of temporary political majorities from rewriting the text of the constitution in pursuit of power, SAL by its unusual expansion of judicial process and power continues to combat the scattered hegemonies of power masquerading its own excess as public interest" (Upendra Bakshi, 1996 : 12) Bakshi likes to use the term SAL (Social Action Litigation) instead of Public Interest Litigation (PIL). Moreover in the eighties of the last century attention "shifted...from the melodrama at the national level between the Supreme Court and Parliament to the myriad microdramas at the local level between the disadvantaged and the petty oppressive agents of the state : police rape, police blindings, social agency corruption, jail inhumanity." (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987 : 122)

3(b). 8 Criticism

Both forms of judicial activism that is of basic structure of our Constitution and Public Interest Litigation has been criticized from various viewpoints.

First, Constitution specialists like Durga Das Basu and Raju Ramachandran etc., have criticised the basic structure of our Constitution. Accordint to Raju Ramachandran "... the basic structure doctrine is anti-democratic ... and that unelected judges have assumed vast political power not given to them by the constitution". (Raju Ramachandran, 2000 : 108)

Secondly, The workload of the courts is huge due to adversarial litigations, it has been enhanced due to Public Interest Litigations causing excessive delays.

Thirdly, The Legislature and the executive has the right to formulate rules and to implement it. However for many cases like sexual harrasment, adoption of Indian child by the foreigners, torture in prison etc., "... the more recent trend ... is for the court to assert its new role as policy-maker ..." (A. H. Desai and S. Murlidhar, 2000 : 197)

Fourthly, the credibility of the PIL is now adversely affected by the criticism that the judiciary is overstepping the boundaries of its jurisdiction and that it is unable to supervise the effective implementation of its orders. It has also been increasingly felt that the PIL is being misused by the people agitating for private grievances in the grab of public interest.

Fifthly, Supreme Court justice, Prasant Bhusan feels that after the introduction of new economic policy from 1991 there is a "lack of sensitivity towards the rights of the poor and disadvantaged sections of society." (Prasant Bhusan, 2004 : 1770) when giving judgement for Public Interest Litigation.

3(b). 9 Conclusion

Judicial Activism is especially needed for cases when the Fundamental Rights of the citizens is being infringed upon, when the state neglects the interests of its citizens or when the state is misusing its power. However judicial activism should not be all encompassing. We should always remember that the chief justice of the Supreme Court (D.A.S. Anand) has cautioned us to be very careful, that judicial activism should not become 'judicial adventurism.'

3(b). 10 Sample questions

1. Broad Questions :

- (1) What do you mean by judicial activism in India.
- (2) Critically analyze judicial activism in India.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (1) What is the meaning of 'judicial activism' in India? Name the two concepts introduced by the Supreme Court which have made the judicial system more active.
- (2) State the basic structure of the Constitution with examples. In which case was this concept initiated?

- (3) What is the meaning of Public Interest Litigation.
- (4) In which areas were the rules relaxed for Public Interest Litigation. Why were they relaxed?

3. Short questions :

- (5) State the matters which can be brought under Public Interest Litigation.
- (6) Discuss the nature and characteristics of Public Interest Litigation.
- (7) Discuss how the basic structure of the constitution and Public Interest Litigation stood against the misuse of power in India.
- (8) State two criticisms against judicial activism in India.

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Unit 4 □ Panchayati Raj and Grassroots Politics

Structure

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Panchayati Raj in India: A history of its evolution
- 4.4 Panchayati Raj and Rural Development
- 4.5 Panchayati Raj and Decentralized Planning
- 4.6 People's participation in Panchayati Raj
- 4.7 Panchayati Raj and Grassroots Politics
- 4.8 Summary
- 4.9 Sample questions
- 4.10 Bibliography

4.1 Objectives

After learning this unit, you would be able to :

1. Understand the meaning of Panchayati Raj.
2. Trace the evolution of Panchayati Raj in India.
3. Understand its significance in rural development and decentralization.
4. Relate its role in promoting people's participation.
5. Address the issues concerning the relation between Panchayati Raj and grass roots politics.

4.2 Introduction

People's participation in decision making of the country is the essence of democracy. As we talk of participation and control of governance by the people, we need to understand that they can only be meaningful when the powers of the state are decentralized to the district, block and village levels. Decentralization can only be effective when people at the grassroots level are empowered to discuss their problems,

suggest solutions and execute and monitor their implementation. This requires creation of suitable mechanisms for guaranteeing a system of participatory democracy. In independent India no other socio-political program has generated as much enthusiasm and interest of the people as the Panchayati raj institutions (PRIs).

Village panchayats were central to the ideological framework of India's freedom movement. Mahatma Gandhi gave a clear vision of village swaraj as a 'complete republic' that could play an important role in the social transformation of rural India. History of evolution of PRIs in India is a long one, about which we shall try to make a schematic presentation.

4.3 Panchayati Raj in India : a history of its evolution

Self governing village communities existed in India from the ancient times. In its present form however, the local self governing bodies bear a distinct impact of the British period. It is worth mentioning here that self-governance was not the objective of British rule. It was mainly their motive to protect the colonial interest and for this purpose, powers were given at the local level. More attention was paid to urban administration than the rural areas.

The Government of India Act 1935 empowered provincial governments and made them accountable to enact legislation to democratize local self-government institutions including village panchayats. Hence the spirit of democratic decentralization became more organized by the time India became independent in 1947.

However, despite this legacy, independent India's political class and bureaucracy had a disdain for panchayats and hence the first draft of India's constitution did not include a provision for panchayats. The Community Development Projects (CDP) were inaugurated in 1952. They sought to improve the social and economic life of the rural people based on community participation. However, it soon became ineffective in the absence of effective instruments for people's participation. National Extension Service (NES) was also introduced in 1953 as a complementary programme. But due to excessive politicization and bureaucratic control, all the schemes remained essentially government scheme disconnected from the people.

Balwant Rai Mehta study team appointed in 1956 to review the functioning of the COP and NES recommended in favour of democratic decentralization through the setting up of Panchayati raj institutions in all the states. Subsequently in 1958 the National Development Council (NDC) also corroborated the Balwant Rai Mehta report and left it to the states to work out appropriate structures. It was during this time

that the term 'Panchayati raj' came into vogue referring to a system of 'linking people from the Gram Sabha to the Lok Sabha'.

Rajasthan became the first state to establish Panchayati Raj in 1959 and by the mid-1960s panchayates had reached every state of India. The three tier panchayati raj structure consisting of Zila Parisad at the district level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level and Gram Panchayat at the village level, were not uniformly applied by all the states. Some followed 1 tier system, others chose 2 tier whereas states like Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh adopted a 3 tier system. The First Generation Panchayati Raj that was initiated in 1959 thus brought within its fold almost all the states. As the process started gaining momentum, it became a new system of governance.

Nevertheless the PRI was falling apart after 1965 in the face of a deliberate design by the bureaucracy, elected representatives in the state legislatures and in the Parliament to scuttle the programme and eventually discard it. It was clear that the ruling elite feared the ascendancy of this institution.

Asoka Mehta Committee :

The appointment of this committee in 1977 was a turning point in the concepts and practices of panchayati raj. The committee's report (1978) was a vision document and sought to make panchayats an organic and integral part of our democratic process. The Second generation of panchayati raj was initiated by West Bengal government when it provided a new life to the panchayats. Following the recommendations of the Mehta committee, West Bengal and some other states revised the existing panchayat acts and brought forth new legislations. The most significant change that took place in the second phase was the elevation of panchayats from a development agency at the local level to a formidable political institution. As more powers were given to local bodies and as their orientation was more political than developmental, there was widespread enthusiasm amongst people about their implementation. The idea of district government was also put into practice in the mid-1980s. The success of zilla parisads in West Bengal and Karnataka provided the boost to the district government approach.

By the end of 1988, a parliamentary sub-committee under the chairmanship of P.K. Thungon recommended that PRIs should be strengthened and constitutionally recognized. The 64th Constitution Amendment Bill was drafted against this backdrop. Following the recommendations of various committees the central government decided to give constitutional status to the PRIs. 73rd constitution amendment act was passed in 1993 to provide a uniform pattern of PRI throughout India. This journey from the idea of 'local self government' to the 'institutions of self government' was a significant evolution of PRIs in India.

4.4 Panchayati Raj and Rural Development

The Panchayati Raj Act has various dimensions. So the whole exercise needs to be looked from a broader perspective. It is not only about self-government, but also covers development, revenue administration, rural policy and administration of justice. The Act also seeks to ensure that adequate financial and human resources should be made available to panchayats towards discharging their responsibilities. The 73rd Amendment also makes it mandatory for all the state governments to :-

1. Hold panchayat election every five years.
2. To establish at the bottom level a Gram Sabha comprising all eligible voters in the village to which panchayat will be accountable.
3. To ensure reservation of seats for SCs , STs, women and OBCs.
4. To form an independent Election Commission in the state.
5. To set up in each state a Finance Commission to determine the principles for allocation of adequate financial resources for panchayats.

The Act also indicates a number of items that may be entrusted to the panchayats by the state governments in addition to schemes provided to ensure economic development and social justice. The most glaring shortcoming however is that, even though the 11 th schedule of the constitution offers an exhaustive list of functions that could be delegated to the panchayats for ensuring rural development, it does not make this mandatory on the part of the states to follow it. The fact of the matter is that, crucial decisions in this regard are left to the discretion of the state government. There are still a number of bottlenecks that hinder the panchayats from becoming real agent of all round rural development.

4.5 Panchayati Raj and Decentralized Planning

Development and planning lose direction when there is hierarchy and centralization. A national plan need to integrate within its fold regional or districts or state plans. This can only be prepared when due considerations are given to local needs, local problems, potentials and resources that vary in different regions. Planning therefore becomes disintegrated unless it has a spatial dimension. Panchayati Raj is based on the idea of decentralization. This is true, because local government is closer to the people. People's needs are better identified and programmes are better executed by administrative units at the local level. PRI involves a three tier arrangement to suit the decentralized model of administration. The first tier is called the Gram Panchayat.

The second tier at the block level is called the Panchayat Samiti and third tier at the district level is called the Zilla Parisad.

Since 1993 decentralized planning has assumed higher significance. 74th constitutional amendment Act specifically provides local self government institutions to take up the responsibility for preparing local plans and also implementing them. District Planning Committee (DPC) will be responsible for consolidation of plans prepared at the Panchayats and Municipalities. Most states governments have enacted legislations that have incorporated these provisions. However, real devolution of powers and functions to elected local bodies vary from state to state.

As the ideas and strategies of devolution and decentralized planning have assumed greater significance since 1993, the states are required to take some steps towards this end. First, local bodies have to be familiarized about the broad policies, goals and objectives of the proposed State Plan. This is necessary, so that the multi-level planning process work in close coordination. Secondly, there is need to define the devolution of administrative, technical and financial powers to the various levels. Thirdly transfer of funds to the village panchayats, blocks and urban local bodies require an appropriate criteria to be fixed for disaggregation. In addition to these, a time bound implementation of plan, accountability of local bodies and budgetary control and other related matters also need to be looked into. Except for Kerala and West Bengal which have fared well on these issues, most other states are struggling to put them into practice.

4.6 People's Participation in Panchayati Raj

Participatory development has emerged as an alternative to the growth-centered model for development since the 1970s. Growth-led development model adopted by the emerging nation states in the developing world including India after independence aimed at economic growth through rapid industrialization and urbanization. It was soon realized that this could only be achieved at great social and environmental costs. Increase in absolute poverty, a further marginalization of the deprived sections of the society leading to greater disparity and loss of life and livelihood were the realities that led to growing discontent and disillusionment with the top-down growth model. People-centered or participatory development was emerging as an alternative that was more humane, inclusive and sustainable in the long run. The alternative model necessitates taking development initiatives from the grassroots so as to ensure participation of people in planning, execution and equitable redistribution of resources. Gram Sabha is the pivot of the entire scheme of participation and democratic decentralization. It is

direct democracy at the grassroots level. Legal empowerment of Gram Sabha has been made in almost all the State Acts right from the inception of the panchayat raj, making it the real watch dog of panchayats. All state panchayat acts have provided for the constitution of gram sabhas requiring them to meet at least twice a year. Linking up people from gram sabha to Lok sabha remains the thrust of the bottom-up approach to participatory development.

However, the ground reality unfortunately does not make a strong case for strengthening and sustaining the system. This is because, in most cases gram sabhas are treated as recommendatory bodies and that they are not taken seriously by the functionaries of the panchayats or by the people. As a result, gram sabhas are mostly functioning as identifiers of beneficiaries for loans and such other schemes. Despite this, states like West Bengal have provided for a two tier structure for ensuring direct democracy in the form of setting up ward based bodies named as Gram Sansads. Rajasthan State also provides for Ward Sabhas in each village where one tenth quorum of women, SCs, STs, OBCs are made compulsory. In Kerala also the key to the success of PRI is the gram sabha.

The position of the gram sabha was reviewed in 2001 and decisions were taken to strengthen it. Setting up of parallel bodies were neglected and it was proposed that gram sabha should be empowered to supervise and monitor the developmental work carried on in rural areas.

Participation of people in gram sabha in large numbers, making its decision binding on the panchayat rather than advisory, will make way towards empowerment. This will also ensure the development of capacity building amongst the villagers at the grassroots.

4.7 Panchayati Raj and Grassroots Politics

Panchayati raj (PR) is about expanding democracy from below. It can function successfully only when people at the grassroots are empowered socially, economically and politically. This can happen with participation of people, when people are conscious of their rights and responsibilities. All these signify that development project should build development around people and also be driven by the people. Grassroots participation in PR cannot happen when the local bodies are overtly carrying on with the programmes formulated and implemented by the government and its functionaries. Even today we find that the panchayat and gram sabhas invariably go along with the government. This makes them less autonomous and self reliant.

At this juncture non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played an increasingly important role in local and community based development initiatives. In many cases many of the government programmes such as poverty alleviation, literacy, health and sanitation etc are carried out by the NGOs. Rural development initiative also requires a well planned strategy of social mobilization that can be materialized through agencies committed to specific goals. NGOs have rightly emerged as the agency of social mobilization.

In an era of liberalization there has been a gradual decline in the role of government. This has paved the way for NGOs in India to operate at the grassroots. They are also supported and promoted by government because of its limitations in reaching out to people and various target groups in distant areas. Since NGOs are generally community based and have local workers, they are better equipped to address and involve people at the grassroots. Some very significant NGO initiatives are Forest Development Committees, Watershed Development Committees, various health and literacy programmes, micro planning and financing etc.

However with the devolution of power, cleavage is becoming visible in many areas between NGOs and PRIs. Such situations of conflict need to be addressed since it is important to understand that both are supplementary and complementary bodies at the local level. Their cooperation is the driving force in transforming the villages in India.

In terms of number, PRIs in India have the broadest representative base. Besides, it is also a matter of great significance that more than fifty percent of the grassroots representatives are from the marginalized sections of the society, namely, women, SCs, STs and OBCs. PRIs have thus created a scope for accomplishing development with social justice. At the same time it has also empowered them to take the development initiative for achieving overall welfare goals.

PRIs are the watchdogs of democracy which aim at creating a sense of partnership in the people towards the development of village life. Some important functions of the panchayats towards this end are :-

1. Construction and maintenance of roads.
2. Providing arrangements for primary education, medical attention, women and child welfare.
3. Helping the farmers in matters of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandary including imparting training related to farm and non-farm activities.

4. Arranging for sale of agricultural products.
5. Establishment of cottage industries.
6. Arranging for street lighting and sanitation.
7. Maintaining the wells, tanks and other public places.
8. Establishment of co-operatives to foster a spirit of cooperation amongst the villagers.

Beside this the village panchayats are also expected to perform many other discretionary functions. PRIs have worked splendidly in many fields at the village level. But certain shortcomings have marred the functioning of the panchayats. First is the inadequacy of financial resources of the panchayats. Second, network of government agencies and functionaries at the district and block level lack cohesion. Third, most of the representatives lack required education and training to shoulder the executive, judicial and social responsibility. Fourth and most importantly, undue politicization has marred the efficient functioning of the panchayats. They have emerged as seats of power in villages, controlled by strong and powerful groups of people. Unless devolution and participation go hand in hand, it would be difficult to bridge the gap between the common man at the lowest rung of the societal ladder and the elected representatives at the top. To eliminate patronage, power brokers and vested interests, there is an urgent need to make the PRIs the most vibrant and effective instrument of democracy at the grassroots.

4.8 Summary

We have discussed above the evolution of PRIs in India. India's commitment to democracy, decentralization and development has resulted in considerable devolution of power and authority at the lower levels of governance. PRIs have been effective instruments of development through participation of people at the grassroots level. NGOs have also played a complimentary role in this regard. Needless to say that there are limitations and shortcomings in carrying out this task. Gram panchayats have undoubtedly raised hopes of vibrant democracy and accountability in administration. It is now being realized that the goals pertaining to social justice, participation, empowerment and good governance can only be realized when PRIs become the pillars of democracy in India.

4.9 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Trace the evolution of Panchayati Raj in India.
- (b) Analyze the role of PRIs in promoting grassroots democracy in India.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) Discuss the role of Panchayati raj in rural development.
- (b) Explain the significance of people's participation in PR.

3. Short questions :

- (a) Write a note on the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee.
- (b) What are the salient features of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act?

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Unit 1 □ Social Cleavages : Caste and Class

Structure

- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Features of the caste system
- 1.4 Characteristics of class society
- 1.5 Caste and class
- 1.6 Constitutional system, politics and caste
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 Sample questions
- 1.9 Bibliography

1.1 Objectives

On reading this unit we shall be able to understand -

- the unique features of Indian society
- the features of the caste system
- the differences and connections between caste and class
- the stand of the State on the question of caste
- the caste system in the political context

1.2 Introduction

The unique feature of Indian society, culture and politics is the caste system. It is a unique example of social stratification. Based primarily on Hindu religion, this system determines the individual's personal and social status. The influence of this system can be found even on persons belonging to other religious denominations - the Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and others.

The caste system is a unique social stratification system that is primarily a feature of India. It's influence can be noticed in almost every sphere of social life. Resting on mythical notions of difference the castes are hierarchically arranged which in turn becomes

obstructive to the notions of equality and democracy. Fragmented caste loyalty becomes a stumbling block on the path of nation-building. Very often we find caste identity gaining primacy over national identity. In the economic sphere not only does the individual or the group suffer because of caste, but even the development of the country suffers.

Caste is simultaneously a theoretical concept, a religious-cultural consciousness, and the structural manifestation of a form of social stratification. Needless to say, the two are dependent on each other and complementary of each other.

Over the passage of time the caste system has undergone many changes. It has coped with changing circumstances and, thereby, despite its illogical nature, managed to survive. Sometime the rigidity of the rules have intensified, sometimes they have become somewhat relaxed; at other times, while some rules appear to have become relaxed, others seem to have become more rigid.

Seen from a theoretical angle, according to this system Indian society is divided into four Varnas - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras. However, in reality we do not see the existence of the four Varnas. What we see is the reality of the existence of hundreds of castes or Jatis. Whether four Varnas ever existed or not remains a matter of debate of the scholars. According to some, the four Varnas were present in the past and in course of time fragmentation within them led to the emergence of hundreds of Jatis. Others, however, think that Varna stratification had existed only at the level of theory, it was never a reality; the reality always was the reality of the existence of Jati divisions. Without going into hair-splitting debates we may say that the stratification that we actually see as existing is that of the Jatis and not of the four Varnas. But in view of the theoretical similarities between the two concepts of Jati, and Varna the two are often treated as synonymous.

But then, the existence of the Jatis are much more region specific and their structural nature more flexible in terms of the course of material changes. A Jati found by a particular name in one region may not exist by that name in another region, yet in the latter place another Jati by another name may be found engaged in the same occupation and of the same social status.

1.3 Features of the Caste System

The caste system rests on the hierarchical positioning of the different caste groups. We can say, it is somewhat pyramidal in structure. At the apex of the pyramidal structure can be found the highest caste - the Brahmins. At the lowest end of the pyramid are multiple untouchable castes. In between these two caste groups, arranged at different levels of the

hierarchy, many other caste groups can be found. Since the position of a caste is in relation to the caste system, any effort to understand 'caste' must rest on an understanding of the 'caste system'. The notion of 'difference' amongst the castes underlines the caste system. There is no scientific basis of this notion, and it is totally antithetic to the idea of democracy, yet this system has become virtually synonymous with Indian society.

There are differences of opinion and different theories regarding the time of origin of the caste system as well as the factor/s that led to its emergence. But then, it may be said that most probably the system emerged from the time of the end of the Rgvedic period. According to some, ethnic differences led to the system while some others claimed that division of labour was at the root of the stratification form. Still others considered class considerations were responsible for the emergence of the system. In the view of certain analysts, however, not one factor but several factors were to account for the origin of the system.

Let us now discuss some of the main features of the caste system.

First, it is important to remember that this is a system of social stratification. All Hindus are brought within its purview. Which person will belong to which caste is not a matter of choice of the concerned individual. It depends on his identity at birth. It means, a person will bear the caste identity of his father just as his son will bear his identity. Caste identity cannot, thus, be acquired at will, nor can it be changed at will.

Secondly, the caste groups are endogamous. That means, marriages take place amongst members of the same caste group. As per the norm, a boy has to marry a girl of the same caste. Even though some exceptions are found with people marrying across castes, such inter-caste marriages are still only exceptions; in terms of numbers they are marginal and further, not supported by caste norms.

Thirdly, caste position is the determinant of all forms of social interactions. Not only does it determine the basis of matrimonial alliances; it also determines who can visit whom, who can invite whom, who can accept food from whom and a lot more.

Fourthly, it is pertinent to remember that the notions of 'purity' and 'pollution' form the ideological basis of the caste system. Resting on this basic, the hierarchic stratification of the castes take place. As per this understanding, Brahmins are believed to be the purest and the castes lower down in the hierarchy are deemed to be increasingly less pure or, they may be called, impure. At the lowest end are the untouchable castes who are also referred to as *ati-shudras* or *dalits*. In legal parlance the latter are today known to us as Scheduled Castes. Even though the practice of untouchability on grounds of caste stand prohibited, its continuance can still be noticed in different parts of the country. People belonging to the so-called untouchable castes are subject to various forms of inhuman treatment. They are

victims of different forms of torture. As and when they try to protest, the intensity of the torture increases.

Fifthly, it needs to be remembered that the caste system is the traditional basis of occupational division in India. Depending on a person's caste and the position of that caste in the caste system, the occupation of individuals were determined. The outline was laid down by the Shastras themselves. For example, the Brahmin was to concentrate on the pursuit of knowledge, do the worshipping of god; the Kshatriyas would engage in warfare; the Vaishyas in trade and the Shudras in physical labour. The occupational divisions developed largely along these lines. Over the passage of time, changes have come about in caste based occupations. Nevertheless, we still find that, barring exceptions, there is a very high concentration of low caste people in the less remunerative, arduous occupations. Not only are these occupations of low remunerative value and require hard labour; socially speaking, they are also considered to be less dignified occupations.

Sixthly, and above all, it needs to be remembered that this stratification system that is unique to India, is established in the name of god. The proponents of the caste system claim, on the basis of Hindu religious texts, that god created the different castes from different parts of his own body, giving them different levels of dignity, to perform different types of work. Thus it can easily be understood that even though the caste system has no scientific basic or social justification, the invocation of the name of god makes it acceptable to the minds of people. As a result, revolt of the lower caste members against the system remains limited and protest is weak.

Finally it may be said that even though it is uneven, there is a sort of give-and-take amongst the different castes. Expression of this could be found in the prevalence of the jajmani system. Even though that system has weakened today, it is by no means obliterated.

1.4 Characteristics of class society

By class we generally think of a population group having certain common characteristics that mark them out from the rest as different. There may be different bases of this difference of class. But most commonly we look at the economic basic for identification of class. For example, in a capitalist society we talk of the bourgeois class and the working class. In our discussion here, we shall look at class in terms of economic class.

In different societies, at different points of time the existence of multiple classes can be noticed. Their mutual relationships have different dimensions. Sometimes there is collaboration amongst certain classes, sometimes there is conflict. Sometimes several

classes come together into conflict with one or a conglomeration of several other classes. Through such conflict social transformation takes place and in place of the old equilibrium of classes a new equilibrium may be attained. This picture of class society primarily revolves around the mod of production. Changes in the mode of production bring about changes in the class scenario. In a new mode of production new classes emerge or gain in importance. Class conflict takes on new forms.

1.5 Caste and Class

While sociologists and political scientists consider both caste and class to be important in the Indian social system, they do not share similar views regarding their similarities, dissimilarities and mutual interlinks. On the whole, three viewpoints emerge. According to some, 'caste' and 'class' are the basis of two totally separate stratification systems. There are no similarities or interlinks between the two. Speaking of caste does not bring in the question of class; and, in any discussion of class talking of caste is not deemed relevant. A diametrically opposite viewpoint is that in the unique Indian context caste is synonymous with class. Here, through caste class division has been enforced. As proof it is pointed out that persons of low class are most commonly those who are low in terms of caste status while higher class people are commonly from the higher caste Hindu categories.

In between these two viewpoints there is still another viewpoint. According to that, caste and class are the basis of two different stratification systems; they are not the same. Many differences may be noted between them but at the same time there are also similarities and links between the two. To understand one of them it is imperative to understand the other.

The last viewpoint appears to be the most logical. Let us consider the reasons.

From the theoretical side if we see we shall find that there is a great deal of difference between caste and class. Caste identity is an unchangeable identity resting on religion and derived from birth. But that is not so in the case of class identity. Class identity does not have any religious basis. It is a social stratification system resting entirely on economic factors. Even if someone is born in a particular class that position is not unchangeable. With a change in the economic condition of the person, class position can also undergo a change. Citing an example we can say, as a result of economic disaster, the son of the owner of a factory can be transformed into a worker of a factory. In that case he undergoes a change of class position. Hence, the sort of change that is not possible in the case of caste is possible in the case of class.

As the caste system is connected with religion, this form of social stratification cannot

be found in all countries amongst all population groups. Outside India and Nepal, the existence of this system can be found in a limited number of countries amongst the Hindu population. But class stratification can be seen in all countries, even though the nature of such classification varies from country to country.

Compared to castes, classes are less numerous. In the case of castes we find the existence of hundreds of castes arranged hierarchically. Such is not the case when it comes to class. If we look at different periods of history, we never find the existence of more than five to seven classes. Amongst them also there are some main classes, the rest are essentially marginal both in terms of numbers and influence. As a result, the main conflict remains confined between two classes or two clusters of classes.

In spite of the fact that there are many such differences between caste and class, a close perusal of the scenario reveals that in India the two are closely linked with each other. In the case of castes even as we speak of 'purity' and 'pollution' in religious terms, in reality it makes for a complex socio-economic stratification. Caste determines who would own the means of production and control production, just as it determines who would put in the labour for production. In other words, these are the very determinants of class status. In post-independence India, in addition to a variety of constitutional legal safeguards members of untouchable castes as Scheduled Castes have got reservation facilities in education and employment. As a result, for at least a section of marginalized people improvement in education and work situation has been possible. Nonetheless, the reality is that, even today the less remunerative, labour-intensive, less dignified work is mostly done by people of the low castes. In those occupations we hardly find the caste Hindus. For example, in the work of agricultural labour, scavenging, mending shoes, low grade work in the factories, endangering life and collecting wood and honey from the forests are all done by either the low caste people or the tribes. On the other hand, the presence of these people in the high up, dignified and economically remunerative jobs is negligible. For example doctors, engineers, senior bureaucrats, professors are mostly caste Hindus.

Even though there are deep connections between caste and class generally the two are treated as separate. At the theoretical level, in discussions of society 'caste' and 'class' are often discussed. But in such discussions not only are the two treated separately but as opposite of one another. In protest movements also we find the existence of caste movements or class movements. For example, the dalit organizations concentrate on the caste factor but not so on the class factor or class struggle. Likewise, political parties or organizations connected with class struggles hardly take up the relevance of caste - the little that they do is from the post 1980s and that too is inadequate.

1.6 Constitutional System, Politics and Caste

Under the constitutional law of independent India, caste based discrimination is prohibited. All citizens, irrespective of their religion or caste, are equally entitled to the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights. Every adult citizen has the right to vote and can also be a candidate for an election. The prohibition on untouchability is one of the fundamental rights. These apart, there are special constitutional provisions to help the members of the untouchable castes to overcome their age-old social disabilities and exclusion. Resting on these constitutional provisions many laws have also been enacted. As a result of all these a certain improvement in the conditions of the oppressed castes has taken place but it has not led to the abolition of the caste system or caste oppression. Many people continue to be victims of untouchability and caste violence.

In the political sphere caste identity is extremely important. On the one hand, there is the effort to hold on to the existing socio-economic layout, on the other there is the effort on the part of the low castes to change it or challenge it. Much of this socio-economic struggle is undertaken politically in the political space. Parliamentary democracy being largely dependent on votes, that is numbers, and caste identity being vital in the moulding of collective group decisions, the different political parties try to build up their own respective caste-based vote banks.

In 1953 and 1978 two backward classes commissions were appointed in India to identify the 'Other Backward Classes'. The first commission was headed by Kaka Kalelkar, the second by B. P. Mandal. The commissions mainly attempted to find the roots of class conflict and socio economic disparity of caste groups. The first commission had submitted its report in 1955 and the second in 1980. Neither of the commissions could deny the links between backwardness and position in the caste hierarchy. The government did not accept the recommendations of the first commission. After a long time the second commission was appointed. The constitution itself had provided for the appointment of this sort of commission. The second commission, that is the Mandal Commission, identified fifty two percent of India's population as backward. Different groups of people were included in this category. A large section comprised of low castes; apart from them some other castes and sections of the Muslim population were included. For the advancement of this section of the population, the Mandal Commission made a variety of recommendations. These included the recommendation of reservations in the field of jobs. However, keeping in mind a fifty percent ceiling on reservations imposed by the judiciary the commission recommended 27% reservation for the OBCs. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that already there was reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of 15% and 7.5% respectively. With the addition of the 27% reservation for the OBCs the total

quantum of reservations stood at 49.5%. In 1990 the central government decided to partially implement the Mandal Commission recommendations. That included the recommendation of 27% reservation. The decision evoked sharp debates. A caste-wise polarization of sorts took place between those for and against it. The Other Backward Classes or the OBCs became much more conscious and organized than before. Moreover, despite the existence of differences, disagreements and conflicts, a degree of shared feeling developed between them and the Scheduled Castes and tribes.

From the 1980s in particular, in the political arena in different parts of the country the low and middle castes began gaining in importance. This became all the more evident since the decade of the 1990s. Along-side middle caste leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh and Nitish Kumar we have seen the rise of the dalit leader, Mayawati in Indian politics. Increasingly low, oppressed caste position was becoming the basis of self respect and identity. Clinging to the traditions of the caste, folk tales, leaders, etc identity was being developed, which in turn was helping them to politically get mobilized.

1.7 Summary

Caste based stratification of society has existed in India since ancient times. Even though it is primarily a stratification of the Hindu community, the other communities are not free from its influence. Many changes have taken place over time. But, still, even today, much of social status and activities develop on the basis of caste identity. The Constitution upholds values that are diametrically opposite to this undemocratic, in-egalitarian and unscientific system.

The Indian constitutional system rests on the principles of equality, fraternity and justice. In it, there is no place for caste based discrimination. Untouchability is prohibited. Yet, we can see that even today in India the class structure is largely caste determined. India's parliamentary politics has been converted to the arithmetic of caste. Against this backdrop, we find members of the long-oppressed, low castes clinging to their caste identities and intensely striving to get organized in their efforts to tilt the balance of Indian politics in their favour.

1.8 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Discuss elaborately about India's caste based social stratification system.
- (b) Explain the connection between caste and class.

3. Discuss how important caste identity is in the political sphere.

2. Short-essay type questions :

1. What is the constitutional stand on caste?
2. With what purpose was the Mandal Commission set up ?
3. Is the influence of the caste system found only on Hindu society?

3. Short questions :

1. Can a person change his caste identity at his own will ?
2. When was the Kaka Kalelkar Commission formed?
3. What percentage of India's population did the Mandal Commission identify as backward?

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Unit 2 □ Business and Politics

Structure

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 The emergence of Indian industry in historical perspective
- 2.4 Emergence and growth of business organisations
- 2.5 Pressure of business organizations on Indian politics
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Sample questions
- 2.8 Bibliography

2.1 Objectives

On reading this unit we shall be able to understand -

- the origin of industrialization in India
- the history behind the emergence of business organizations
- the political interests of the business organizations and their role in exerting pressure
- the *sort* of tactics they resort to as pressure groups

2.2 Introduction

In the politics of modern states the importance of pressure groups is immense. However, theoretical research of it is rather limited. Whatever has been done is primarily in the west and concentrate on the pressure groups of western states. The role of pressure groups of developing states has remained largely unexplored. Yet, the importance of pressure groups in those states can hardly be denied. But, to understand them properly it is important to be familiar with the social systems of those states. It is, also, important to know about the economy and the evolving course of history.

Pressure groups use different tactics to try and bring government policy in line with their interests. Sometimes they try to mould public opinion in their favour; and it is for this

that they often try to control the media. Sometimes they try to influence the ministers and members of parliament, indulge in lobbying and give gifts, etc. sometimes in the same manner they try to influence the bureaucrats. Sometimes, making use of the presence of their or their friendly organisations' representatives in different committees they try to exert their influence. In certain cases, there are provisions recognized under the law itself whereby the pressure groups can convey their views. On the whole, it can be said that pressure groups in different countries, in different ways, according to their own diverse capabilities, use legal, extra-legal and illegal tactics for influencing the government.

In the case of India also we find the existence of different pressure groups and their attempts to influence policy. They can be found in different forms. Sometimes, people with environmental concerns come together and get organized, sometimes they come together in protecting the interests of some marginalized section of the population, sometimes they are seen to lobby for farmers or industrial workers and still others speak for business group interests. It may be said that in Indian politics the importance of the 'group' and bargaining by the group occupies a wide range.

In India we find the emergence of different organizations seeking to uphold the interests of business groups and extract their claims from the politicians, government and bureaucrats. These include NASSCOM, Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) and Associated Chambers of Commerce (Assocham). Today, following liberalization, the organizations of multinational companies have also become powerful. For example, the American Chamber of Commerce. But then, the multinational corporations do not lobby too much at the lower levels. Their attempts to exert influence are concentrated at the top levels of political leadership and government. That is why, when Walmart wishes to lobby for FDI it does not do so at the lower levels but makes Hilary Clinton lobby to the Government of India.

2.3 The emergence of Indian industry in historical perspective

The entry and advance of capital into India followed complex social and economic routes since the time of British rule. The history of British domination in India developed on the base of the collapse of India's traditional agrarian economy and destruction of small industries. During the early years of the East India Company's rule the British were keen on exporting their manufactured goods to India and as such destroyed the indigenous industries. The path of India's socio-economic exploitation was opened up first by domination of the East India Company and subsequently by the British government. To facilitate the extraction and transport of raw materials from India for meeting the needs of the Industrial Revolution the British government was compelled to improve the communication

network; railways were inaugurated and centring around them capital started flowing in into different industries. British capital started entering the fields of mining i.e. the coal industry, tea gardens and tea production, jute industry, and other fields. Unlimited sources of raw material and cheap labour made India one of the places of attraction for the British capitalists who were wishing to make their investments. India's industrialisation thus progressed. Gradually a section of Indians too became capable of investing in industry. During the Swadeshi movement the call for the boycott of British goods furthered the interests of the Indian industrialists. In the beginning of the twentieth century the steel plant of the Tatas came up. This apart, textile industries developed in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Bengal. It may be said that the base of modern industries developed in India between 1850 to 1870. By 1890 quite a few big industries had come up in India. As a result, several lakh people came to be employed in the factories and mines.

Even before India gained independence, particularly between 1914 to 1947 the base of Indian owned and controlled industries, however small, was laid. The two World Wars and the recession of the 1930s, better known as the Great Depression, somewhat weakened imperialist dominance and control. And, that situation was used by the Indian industrialists to their advantage. The emergence of the big industrialists such as the Tatas, Birlas, Singhanias, Dalmiyas and Jains had taken place before independence itself. Their interests were involved in diverse areas such as business, banking, industry, communication, etc.

Besides this, it is pertinent to remember that in post-independence India on the basis of the interest of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru and widespread popular support the path of mixed economy and planned development was adopted. Within the first three plan periods a strong public sector developed which contributed significantly towards the development of primary industries. The freedom of unrestricted functioning that private sector industries enjoyed during the British days was no longer possible after independence. There was the commitment to undertake industrialization in a planned fashion within the frame of a democratic political system; as a result the restrictions of governmental rules and regulations became more stringent for the private organization. Gradually there emerged, what in popular parlance is termed as the 'license -quota raj.' In order to access governmental permission and facilities corruption in different forms crept in at different levels. From small to big, the names of businessmen got entangled one after the other, in scams for giving money or gifts for getting things done.

Following the acceptance of the liberalization policy, after 1991 national and foreign private industrial organizations began to enjoy much greater freedom than what they did earlier. Needless to say, in the determination of policies the views of industrial establishments became much more important. Not only that, politically also a greater acceptability of the

opinion of industries was there. The interests of industry needs to be given priority - such seemed to be the mainstream political mood. This position was clearly different from the earlier position where precedence was given to 'democracy' and 'welfare oriented politics' and industry was expected to adjust to their requirements.

2.4 Emergence and growth of business organizations

Even before India became independent quite a few business organizations emerged with the purpose of representing and protecting the interests of industry. After independence, with the aim of maintaining smooth relations with the central government and bureaucrats many business organizations set up their communication units or 'industrial embassies' in Delhi. Their main intent was to maintain smooth relations with the bureaucracy and get things done. From the side of the government also it became important to keep vigil over the private organizations and develop legal modus operandi for interactions with them. As such, the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951 was adopted.

Of the business organizations in India Ficci or the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry is worth mentioning. Ficci was established in 1927. Its history is associated with the history of India's freedom movement, industrialization and economic development. This organization had been set up by G. D. Birla and Purushottam Das Thakurdas on the advice of Gandhi. This is one of the oldest and largest apex bodies of India's different chambers of commerce and industries. It undertakes different programmes with the intention of creating a congenial environment for industry. These activities include research, attracting the media's attention, arranging for discussions between the representatives of government and industry, etc.

In 1920 the Associated Chambers of Commerce (Assocham) was formed. It was primarily created to uphold the interests of British business organizations that existed in different parts of India. With the passage of time, however, there has been a sort of indianisation of Assocham. There are several thousand members of the Chambers of Commerce associated with it. Its primary aim is to bring about the expansion of national and international business; reduction of huddles in the path of business and the creation of congenial conditions for trade and business.

2.5 Pressure of business organizations on Indian politics

After independence, at least during the first decade, the voice of business organizations was feeble in Parliament. But gradually they gained substantial strength as pressure group. But then, since before independence itself businessmen and business organizations had been showing interest in politics and seeking to influence it.

The development of business organizations take place in the political milieu. They have to work within the frame of governmental rules and regulations. Hence, much of their capabilities of functioning or their inability to function, their successes and failures rest on the sort of rules and policies that are adopted. As a result they cannot remain uninterested in politics; quite naturally they try to mould the course of politics in their own favour.

Keeping control over the political parties is one of the mechanisms. The business world keeps a sharp eye on what the programmes of the political parties are and who are chosen as candidates for elections. On the one hand they try to influence the policies and selection of candidates or leaders of the political parties, on the other they try to promote the party that they consider to be friendly towards them. Beginning from the provision of funds the latter's propaganda campaigns are also assisted in different ways. Different business organizations pin their hopes on one or more political parties. When they feel that they have made a wrong bet, they shift their support from one to another party. Needless to say, they have greater interest in the relatively bigger national level parties.

In their efforts to influence governmental policies, business organizations often organize discussion meetings of political leaders, bureaucrats and business representatives where exchange of views on business matters becomes possible. Through these discussion meeting business organizations try to sensitise political leaders and bureaucrats to the interests of business. Sometimes we find them organizing seminars and exhibitions at the national or international levels.

Sometimes we find representatives of business interests making representations to parliamentarians, ministers or bureaucrats explaining their position and demanding suitable legislation. Sometimes they make written representations, at other times they attempt to exert personal influence. Even though legally speaking lobbying is not recognized, in reality lobbying does take place. In the efforts to get things done sometimes there is an exchange of cash, sometimes gifts or other facilities are made available. In post-independence India the name of business has got entangled with the tales of many political scams. Recently, from what was published in *The Hindu* (12 December 2012) in the context of information leaked regarding the lobbying of Walmart, we come to know that at least 27 Indian companies have spent money in order to lobby for their interests in the United States. These include, Reliance, Ranbaxy, Tata Sons, Wipro, etc.

2.6 Summary

The influence of pressure groups on India's political system is substantial. With modernization and industrialization amongst the pressure groups that have emerged as extremely important are the business organizations. Apart from lending their support to

specific political parties in specific situations, contributing to the building of their election funds, they are seen to lobby in many ways to influence the parliamentarians; in some situations they even try to influence the bureaucrats and get things done.

What the country's industrial policy will be is politically determined. Ministers and parliamentarians have an important role to play in this respect. The interests of business organizations remain inseparably linked with it. As a result they try to mould governmental policies in different ways - sometimes trying at the individual level, at other times at the organizational level. On the one hand we see the influence of big businessmen such as the Tatas and the Ambanis, on the other hand is the importance of organizations such as Assocham and Ficci. Needless to say, post-90s, as the government has given greater importance to privatization the importance of business interests in politics has increased substantially.

2.7 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

1. Discuss the importance of business organizations as pressure groups in India.
2. Explain the history of the emergence and rise of business organizations in India.
3. Discuss how business organizations, as pressure groups, seek to influence politics in India.

2. Short-essay type questions :

1. How did industrialization develop in India during the period of British rule?
2. Write a short note on Assocham .
3. Discuss in brief Ficci.

3. Short questions :

1. What was the development policy of India in the post-independence period under the rule of Nehru?
2. What is 'industrial embassy' ?
3. When was Ficci established?

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Unit 3 □ Women and Politics

Structure

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 The Indian Constitutional system and Women
- 3.4 Women in Indian Politics
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Sample Questions
- 3.7 Bibliography

3.1 Objectives

On reading this unit we shall be able to understand—

- the social position of women in India
- The root causes of women's oppression in India
- The extent of women's participation in politics in india
- The need to enhance women's participation in the political sphere and the various measures adopted

3.2 Introduction

If we look at the pages of history it becomes evident that women in India have perpetually been entrapped in the rules and regulations of caste and patriarchal society. In the classical Hindu religious texts women were clearly relegated to an inferior position than men. The basic tenet of caste distinction is endogamy which demands strict regulation of women's sexuality. Hence, chastity, child marriage and constant supervision were deemed as some of the necessary measures for preventing her from treading the path of 'sin'. Woman's destiny was that she be first under the control of her father, then her husband and finally her son. Socially, there were clear divisions made between man's work and women's work. The world outside the home was considered the place fit for the man's activities, and that within the home as place for the woman. Decision making and display

of strength or power was within the domain of man; the daily chores of the domestic work, household, child bearing and child rearing, care- giving to the family members were seen as the responsibilities of the woman. Here, it is pertinent to remember that the vast majority of Indian women are Hindus; today they comprise about 80% of the total population. Hence, the impact of these values on them are immense. Amongst the other minority population groups patriarchal values are deeply entrenched, hence the gender division of labour is more-or-less the same amongst them. Amongst them, too, it is the practice to consider women as inferior to men and oppress them.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, through various social movements, women first gained access to education. Social activists also took up cudgels against the oppression of women. Initially, the struggles were led by men and elite class women; but at that point the struggles were not directed against traditional patriarchal system as such. In the beginning of the twentieth century in Bengal women like Sarala Devi Chaudhuri and Saroj Nalini Dutt set up the first Mahila Samiti for building up of women's independent identity. Other women's organizations were formed in Madras. For example, the Women's Indian Association (1917) and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC, 1927) were set up. In 1917, under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu several women's organizations made a representation to the Montagu-Chelmsford Committee demanding voting rights for women under the new constitutional system. From the side of women, this was an important primary step in their demanding equal political rights with men. Gradually, opinion in favour of women's voting rights began to gain in strength. But then, the opposite viewpoint too was very clear. Their main argument was that women were mostly uneducated and confined to the purdah, hence giving them this right was not justified. But on behalf of women's organizations strong movements were built up. In 1921, in the provinces of Bombay and Madras, women got their first right to vote. In Bengal that right was gained in 1926. Gradually the demand of women to be elected to legislative bodies also came up. There too more or less the same lines of argument were seen in favour and against the idea. But ultimately that right too was won by women. The first woman member of a legislative body was elected in 1927 to the Madras Legislative Council. She was Muthulakshmi Reddy.

As women's voices became stronger we find that since the decade of the 1930s various laws were enacted to safeguard the rights of women from different angles. Needless to say, women's struggles for securing their civil rights were indeed difficult. The opposition of men were often expressed in terms of religion and traditional values and customs. The stand of the members of the Indian National Congress was also divided.

3.3 The Indian Constitutional system and Women

The constitution of Independent India gives women the same rights as men. It is their Fundamental Right. The same legal safeguards, same opportunities in the field of government jobs come side by side with the prohibition of discrimination in the public sphere. With universal adult suffrage being accepted, women have become politically relevant. Resting on the constitutional provisions, parliament and the state legislatures have at different times enacted laws for the advancement, development and protection of women; the judiciary has also handed down many positive verdicts for the safeguard of the rights and protection of women in the course of the disposal of different cases. For various special projects for women, government grants have been provided for.

In the decade of the 1950s a number of laws were enacted to bring in major changes in Hindu Personal Law. These strengthened the rights of women in matters relating to property, inheritance and marriage. With time, many more laws have been enacted, the net result of which was to strengthen women's rights and security in relation to the family, workplace and society at large.

In spite of all these efforts women continue to be denied their rights to security and justice. In 1971 the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare of the Government of India had appointed a Committee headed by Dr Phulrenu Guha. The purpose of the Committee was to examine the social position of women, their education, work opportunities etc against the backdrop of constitutional, legal and administrative provisions and make an assessment of the same. The United Nations had declared 1975 as the International Year for Women. In that context, it asked all countries to prepare reports on the condition of women in their respective countries. It was against that backdrop that India formed the Committee. The Committee's Report was published in 1974. The Report unraveled startling facts. In the Report titled 'Towards Equality' the Government's promise of establishing gender equality was seriously questioned. This Report for the first time stated that constitutional guarantees of equality and justice had not been achieved in the case of women. The Committee members in the Report in fact noted that after independence not only had women's position not improved, in certain areas it had become worse.

In the International Decade for Women many programmes were adopted. Instead of adopting 'welfare' oriented measures, emphasis was placed on 'developmental' measures. Different programmes were taken up by different ministries for training, education and income-generation of women. To monitor these programmes women's cells were formed in different ministries. In 1993 legislation was passed for the setting up of the National Commission for Women. One after the other, women's commissions were set up in different states including West Bengal. In the Ninth-Five Year Plan (1997-2002) the

Government of India took up the issue of empowerment of women as one of its primary goals. 2001 was declared as Women's Empowerment Year. Women are seen occupying important posts, as ambassador sent to foreign countries and even as Prime Minister and Chief Ministers.

Alongside this an opposite picture comes up. It is the picture of the life story of the ordinary woman. There, instead of rights, equality, justice we find the existence of marginalization, violence, torture in different forms that bring to the surface the many facets of gender discrimination. Female feticide and infanticide, rape, bride killing become daily news. Social and family pressures constrict the woman's world from different directions. Its manifestations can be seen in the many fields such as lack of health security, illiteracy or limited literacy in comparison to men and lack of employment opportunities. On the whole it can be said that women remain as a large population group lagging behind.

3.4 Women in Indian Politics

Politics is for men, women are unsuited for it - this has been the traditional patriarchal attitude. It is thought that politics is not for women because what politics generally deals with - war, conflict and decision making - are outside the purview of women. It is said, these undermine the femininity of women and are against their nature. As such, whether in India or abroad, the participation of women in active politics is discouraged. From ancient times it can be seen that barring a few women who have played active roles in politics, women's participation in politics has by and large remained limited. Of course, the names of women like Rani Lakshmi Bai, Jhalkaribai and Uda Devi are there.

In the twentieth century during the Non Cooperation Movement led by Gandhi large numbers of women came to be associated with politics. From the decade of the 1920s women's participation in mass movements such as the Non-cooperation Movement (1921), Civil Disobedience Movement (1931), Quit India Movement, etc., was significant.

During the days of British rule a few brave women could be found playing leading roles in different revolutionary parties. For example, there was Pritilata Waddadar, Kalpana Datta and others who were directly associated with the Chittagong Armoury Raid.

At different points of time women have also been found to actively participate in peasant movements. In the Tebhaga Movement in Bengal (1946-50), the Telengana Movement in Andhra Pradesh (1948-51) and later in the Naxalbari Movement in the decade of the 70s women were seen participating as militant activists.

Yet, a basic cause of anxiety remains in post independence India as women's active participation in the parliamentary democratic process has remained essentially limited. In

fact, their presence is more visible in the fields of non-conventional political movements such as environmental movements, anti-liquor movements, peace movements and even revolutionary movements. But, the field of conventional politics remains male dominated. Even though women can be seen as voters their presence in important decision making positions is negligible. In terms of numbers it can be found that women's presence in top positions of the major political parties is limited. Decision making in the parties remain in the hands of men.

If we look at Parliament we can understand how distressing the scenario is. Legally speaking, on contesting in the elections and getting elected, women have the right to be the peoples' representative; but, the reality is that the number of female contestants as such remain limited. And, the number of women getting elected and reaching the parliament is still lesser. Where women's proportion in the population of the country is almost the same (a little less) than men, the percentage of women elected to the Lok Sabha from the time of the beginning to the thirteenth Lok Sabha could never reach more than ten percent. Presently it has just crossed ten percent. The scenario of women's representation in the Rajya Sabha is more or less similar. If we turn to the states, there too the picture is not much different. The number of women representatives in the legislative assemblies is very poor. Needless to say, with such limited presence in the legislative bodies women are hardly in a position to make any meaningful contribution in the field.

Alongside the legislatures, in the ministries too the presence of women representatives has remained consistently low. Whether it is at the central or state levels their numbers have remained a cause of concern. The problem is not just of numbers. Even if someone does become a minister, finding a berth in the cabinet, which is at the centre of decision making, is even more difficult. This apart, it can be seen that the departments that women are given charge of are either those that directly deal with women, or at least deal with women-related matters; for example, women and child development, welfare, health , etc. Responsibilities of ministries of home, defence or foreign affairs are seldom given to them. In other words, women are considered unsuited for those fields where big decisions are taken and which are the sites for demonstration of full power and strength.

It was pointed out in the 1974 *Towards Equality* Report that we have already referred to, that Indian politics has totally failed in bringing about the empowerment of women. Even though women are in terms of numbers nearly half the population of the country, their declining position in terms of political power seem to be increasingly converting them into a minority group. The Committee had made certain recommendations for countering this trend. They were - a) political parties should fix quotas for women candidates , b) in municipal bodies a number of seats should be set aside for women, c) as a temporary measure, women's panchayats should be formed. It may be noted, here,

however, that in the Report reservation of seats for women in parliament or the state legislatures was not recommended. The reasons given were that such reservations would lead to a narrowing down of the vision of women, their interests cannot be separated from those of different economic, political and social groups or classes; if such special representation is given similar demands would come up from the side of other groups that could become injurious for national integrity. And, if reservations are once given it would be difficult to withdraw them.

By the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, India introduced one third reservation of seats for women at the level of the panchayats and municipal bodies. As a result, at the levels of the panchayats and municipalities the entry of women increased. Of course it has to be noted here that though the entry of women at this level increased, they had to encounter various hurdles in their efforts to play meaningful roles. Frequently they face negative societal and family pressures when they seek to express their own independent opinions or take a political stand. But then, the extent to which women representatives followed the instructions of male family members in the earlier years has now somewhat declined. There are now many instances where women representatives are forcefully putting forward their own standpoints.

Even though the representation of women has increased at the grass-root panchayat and municipal levels, it has not increased at the levels of parliament or state assemblies. As the representation of women continues to be appalling at the level of parliament and the state assemblies women's organizations have long been demanding reservation of seats for women at those levels. In 1996 the 81st constitution amendment bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha seeking to ensure one third reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies. But then, till today it has not been possible to get the women's reservation bill passed by parliament and made into a law.

There are many factors that deter women from actively entering the political arena and effectively participating in the political processes.

On the whole it may be noted that the dominance of patriarchal values in society and politics keep women dissociated from the political sphere. Where we do find women playing an active role in politics it is often as representative of a male member who for some or other reason is unable to play the role, or to work in support of him. In the Indian political scenario on the death of an active politician we find his wife or daughter entering the political arena. For example, that appears to be the situation in the cases of Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Jayalalitha, etc. Indira Gandhi entered the political scene under her father's guidance; and, following the latter's demise that helped her to gain support on her father's image. Sonia Gandhi came up as the leader of the Indian National Congress after

the death of Rajeev Gandhi resting on the image of being his wife. In state politics, in the same way, the ascent of Jayalalitha took place resting on her identity as the partner of M.G. Ramachandran. Thus, in many cases women get recognition and find entry into the political space on the basis of the identity of some man. Moreover, in the case of most women who enter politics, it is possible for them to do so because there is either active familial encouragement, or at least support. If the male members of a family are actively associated with politics, women of that family are encouraged or permitted to participate in the politics of that particular political party; but not any other politics. Thus, women's participation in politics or its absence largely depends on the requirements of men and is subject to their approval.

Being socially oppressed, women naturally get marginalized in the political sphere. In the political parties they cannot find place as major decision makers. At best they remain as workers at the lower levels. Patriarchal values and styles of functioning with the political parties keep the women marginalized within the organization. As a result they fail to actively contribute to national politics.

Women often feel helpless in the wake of the large scale violence and display of muscle power that is so often associated with elections. As women are physically weaker than men they prefer to keep away from such violence and muscle power. Unfortunately, politics and the politics of muscle power often become synonymous. As such, many women are afraid to enter politics.

Due to the above factors and also because there are no reserved seats for women except at the grass root level, women appear reluctant to enter into a field of uneven contest with men. And, the very factors that account for the low level of participation or absence of women in parliamentary politics are the factors that get further reinforced by the low presence or absence of women.

As a result, on the one hand, women's overall development is hampered. On the other hand, it is not possible for them to play any meaningful role in the determination of governmental policies; it becomes difficult for them to influence the adoption of necessary legislation for protecting women's interest. On the other hand, India's overall development and democratic process gets undermined. For identifying the correct path of development it is imperative to consult and know about the views of the affected persons. Yet, here, almost half the population remains dissociated from the decision making process. They have to try to exert their influence and pressure either through male representatives, or directly from outside the political system. Moreover, we should remember that for the true flourishing of democracy it is urgent that people of all levels enthusiastically participate in the democratic process. In this situation the deficiency is clearly evident. Democracy remains flawed.

But then, there is the ray of hope. The protest voices of women are becoming more and more loud and organized. This is particularly so after the decade of the 70s. From the 1970s and 1980s we find movements emerging in many non-conventional areas and forms. On the one hand there was the movement based on the notion of total revolution propagated by Jaiprakash Narain, the demand for equality put forward by the leftist political parties, movements like the Chipko movement seeking to protect the environment; on the other hand, there was the women's movement progressively gaining strength. Against this entire backdrop, women's problems and their demands became all the more important.

3.5 Summary

On the whole the position of women in India is a cause of extreme anxiety. In the patriarchal social system women are still oppressed from different angles. Viewed against different parameters it becomes evident that this large population group of the country is forced to lag behind in comparison to men.

In the political arena they are marginal. Notwithstanding the many democratic promises and assurances the fact remains that they are largely dissociated from the mainstream of politics. Although a few powerful women in the political space can draw our attention, the reality is that very few women get the chance to contest in elections and a negligible number can make it to the legislatures. Hence, as legislators, women hardly get the opportunity to present their views regarding their lives, or influence the governmental policies of the democratic country. This is extremely damaging for women as a whole and also the country.

But then, hope lies in the fact that today women have become much more conscious of their own problems. They are raising the demands that women's problems should be looked at separately and not in terms of routine democratic struggles or class analyses. Women are forming their own organizations in different states; publishing magazines and periodicals through which they speak for themselves. They are also enthusiastically participating in many non-conventional struggles. Taking the advantage of reservation at the level of panchayat and municipal bodies, women are today finding it possible to participate in larger numbers in the political processes at that level. They are today vocal in demanding opportunities of greater representation through reservation facilities at the level of parliament and the state legislatures. It is not that women are simply seeking to come into the limelight. Today they are trying to become active in the corridors of governmental power and the policy making levels of the political parties.

3.6 Sample Questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Discuss the position of women in Indian society.
- (b) Examine the factors responsible for women's marginalization in Indian politics.
- (c) What are the implications of the absence of adequate representation of women in the political field?

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) What is the position of women under Indian constitutional law ?
- (b) Why was reservation of seats for women in parliament not recommended in the Towards Equality Report ?
- (c) How effective is reservation of seats for women at the panchayat level ?

3. Short questions :

- (a) When was the *Towards Equality* Report published?
- (b) When was the International Decade of Women observed?
- (c) Which constitutional amendments led to the introduction of reservation of seats for women at the level of panchayats and municipal bodies?

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Unit 4 □ Regionalism and Ethnicity

Structure

- 4.1 Objectives**
- 4.2 Introduction : The historical background of the emergence of regionalism**
- 4.3 Regional demands and the formation of new states**
- 4.4 National politics and the importance of regional parties**
- 4.5 Regionalism and the many sides of politics**
- 4.6 Summary**
- 4.7 Sample questions**
- 4.8 Bibliography**

4.1 Objectives

On reading this unit we shall be able to understand—

- **The causes of the rise of regionalism in India**
- **About different important regional movements**
- **The role and importance of regional parties**
- **the many sides of the politics of regionalism**

4.2 Introduction : The historical background of the emergence of regionalism

In different regions of India people of different ethnic identities, linguistic and cultural groups can be found. The immense diversity is an unique feature of India. It is not a new feature. It is linked to the distant past - to the history of the development of this region. In this vast area at different points of time people from different parts of the world have come and settled down to make it their home. There have been clashes between their cultures and the cultures of different local population groups, sometimes there has been a link up, sometimes through the processes of mutual interactions new cultural patterns have emerged. In some places people have tried to give themselves a separate local regional

identity. In some cases this develops around ethnic identity, sometimes language, while in some other situations place or feeling of 'homeland' finds primacy.

Regionalism does not simply involve the love for a region. This love often takes the form of some sort of conflict with the state or national government. Due to the regional feeling, people of the region who share those thoughts believe that their and their regions interests are being directly undermined or neglected both by the state of which the region is a part as well as by the central government. Resting on this line of thinking and aiming at achieving the demands of the region, different types of regional movements crop up. Sometimes they are peaceful, sometimes militant movements. Sometimes both the forms of struggles continue side by side. Sometimes, it takes the form of animosity towards people living outside the region, or towards those from other regions residing in the identified region.

At the time of India's independence nation building, or consolidating the identity of the Indian nation was the greatest challenge; to generate in all the sense of Indian Citizenship and generate feeling of a pride regarding it. The main aim was to give primacy to the Indian identity over and above the many fragmented bases of loyalties. With an eye to attaining this goal, the mainstream of the nationalist movement was built up in pre-independence days. On the one hand, efforts were made to build up the movement on the basis of national identity; on the other hand attempts were on to associate the diverse cultural and regional population groups. At the centre of it all was the principle of 'unity in diversity'.

At the time of the drafting of the constitution the framers of the constitution had this in mind. We find that within the frame of a federal system efforts were made to harmonise the interests of different population groups and different regions. Two Houses of Parliament were formed. In the second chamber, that is the Rajya Sabha, regional representation was provided for. But then, that representation was not on the basis of uniform representation of all the states, but on the basis of the proportion of population. As a result, the representation from the larger states were greater while the smaller states had a lesser share of representation. Apart from this, it is pertinent to remember that, in the federal system that was adopted there was clearly a bias in favour of the centre. In comparison to the states, the centre was more powerful.

4.3 Regional demands and the formation of new states

From the time of independence itself regional discontent was evident in different parts of India.

In the first two decades after independence, the issue of language came up as the most

important basis of regional demands. The problem had mainly two dimensions. First, there was the opposition to the centre's language policy. Secondly, there was the demand for the reorganisation of states on the basis of language.

Let us look at the first demand. Even though a number of languages were given recognition as official languages by the constitution, only Hindi was given the status of official language for the centre. While the use of English was permitted to continue till 1965, it was decided that thereafter Hindi was to replace it. The main argument for Hindi was that although in terms of the total population they were not a majority, the number of Hindi speaking people were the maximum.

But giving this importance to Hindi was a cause of dissatisfaction amongst the people of the non-Hindi speaking regions. This discontent spread rapidly particularly in the states of southern India and took the form of agitations against Hindi and the Centre.

To start with, the leaders of the anti-Hindi agitation demanded that the time set for the transition to Hindi as the official language of the Centre be deferred. Later, they changed their stand and insisted that they would never ever accept Hindi. Their slogan was : Hindi never, English ever. In Tamil Nadu a powerful movement was built up by the DMK and the Tamilnad Students Anti Hindi Agitation Council. This agitation marked by language riots, suicides, mass arrests of thousands of people, destruction of public property and deaths in police firings, rapidly spread to other parts of the country. The agitation spread to Kerala, Pondicherry and even to West Bengal. However, it did not take on such intense forms in all these places. Ultimately, with the central government softening its stance on the implementation of Hindi led to the agitators withdrawing the agitation. In a 1965 message to the nation, the then Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri reiterated Jawaharlal Nehru's assurance that English would continue to be used as an alternative language as long as people so desired. The decision would be taken by the non-Hindi speaking people. Hindi would not be imposed on anyone. Later, in December 1967 the Official Language Act (1963) was amended incorporating with the assurances of Nehru and Shastri. Even though the issue of official language was not fully resolved, the tensions around it were somewhat reduced.

However, the problem of official language of the centre was not the only problem. Centring around the issue of language the demand for the formation of linguistic states was one of the major linguistic demands. From immediately after independence itself agitations began to surface around this issue in different parts of the country.

At the time of the drafting of the constitution the question of demarcation of state boundaries on the basis of language had come up in the Constituent Assembly. In 1948 the Linguistic Provinces Commission was formed under the leadership of S. K. Dar. But

that Commission had not expressed its opinion in favour of the linguistic demarcation of state boundaries; it felt such demarcation would be against national integrity and also lead to administrative difficulties. As such, we find that the Constituent Assembly did not accept the principle of formation of states on linguistic lines. Nevertheless, strong demands in favour of it remained. Particularly in southern India.

In 1953 the government of India under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru appointed the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) to look into the details of the issue of states' boundaries. After two years, that is in 1955, this commission submitted its report to the government. In its Report the commission stated that subject to administrative and economic considerations, states reorganization along linguistic lines may be made. But then, Bombay and Punjab were not to be divided. On the basis of the SRC Report in 1956 Parliament passed the States Reorganisation Act. As a result fourteen states and six centrally administered union territories came into existence. But the problem was not solved.

Widespread agitations against the States Reorganisation Act took place in Maharashtra and Punjab. Finally, in 1960, the central government decided to bifurcate Bombay between Maharashtra and Gujarat. Maharashtra got Bombay city, while Ahmedabad became the Capital of Gujarat. Still some years later, Punjab was divided into Hindi speaking Haryana and Punjabi speaking Punjab. With this it may be said that the linguistic reorganization of states was more or less complete.

But regionalism did not remain confined to language. Regional identities of tribal communities, regional demands of separate cultural groups were at the centre of many political and non-political demands around which movements developed and organizations were formed to carry forward the struggles. On the one hand there was the dissatisfaction of being marginalized, and on the other hand there was the grievance around the perceived notion of others getting a disproportionately better deal. The concept of 'Sons of the Soil' comes up in different forms.

In the Jharkhand and the north eastern regions of India strong regional feelings of the tribal people developed mainly around economic and identity demands. From the immediate post independence period itself the lack of development and welfare programmes was the cause of deep and prolonged discontent amongst these people. On the basis of that the demand for autonomy developed. In some situations this demand took the form of the demand for the formation of a separate independent state, in some cases the demand for statehood within India was raised. In some cases again with the passage of time we find the agitators shifting their stance.

In the decade of the 1960s the Mizo National Front built up a strong militant

movement for independent statehood in the districts of the Mizo hills of Assam. Their struggle was aimed not only at separation from Assam but from India as such. At the time of the India China War in 1962 the Government of India had banned this organization, but failed to stop its activities. In fact, the movement of the Mizos became more and more intense. To deal with the situation the government of India first made Mizoram a Union Territory and later gave it recognition as a state within the territory of India. While this led to the movement becoming somewhat subdued, discontent continued to linger.

The Naga inhabited regions of Assam were also agitated by demands for autonomy. This movement was organized in the decade of the 1950s by the Naga National Council under the leadership of Zapo Phizo. The struggle to separate from India took up a militant form. The government called out the army to counter the struggle which led to the killing of many Nagas. A section of the Naga leadership was opposed to the militancy of the movement and sat for talks with the government to search out a formula for settlement of the issue. After all this, ultimately in 1962 Nagaland emerged as a separate state - not independent from India, - but remaining within India.

Even though a separate state was formed, Nagas were far from satisfied. Naga revolutionaries took to the path of guerilla warfare. The struggle reached a peak towards the middle of the decade of the 1970s. Army action failed to effectively counter this struggle. Efforts of the government to come to an agreement with the militant Nagas too were not very successful. As a result Naga dissatisfaction, hit and run actions, efforts to organize with foreign assistance - all these continued to keep the flames of unrest simmering.

The Sikhs' demand for an independent state of Khalistan had come up before independence under the leadership of Master Tara Singh. After independence, the Akali Dal stood for greater powers for the Sikhs and struggled in favour of greater empowerment of the states, it did not directly come out in favour of the demand for an independent state for the Sikhs. They demanded a separate homeland for the Sikhs within the territory of India. But a militant section of the Sikhs continued to cling to the demand of an independent Sikh state. In the beginning of the decade of the 1980s, under the leadership of Bhindranwale the Khalistan movement took on an intense form. In the violent militant struggles the Golden Temple of Amritsar became the shelter for the militants. The central government's military strategy, Operation Blue Star leading to military action within the Golden Temple and the killing of Bhindranwale did act as a damper on the Khalistan movement but resulted in the death of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi at the hands of her Sikh bodyguards.

The demand for separate statehood with India has been a cause of agitation in different parts of the country at different times. In some instances, after prolonged struggles the

demands for formation of separate states have been met. New states have been formed. For example, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh. In 2000 these three states were carved out from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh respectively. All these regions were backward regions inhabited by large tribal population; there was long standing discontent amongst the local people over the unfulfilled development demands. Here, linguistic demands did not find primacy, but cultural identity and local traditions were important determinants of the movements.

The most recent intensified demand of separate statehood on the basis of regionalism is the demand of the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh. From the 1960s itself struggles were being organized in this region. Though governmental assurances temporarily assuaged the feelings the problem was not resolved. The unrest in the Telengana region persisted. From 2010 the movement intensified to such an extent that the union government initiated the process of granting separate statehood to Telengana. And ultimately Telangana got it very recently.

It may be noted here that the people of Telengana are Telugu speaking people and there is no conflict of language with the non-Telengana region. The difference is to be found in the history of the region. Telengana had been a part of Nizam ruled Hyderabad; Rayalseima and Coastal Andhra Pradesh were parts of Madras Presidency. The differences of regional development and history pushed Andhra Pradesh towards bifurcation.

Even apart from the demand for separate statehood, regionalism finds manifestation in inter-state disputes. Distribution of river waters, building of dams and boundary disputes become causes of discontent. Conflicts of this nature may be noted amongst Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Punjab Haryana and Rajasthan. The union government tries to mediate, but that again leads to the union government facing the ire of the concerned states.

In certain regions migrants from other regions become victims of narrow, intense regionalism. Sometimes they face difficulties in finding accommodation, sometimes there are problems in finding work, sometimes the security of the individual or property get endangered. Needless to say, in all these situations political pressures operate to instigate the regional feelings. The display of such vulgar regionalism has been noticed at different times in Maharashtra, Bihar, Assam and in other parts of India.

4.4 National politics and the importance of regional parties

Till the 1967 general elections, i.e. as long as a single political party - the Indian National Congress - was in power in the centre and most of the states regionalism did not

take on the form of centre-state conflict. The importance of regional parties in national politics was limited.

After 1967 the picture changed substantially. The reduced strength of the Indian National Congress as the dominant party in the centre and the states, the increased tendency towards formation of coalition governments, the formation of non-Congress governments in different states all led to a new pattern of centre state relations. Where no single party enjoyed absolute majority in the elections often coalition governments were formed. In such situations the stability of the government came to depend in many cases on the small regional parties. Soon it could be seen that the small regional parties were becoming important in national level politics and the politics of different states. As the support base of these regional parties were essentially regional, they were found to be particularly enthusiastic about upholding regional demands. In many cases they did this undermining the interests of the state or coming into conflict with it. Also, they got into conflicts with the central government on matters regarding fulfillment of regional demands.

Today we find the existence of two types of regional parties. First, there are some parties that have come up resting on the basis of the long history of regional cultural divisions. For example the parties in the Tamil region that came up in the beginning of the twentieth century itself. These apart, we can mention the instance of the Akali Dal that came up against the backdrop of the Gurudwara movement in the decade of the 1920s. Secondly, there are some regional political parties that have come up more recently. These have surfaced either in the decade of the 1980s and 1990s or thereafter. As the Indian National Congress increasingly failed in representing the interests of local national aspirations, these parties came into existence. For example, the Telugu Desam, Asom Gana Parishad and in different states there came into existence the splinter groups that broke away from the Congress.

Now in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Jharkhand and Tripura the Chief Ministers are from non-Congress and non-BJP political parties. They are all the leaders of different regional parties. From this we can understand the importance of regional parties in India today.

4.5 Regionalism and the many sides of politics

There is nothing wrong in having an attachment to a particular region. It does not weaken the constitutional fabric of the country. The problem arises when local allegiance overshadows national allegiance, when the demands of Indian citizenship are pushed into the background and primacy given to regional interests. It is there that regional sentiments and politics becomes antithetical to national development and undermines the constitutional system, people of one region come to hate people of another region.

In the federal set-up, the presence of the regional parties help to draw attention of the central government to the needs of the regions and can be helpful in the process of decentralization of power. They can play an important role in protecting the interests of states, local communities and regions. But if regional parties, in their efforts to expand their local support base, resort to narrow, aggressive regionalism it can definitely become dangerous.

In the case of regional politics it can be seen that most regional parties keep the issues of language, community demands, allegations of economic marginalization, etc in the forefront and build up their movements. But even in such movements frequently we notice unrest and instability. Sometimes several regional parties merge to form a single regional party; sometimes there is fission in one regional party and one or more, or a series of fragmentations result. In most cases the small regional parties seek the support of one or the other big national parties. Needless to say, the purpose is to increase their influence at the national level as also to strengthen the regional position.

4.6 Summary

In India in many cases regionalism has developed on the base of ethnic identity. But that is not the only factor leading to the rise of regionalism. Language, the issue of local regional development have been separately operative distinct from the ethnic identity. The roots of regionalism in India can be found in the immense diversity of India's population.

Resting on the regional sentiments, regional parties come into existence. They try to obtain the support of the local people by promising to carry ahead the demands of the region. As the political and social base of the Indian National Congress narrowed down, the political importance of these regional parties began to increase. In the event of coalition politics in particular the stance of these regional parties proved to be very important.

Regional parties and regional sentiments can be supportive of the promotion of the interests of the region or the regional communities. But narrow regionalism can run counter to democracy and the constitution that could undermine India's strength.

4.7 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Explain the sources of regionalism in India.
- (b) Analyse the problems resulting from regionalism in India.
- (c) Discuss any two ethnicity based regional problems in India.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- Write a note on the demand for reorganization of states on the basis of language.
- Discuss, citing any one example, the expression of regionalism amongst the ethnic groups of north eastern India.
- Write about the importance and limitations of regional political parties.

3. Short questions :

- When was the Linguistic Provinces Commission formed under the leadership of S.K. Dar?
- 'When did the States Reorganisation Commission submit its Report ?
- When did Jharkhand emerge as a separate state?

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Unit 1a. Working Class Movements

Structure

1a.1 Objectives

1a.2 Introduction

1a.3 Social character of the Indian Working class in colonial India

1a.4 History of origin of the Working Class Organization

1a.5 All India Working Class Organizations and Nationalist Movement

1a.6 The inter-relation between Working Class organization and Left

1a.7 Some Important Working class movements

1a.8 Conclusion

1a.9 Sample questions

1a.10 Bibliography

1a.1 Objectives

- To explain the long political lineage of Working class movement dating from the mid 19th century.
- To analyze the history of origin of the Indian Working Class.
- To explain the class character of Indian Working Class during colonial rule.
- To discuss how Working class movement as an integral part of the political forces combined to give the nationalist movement decisive and final shape.
- To explain the inter-relation between Working Class organization and Left-Movement.
- To discuss the character of working class movement and economic struggle of Indian workers in the pre and post independence period.

1a.2 Introduction

Studies on labour problems in Indian industries, trade unionism and working class movements have been the focus of a large number of studies. However in most of the discourse on politics in India, the working class and its movements hardly find any space. But it forms an integral part of the political forces that combined to give the Nationalist Movement its decisive and final shape. The railways and associated engineering industries beginning in the 1850s, soon followed by the development of the cotton textile industry and later, jute, sugar and cement, did see a rapid increase in the numbers of industrial workforce. Its very origin suggests that emerging working class would be stepped in pre-capitalist relations, both in terms of economic ties to land and agriculture and in terms of caste and other obscurantist structures and values. This pre-capitalist, and colonial milieu of the emergence of the Indian working class gave it an altogether new social class formation weakening it ever since its inception.

1a.3 Social character of the Indian Working class in colonial India

The first modern organization of Indian working class took shape only in the second decade of the 20th century and the first national conference of the All India Trade Union Congress took place only in 1920. This was, however, preceded by nearly 50 years of socio-political movements organized in different regions of the country by various segments of the working population, suffering all sorts of exploitation, humiliation and oppression. The textile workers in Ahmedabad, Bombay and Madras, the jute workers in Bengal and the coal mines labourers in Bengal and in parts of Bihar led various struggles against their employers cutting across caste and community divide throughout this period. The leadership of most of these movements came from the urban educated middle class politicians who often formed part of the leadership of Nationalist movements. In India, in 1881 there were 813 factories with an average daily employment of 3,49,810. The number of factories rose to 3957 in 1921, 22705 in 1950 and 1,10,704 in 1991. Average daily employment rose from 1263658 in 1921 to 2504399 in 1950 and 5211829 in 1991. As of 2004-05, India's work force was estimated at nearly 460 million. Of these only 70 million were in any kind of regular employment, another 130 million were casual or contract wage workers. But majority of India's working people, the remaining 260 million, were in fact self-employed, being for the most part tiny producers or persons forced to engage in some income earning activity on their own for a pittance, given the absence of any kind of social security for the poor in our country.

1a.4 History of origin of the Working Class Organization

It was some time during 1880 or 1889 that the first labour union in India, the Bombay Mill hands Associations, was founded. Its founder was N. M. Lokhanday, who apparently was a white-collared worker in a Bombay mill. He was responsible for drawing up a memorandum, signed by some 90500 labourers in Bombay. He was also a founder editor of the first labour journal in India, called the 'Dinabandhu'. That is why Lokhanday has been described as the moving spirit of the labour movement in India. After First World War, trade union as formal and stable organization began to emerge and in 1925 the Bombay Textile Labour Union was formed out of a committee of assistance, which was organized to provide relief to the textile workers during the 1925 textile strike. It was formed by outsider labour politicians and social workers, N.M. Joshi being one of its leaders. A year ago, another labour union had also been formed by the jobbers themselves called the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal. When the communists took control over labour movement, they set up their own Girni Kamgar Union. In the meantime, AITUC was formed in 1920; the Girni Kamgar Union also was affiliated to this all India platform for workers movement. The AITUC was a common platform for the struggling workers of all political hues. The leadership of the Congress had their control over this trade union organization and hence it could not turn 'red' in course of taking part in the anti colonial struggle. Nevertheless, the socialist and communists, both inside the Congress and outside become increasingly active and assertive within the AITUC and added to its militancy as a class organization of the Indian labour. Apprehending farther drift to the left, the Congress set up its own trade union organization, the INTUC, immediately after independence in 1947. A number of trade unions affiliated to various political parties have since come into being as follows :

| Name | Affiliating Parties | Year of Establishment |
|-------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| AITUC | CPI | 1920 |
| INTUC | INC | 1947 |
| HMS | Socialist Parties | 1948 |
| UTUC | RSP | 1959 |
| BMS | Jan Sangha/BJP | 1955 |
| CITU | CPI(M) | 1970 |

The formation of the INTUC by the Indian National Congress ended the theoretically all party character of the AITUC. Henceforth every political party felt the need for a trade union wing making trade union movement inevitably political and party based. Political parties found in the trade unions a means for mobilization of the urban working class voters in their support as well as a source of funds in times of need. The trade unions on their part found in the political parties a source for steady flow of leaders and activists as well as for guidance and political influence. Central trade unions become the trade union fronts of political parties marking a phase of intensely politicized trade unionism. Thus it remains a factor of strength as well as of weakness of the trade unions in India. It eliminates the possibility of gradually evolving trade union leaders from among the ranks of the workers themselves. It also blurred the distinction between the political interests of the parties and working class interests of the trade union. Party - union relationship has two major dimensions: 1) it is based on policy linkage, and 2) it is based on interlocking leadership. The CPI-AITUC relationship clearly shows this linkage. In late 1940s when the CPI was following a militant or revolutionary strategy, the AITUC was also showing trade union militancy. During more sober periods of peaceful transitions, envisaged by both the CPI and the CPI_M in their political strategies and programmes, particularly during the post 1970s, trade union militancy would be decisively tamed.

1a.5 All India Working Class Organizations and Nationalist Movement

The CPI, sole political party of Indian trade union movement, legalized by the British Colonial ruler in 1942, advocated united action on the part of the various forces within the national movement as the most important prerequisite for success in the struggle against imperialism. It took a negative view of the 'August Resolution, adopted by the Congress for launching the Quit India Movement and also supported the 'Lahore Resolution' drawn by the Muslim league on the creation of Pakistan. It put forward demands for the release of Gandhi and other leaders and end of repressive measures, re-legalization of the banned INC. Under the CPI, the activities of the AITUC were intensified in mid 1945. With the growing mass labour movement, it gained political character. The economic struggle of the Working class was coordinated with the political demonstrations of the students and other groups of the working population. In Madras, it called for political independence of India that is, Purna Swaraj. From 1945, AITUC became militant resulting in armed clashes with troops and the police. It took the path of armed struggle and subsequently India achieved its political independence in 1947.

1a.6 The inter-relation between Working Class organization and Left

The emergence of the communist movement in India introduced certain changes in the worker's movement. Members of the early communist groups began to play an active part in the organization of strikes and in the leadership of local alliances between industrial and white collared workers. This development was facilitated by the fact that many leaders of communist cells were closely associated with the activities of the trade unions since the inception of the communist party of India in 1920. The activities of the workers' and peasant parties that had been founded by the communists served to consolidate the strength of the latter in the labour movement. In the year 1926-28 worker's and peasant's parties were set-up first in Bengal and then in the Bombay province at that period the worker's and peasant's parties provided the most important channel for communist influence over the working class, the peasantry and the urban middle class. Under their leadership, a number of workers' trade unions and Kisan Sabhas started in the early thirties. The parties defended the interest of the working class and the peasantry. They came out in favour of the abolition of the Zamindari land system and full independence.

The first revolutionary trade union was set up in Bombay, known as the Girni Kamgar Union of Textile workers and led by Dange and Ben Bradley. It organized a mass workers strike when several thousand workers were sacked. Over twenty million working days were lost during long six month strike. It exerted considerable influence on the entire Indian labour movement and gave a revolutionary shape to the next stage of activities organized by the Indian working class. At the conference of the AITUC in Jharia, regulations were passed calling for the establishment of an independent socialist republic of India, in which the land and the industry would be nationalized.

Apart from the strikes for economic rights and calling for higher wages, trade union agitation for the observance of the 1948 labour laws were to play an important part in the activities of the labour movement in the early 1950s. The average annual total strikes in the 1950s had increased fivefold. In the early 1960s, CPI began a more intensified move to organize mass-scale action of the working people including the white collared employees to defend their rights. It called for the growing national campaign of mass action calling for lower prices, lower taxes, higher wages, bank nationalization, etc.

1a.7 Some Important Working class movements

The industrial labourers launched a number of strike struggles primarily in support of their economic demands but at times also on crucial political ideological issues. Mention may be made of the Rail strikes in 1948 and in 1974, the textile labourers strike struggles in Mumbai and Ahmedabad during the 1970s and 1980s and a series of militant working class movements in jute and mining industries in West Bengal during the 1960s and 1970s. Through such struggles, organized workforce in India has succeeded partially to contain the rapacity of the profit hunting employers and augment their bargaining power vis-a-vis both the state and capital. Taking the experiences of the rail strike of 1974 into consideration Stephen Sherlock observes that this strike, for once, cemented working class solidarity in the Railways, cutting across diverse political and trade union loyalties and consequently forced the employers and the state to realize that 'the acquiescence of organized labour could not be taken for granted and labour's possible reaction had to be factored into any major 'decision'. But it also brought out the paradoxical role of trade unions in a capitalist society. Stephen Sherlock makes an intensive foray into the 1974 strike, relating the course of trade union activity in the Indian Railways prior to the strike, to the unfolding of a new chapter in trade union militancy engendered by the strike and its aftermath. The narrative, culled from newspapers, leaflets, personal papers and memoirs of trade union leaders and members of the Railway Board, and interviews with leading political and trade union personalities, is comprehensive. The Railway workers have traditionally been led by the National Federation of Indian Railwayman(NFIR), a pro-Congress Union, and the All Indian Railway men's Federation(AIRF), a non-Congress socialist dominated union. Between them, they continued to share the loyalties of an overwhelming majority of the railway workers till the 1960s when disenchantment of the rank and file set in, out of frustration at the failure of both the management recognized unions to clinch some of the basic demand of the unionized workers. Pathetically, the unions were identified as stooges of the management, as "ruthless strike breaker" showing an increasingly prevalent "patron-client mentality" and betraying a tendency on the part of their respective leaderships of building up personal influence through their ability to win favours for individual workers. The response of the rank and file came in the shape of sectoral unions formed in the teeth of sharp opposition from the recognized ones and also from the management habituated to dealing with pliable trade union leaders. The All India Loco Running Staff Association (LRSA) appeared as a formidable category union spearheading a series of militant movements including strike struggles. The management opted for the age old colonial style of derecognizing the militants and dillydallying with conformist leaders. The strike of 1974

was organized in a complex scenario involving a wide array of political forces and competing trade unions seeking legitimacy in an atmosphere of mistrust, hostility and mutual bickering and confronting a Government that would adopt an irreversible anti-labour posture since 1973.

Ever before the strike would commence on and from May, 08, 1974, the Government unleashed a reign of terror on the organizers. The outcome was a spontaneous outburst of worker's militancy making the strike almost total. The strike was withdrawn after three weeks amidst enormous casualties suffered by the railway workers. The leadership of the movement was sharply divided on the question of carrying the battle to its ultimate level calling for an open confrontation with an authoritarian state bent on striking a decisive blow to working class movement altogether. Nevertheless, this strike nearly brought about a political impasse for the ruling class in India. It also revealed starkly the limitations of working class movements in one of the largest organized public sectors in India under the leadership of Babus, having little in common with the working class they represent.

1a.8 Conclusion

In the era of economic globalization, liberalization and privatization of the economy opened up key sectors to foreign competition with little care for the wellbeing of the indigenous toiling classes. Its immediate effect on labour was massive retrenchment, casualization and withdrawal of various social security coverage. The rank of the working class in the unorganized sector started swelling up resulting in considerable amount of reduction of wages. The existing trade union organizations showed little preparedness in mobilizing the huge chunk of casual and contractual workers for undoing the evil consequences of liberalization and privatization that had already become rampant as a result of the neo liberal turn in the economic policies of India's post-colonial state now showing symptoms of re-colonization. In the era of globalization, the working class movement in India as well as the world is in crisis. The overall impact of the trajectories of global capitalism on the working class has been that absolute levels of formal employment in the organized manufacturing sector show no rise for over a decade, despite high rates of growth of manufacturing output. Further, the share of wages in gross value added in manufacturing has been declining steadily since the early 1980s. Ideologically, the forces of obscurantism and of identity politics continued to exercise a strong influence even on segments of the working population, including industrial workers that are part of the technologically advanced sectors of the economy. Division of caste, religion, language and

ethnicity has not disappeared and continued to influence the consciousness of the workers thus making the task of developing class and political consciousness of the working class a major challenge. Where the democratic movement has advanced through decades of struggles, there is emerging an all-in-unity of the most reactionary forces against it. Neo-liberal policies, while deepening the crisis of working peoples' lives, also provide a fertile soil for growth of divisive forces that make it even more difficult to build the unity of working class and the broader sections of working people. The trade unions conducted several mass agitations against labour reforms initiatives on the part of the post colonial state in recent years. More than a dozen all-India strikes have taken place so far, mostly on economic and labour policies of the government. Two objects of most of the contemporary working class movements are found to be working at cross purposes. One of these objects is complete elimination of informal labour and bringing the whole gamut of labour relations within a highly regulated system, through registration of all employers and employers and regulation of employment market. The other, and more primordial object of traditional trade unionism in India is to look after the trade union rights and economic well being of the workers unionized by different trade union organizations, virtually ending up their mission in a mere struggle for the economic and political status quo. These two objects could hardly ever meet. The way out is nowhere in sight under the present milieu of global capitalism. This poses a challenge not only to the leaders of organized working class movements but also to the students of labour history and labour economics. Therefore the working class in India, after fighting so many battles since the colonial days, now faces an unprecedented political impasse brought about by the neo-liberal economic dispensation, brought up as they were in a milieu of the mixed economy of the pre-reform days.

1a.9 Sample questions

1. *Broad questions :*

- (a) Write a note on Working class movements in India.
- (b) Explain critically the basic features of Indian Working class movement.

2. *Short-essay type questions :*

- (a) Write a short note on the nature of the Working class movement in the pre-Independence period
- (b) Discuss briefly the limitations of Working class movement in the era of globalization.

3. Short questions :

- (a) Point out the problems of Working class movement in the post colonial Indian State.
- (b) Write a short note on the impact of globalization on Working class movements in contemporary India.

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Unit 1b. □ Peasant Movements

Structure

- 1b.1 Objectives
- 1b.2 Introduction
- 1b.3 Different phases of Peasant Movement
- 1b.4 Classification of the Peasants
- 1b.5 Land System and Tenancy Right
- 1b.6 General features of Indian Peasant Movement
- 1b.7 The nature of Telengana and Tebhaga Peasant movements
- 1b.8 Peasant movements during the 1960s and 1970s
- 1b.9 Neo-peasant movement
- 1b.10 Conclusion
- 1b.11 Sample questions
- 1b.12 Bibliography

1b.1 Objectives

- General analysis of the nature of Peasant movement.
- Forming an idea of the various phases of Indian Peasant movement.
- Classification of post-independence Indian Peasant classes.
- Analysis of the land system and tenancy.
- Gathering knowledge about the general features of Indian Peasant movement.
- Discussion on the nature of Telengana and Tebhaga Peasant movements.
- Evaluation of the Peasant movement on the basis of the demands of land reforms, increase of the wages for the agricultural workers, proper value of the agricultural product.
- Explication of the different facets of Naxalbari Peasant movement.

- Discussion on the contemporary scenario of the Indian Peasant movement with special reference to the farmers' movements

1b.2 Introduction

For more than two centuries Peasant movements have remained an integral part of the dynamics of Indian politics. Even after more than sixty years of independence of the country and its trajectories of industrial development with or without overarching patronage of India's omnipotent state, 70% of the population of the country still inhabit the rural space, and are connected with agricultural activities although the share of agriculture in the gross domestic product has been on the decline over the years.

1b.3 Different phases of Peasant Movement

Historically, the Peasant movement can be analyzed in three distinct phases, viz. Pre-colonial, Colonial and Post-independence.

In the pre-colonial days, Peasant movements were extremely localized, caste and community centric, spontaneous in nature and often couched in religious idioms. The Adivasis had a long history of Peasant movement and the Wahabi and the Faraizi movements, Moplah revolt in the south are also the examples of pre-colonial Peasant movement. Colonial land policy which introduced the Zamindari settlement after 1793 in the Eastern part of India and Rayatwari in the South and in the West, brought about, for the first time, a sharp polarization between the landed gentry and the land less masses. The land owning Zamindars gradually turned into a parasitic class enjoying all sorts of privileges and pampering from their colonial bosses in return for absolute loyalty rendered to the latter and giving a fixed return to the colonial administration in the form of land revenue to be extracted from the actual tillers of land, victims of a series of both economic and extra-economic extortions. To liberate them from the oppression of both the landlords and their colonial mentors, peasants with or without occupancy rights on land, forged unity amongst them and started movements of protest and resistance against the twin enemy.

In the colonial period, the peasant movements were both peaceful and violent depending on the responses of the landlords and the colonial state. At the initial phase, the strategy of mobilization of the peasants involved all sections of the peasant masses, around the slogan of all-peasant unity. The target of the movement was the rapacious landlords enjoying patronage of the colonial state as their native collaborators. The demands around

which all classes of the peasant masses were mobilized, were land to the tiller and a fair share of the produce from land for the actual producer. It is important to note that the protagonists of peasant movement, violent or non-violent alike, began to take up the cause of the Indian peasant from the 1920s. They all agreed on the demands of the peasants but differed vehemently on the courses of struggle to be followed by the peasants for redress of their grievances. Gandhi was primarily interested in mobilizing the huge chunk of the peasant masses under the Indian National Congress to add the long awaited fire power to his non-violent national movement. The Marxists would strive for escalating peasant militancy beyond the framework of anti-colonial struggle, in the direction of liberating the peasants from both colonial and feudal exploitation through abolition of Zamindari and distribution of land to the actual cultivators.

1b.4 Classification of the Peasants

The scenario of rural India in relation to the battle the two sections of the rural population were involved in, was highly complex. The peasantry was divided into too many layers with differential tenancy rights and diverse patterns of land ownership. They could be classified into three strata of Malikhs, Kisans and Majdoors, following Daniel Thorner. But in this classification, the Kisans would represent an amorphous category with different patterns of relationship with land as both owner of a small plot and also a non-owning cultivator in the land of others at the same time. For instance, the share-croppers fought for tenancy rights for more than sixty years from the late 19th century till independence, notwithstanding a whole series of tenancy reforms Acts passed from time to time by the colonial rulers. They had to suffer eviction from the land cultivated by them subject to the sweet will of the landlords who would never touch the plough.

1b.5 Land System and Tenancy Right

The social distribution of land as well as the land systems inherited from the British also constituted various factors of agricultural backwardness. In the eastern India and in the northern areas of the Madras Presidency, the Zamindari System of land ownership was prevalent. Under this System, wherever the original landed estates had not been fragmented in course of time into smaller units, the land belonged to a small group of big absentee landlords, liable to a fixed and rather light land tax, who would farm out their land to intermediary tenure-holders, and live off the rents they received from them. The actual cultivators of these lands were mostly small tenants who were ill-protected against the

arbitrary behaviour of these intermediaries to whom they paid rent, and often overburdened with illegal exactions. In western and southern India, the colonial authorities settled the land directly with the actual cultivators, the raiyats who were subjected to high and periodically revised revenue rates. Though apparently egalitarian, this raiyatwari system also ended up with massive concentration of lands in the hands of a dominant group of rich non-cultivating rural families who rented it out to tenants. In north and north-west India, a hybrid system called mahalwari was adopted. In these areas, the land revenue was settled with the village community as a whole, each cultivator paying his share in proportion to the size of his individual holding. In course of time, the distribution of land under this system became highly unequal as under the raiyatwari system. Therefore under all of these different tenurial systems introduced by the colonial rulers, the small and poor peasants remained perennial victims of oppression and exploitation. Caste based oppression and discrimination was another added burden weighing against the low caste Sudras and the untouchables. The resistance of the peasants against such exploitation found expression in a series of militant movements against both the colonial rulers and the native landed classes.

Large scale peasant mobilization was definitely one of the major political achievements of the leadership of Gandhi. But Gandhi also was responsible for containing peasant militancy within limits so as not to antagonize the rural rich and the upper caste gentry. The voice of the poor peasants and the landless agricultural labourers found expression in the struggles launched by the communists in the countryside from the early 20s culminating in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1936. The demands around which peasant mobilization was organized would include abolition of parasitic land lordism, right of land ownership to the actual tillers, reasonable share of the produce from land for the non-owning cultivators, the share croppers in particular, and fair wages for the farm labourers.

1b.6 General features of Indian Peasant Movement

There are some common features of Indian Peasant movement. First, the Peasant movements are spontaneous outbursts of the exploited masses. They were marked by a very wide participation of the peasant masses often cutting across caste, community and even gender divides.

Secondly, Anti-Zamindar and anti-British content was prominent in these movements. Right from the colonial days, the peasant masses were imbued with patriotic and nationalist feelings which became evident in the Moplah uprising in the Malabar region under the then Madras Presidency and once again at the time of the Telengana and Tebhaga peasant

uprisings: The anti-colonial thrust of these movements were supplemented by their anti-feudal ideological contents. Throughout the colonial period, peasants with or without land-holding, forged a broad based unity against the dual power of the colonial state and the local Zamindars as their henchmen in most cases. Even under the leadership of the Communists, the peasant masses retained their patriotic zeal and upheld the cause of nationalism while forging a militant battle against the terribly oppressive local landlords who would, in most cases, receive the patronage of the colonizers, and operate like the local state under colonial dispensation.

Thirdly, economic exploitation was the prime motivating factor but some of the uprisings, in fact, raised political challenges too. Rebels in many cases demanded both land and liberation.

Fourthly, regional specificity or regional peculiarity was another feature of Peasant movements. We cannot cite a single example where Peasant movement engulfed the whole country.

Fifthly, Peasant movements were party led movements. The movements were directed, regulated and controlled by political parties. The movements could have differed in character if they had the autonomy of their own.

Last but not least, most of the movements could be suppressed only with extreme brutality. The administration could not altogether ignore the grievances of the peasants and in some case; it had to make reformist interventions. Thus peasant movements were not revolutionary movements but reform movements, though with specific class content and class outlook.

1b.7 The nature of Telengana and Tebhaga Peasant movements

In late 1940's All India Kisan Sabha organized two major Peasant movement i.e. Telengana and Tebhaga Peasant movement. The Telengana peasant struggle were organized in the three district of the princely state of Hyderabad under Nizam's rule and the Tebhaga movement were organized for the sharecroppers in undivided Bengal for two-third share of crops.

The five year long (1946-1951) Telengana uprising will always occupy a distinct position in the annals of militant peasant movements in India. The uprising was led by the Kisan Sabha with the Communists playing the role of the vanguard. The movement started

as a resistance movement of the peasants and landless labourers against the feudal exploitation by the deshmukhs and jagirdars and violence of Nizam backed rajakars but in course of time transformed into a struggle for the seizure of state power in independent India. The communists had begun to penetrate in Telengana through two cultural organizations – the Andhra Mahasabha and the Andhra Conference. This powerful peasant struggle proliferated in various pockets of Nalgonda district and also in some areas of Warangal and Khammam. Some 30 lakh people under the leadership of the communist party started struggling against the colonial oppression and exploitation. The main target was the forced grain purchase, the practices of vetti beggar, illegal exactions, and illegal seizure of land. The peasant rebels sought to protect occupancy rights of the tenants and raise the wages of the agricultural labourers.

Tebhaga Peasant movement: From late 1946 Tebhaga Peasant movement began to spread in a number of districts in Bengal under the leadership of Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha. It was a movement for two-third share of crops for the sharecroppers working on jotedars' land. In 1940, the Flood Commission appointed by the then Bengal Government of Fazlul Haq, had been admitted the justifiability of the demand. The movement spread to 15 districts in the harvesting season of 1946 with north Bengal, specially Dinajpur, as a centre. At its peak, the movement involved 60 lakh sharecroppers who had to face stiff resistance from the jotedars and violent reprisals by the police leading to a death toll of about 70 persons. The most harrowing incident took place in Khanpur where 22 persons were killed in a direct confrontation with the police.

1b.8 Peasant movements during the 1960s and 1970s

The reverberation of the spirit of Tebhaga and Telengana would be felt two decades hence in course of unfolding of the Naxalbari peasant movement engulfing half of the states of post-colonial India and also the scattered movements for tenancy reforms and land redistribution organized by peasant organizations owing allegiance to various radical political parties and groups firmly entrenched in parliamentary politics during the 1960s and 1970s.

From the late 1960s a sections of the communists gave out a call for both seizure of land and seizure of state power at one go in defiance of the armed might of the state. The Naxalite movement, as it was popularly known, sprang up in parts of the north region of West Bengal in May, 1967 escalating from a movement for taking possession of benami land to a direct confrontation with the police and the para military forces representing state

power. The Naxalites also gave a rude jolt to the parliamentary communists by questioning their commitment to the cause of the poor and landless peasants who had little to gain from the official programmes of land reforms, given the overall context of India's class state. This new movement soon gained ground in a number of states, particularly those having vast tracts of hills and forests and where agriculture had remained extremely backward giving rise to acute poverty amongst the rural masses. It also achieved considerable success in areas mostly inhabited by the scheduled castes and the adivasis, known for their militancy right from the days of colonial rule. The Naxalite movement was ruthlessly suppressed in West Bengal and some of the other states by the middle of 1970s, but its hang over continued ever since engulfing new spaces from time to time and often assuming menacing proportions under the label of Maoism, now considered a threat to the nation by the managers of the Indian state.

1b.9 Neo-peasant movement

The intervention of the Green Revolution sharpened polarization between the farmers and the agricultural wage earners from mid 1960s, putting most of the peasant organizations in a dilemma. As most of the newly emerging owner cultivators who benefited from the new agrarian strategy of the post-colonial state, had belonged to the intermediary peasant castes, numerically dominant in their respective regions, they were part of the age-old grand alliance of non-Brahminical castes who had earlier fought against the domination of the land lords. Now, under the new dispensation, they found themselves pitted against the Dalits, the untouchables and the Adivasis who were mostly the victims, rather than beneficiaries of the new agrarian strategy sponsored by the state in its zeal for maximizing productivity in land through technological innovation sans institutional interventions which might have taken care of the actual producers. The rise of a new class of rich capitalist farmers in the rural sector claiming higher subsidy in agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, electricity, pesticides and other equipments and higher remunerative prices for their products, from the state brought to the fore a new trajectory of peasant mobilization involving new organizations and new programmes, viz. The Shetkari Sangathan in Mharastra and Bharatio Kisan Union in Utter Pradesh. These organizations launched the Farmers' Movement from the late 1960s involving a large number of rich and middle peasants who would no longer see their interests converging with those of the Khet Majdoors suffering from low wages and an acute scarcity of food caused by the decline in purchasing power. This new movement was multi class in composition and deriving its strength from an ideology of peasant populism

that would pitch India against Bharat, highlight the unequal terms of trade between industry and agriculture and growing disparity between the rural and the urban sectors in India. In between the 1970s and 1980s, peasant mobilization in India, on the one hand there would be movements for redistribution of land, enhancement of agricultural wages and protection of small farmers against eviction or forced starvation, on the other hand there would be mobilization of a relatively well off segment of farmers demanding concessions from the state so as to make agriculture profitable for them without caring much for the plight of the small producers.

1b.10 Conclusion

The advent of Globalization affected all segments of agricultural population of the country. Withdrawal of subsidy on most of the important inputs of agriculture, throwing agricultural products open to the vagaries of a competitive global market resulted in growing indebtedness of a large number of peasants who were also denied remunerative prices for their products under the changed economic situation. Farmers' suicide became rampant in a number of states both agriculturally advanced and backward escalating discontent amongst the rural population in a large measure. Violent protests leading to attack against all symbols of state powers became almost chronic in a large part of rural India, described in official discourse as the manifestation of Maoist terrorism. More moderate forms of protest were brought about by peasant organizations owing allegiance to various parliamentary political parties, staging Dharnas, holding Kisan rallies or even organizing general strikes covering the whole country. In the era of globalization, peasant mobilization has also become essential for stalling attempts at forcible acquisition of land by the state or private agencies for commercial purposes. There have been incidents of large scale eviction of peasants or sometimes even forest dwellers by private agencies, local or global, for unsavoury purposes, often in collusion with local bureaucrats and politicians. The rise of such incidents is caused by the fact that the traditional agriculture has become increasingly unproductive from the point of view of both the land owners and the real producers. Share of agriculture in GDP has been constantly on the decline. So, the sudden withdrawal of the command economy and liberalization of core economic sectors devoid of all regulatory mechanisms has worsened the condition of both agriculture and the agriculturists.

1b.11 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Write a note on Peasant movements in India.
- (b) Explain critically the basic features of Indian Peasant movements.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) Write a short note on the nature of the Peasant movements in the pre-independence period.
- (b) Write a short note on the feature of the Peasant movements in the post-independence period.

3. Short questions :

- (a) Discuss briefly the major demands of the Telengana Peasant movement.
- (b) Point out the impact of globalization on Peasant movements.

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Unit 2. □ Movements for Human Rights

Structure

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Meaning of Human Rights
- 2.4 Human rights movements in India
- 2.5 Conclusion
- 2.6 Suggested questions
- 2.7 Bibliography

2.1 Objectives

- To examine the nature and extent of the liberty and rights of an individual which are 'natural', inherent in individual nature and without which an individual cannot live as a human being.
- To discuss the state's attitude towards those liberties and rights.
- To analyze the philosophical roots of those liberties and rights.
- To explicate the change of meaning of those liberties and rights in course of time and in different contexts.
- To discuss the position and stand of the Indian state towards those liberties and rights.
- To explain the nature of the different organizational activities and movements in relation to human rights.
- To evaluate the present status of human rights in India.

2.2 Introduction

The concept of Civil Liberty and Human Rights is basic to modern political and social thinking. Civil Liberty and Human Rights mean the freedom of the individual with respect to personal action, the possession and use of property, political, religious and other beliefs

and the expression of opinion. This freedom is conceived to imply a right to protection against both state and individual interference, but is essentially a right of the individual against an omnipotent, commanding and tyrannical State. Though the concept Human Rights is a modern one but the notion of human dignity and freedom, protest against patriarchy, injustice and oppression of different types prevailed in our country throughout the ancient and medieval periods of history. The concept developed in the modern period in course of the emergence of capitalism and the broad democratic movements over several issues against anguish and suffering, social injustice and various types of domination. Since Nineteenth century, the concept of Civil Liberty and Human Rights drew the attention of Indian intellectuals and in course of protracted struggles of people over issues relating to state repression or terrorism, violation of human rights of common men and increasing concern for the right to life, the discourse on human rights has become an integral part of the study of Indian politics in our time.

2.3 Meaning of Human Rights

Human rights are seen as those minimal rights which human beings are entitled to by virtue of being human beings, irrespective of any other consideration. In this connection it is important to note that the discourse of human rights stretches back to history of ancient laws such as the Hammurabi Codes of Babylon, the Greco-Roman doctrines, the French and American Declarations, the traditions of law and natural rights and the term 'The Rights of Man'. Human rights could be generally defined as 'those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings'. These rights should not be violated by the state and it requires to be protected against the authority of the state. However it is also expected that these rights need to be protected and enhanced by the state. Generally these rights are included in civil and democratic rights. Human rights are universal and apply to all individual without discrimination. Human rights are sometimes called fundamental rights or basic rights or natural rights. As fundamental rights these are rights which must not be taken away by any Act of legislature and which are often set out in the constitution. As natural rights these are seen as belonging to men and women by their very nature. In course of time and difference of context the meanings of human rights have changed. For instance, traditionalist and status quoist human rights include the rights embodied in religion which justify ownership of property including the system of slavery and bonded labour. For the liberals and leftists 'equality' and dignity of all individuals to sustain life are the main human rights. In India the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993

says "human rights" means the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India'.

The discussion on right of an individual and movements around the ideas of human rights has a long history rooted in Western society. The French and American revolutions of 18th century influenced Indian intellectuals. Social reform and political movements and the Indian National Congress provided the platform for discussion and assertion of the rights. Actually the social reformers and liberal political leaders were the champion of equality of Indians as 'citizens' with the British before law. Social reformers worked hard for reforming social customs and traditions so as to protect age old subjugated strata of society. The liberals were concerned with individual freedom of expression and association and the recognition of equality before law for all Indians. In 1918 Indian National Congress prepared a declaration of rights including the freedom of speech, expression and assembly, the right to be tried according to law, and above all, freedom from racial discrimination and submitted these to the British parliament. The Indian Civil Liberties Union was formed in 1936 with Rabindranath Tagore as its president. According to Jawaharlal Nehru, the idea of civil liberties is to have the right to oppose the government. It is of course true that the root of the concern for human right may be traced to religion, humanitarian traditions and the unceasing struggle for freedom and equality. It was the adoption of the universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 that the question was tackled and government across the world took up the matter of human rights as never before. Various institutional devices have been resorted to for the protection and promotion of human rights. India's commitment to human rights is evident from the fact that India is a signatory to a large number of human rights Declarations and Conventions. Indian constitution clearly reflects the tone of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in guaranteeing the protection of a vast array of Fundamental Rights of the citizens and promising attention to a still wider range under the caption of Directive Principles of State Policies. Universal adult suffrage and democratic vocabulary underline the discourse on human rights. Universal Suffrage, elected government, independent judiciary were guaranteed and enshrined in the Constitution of India. On the other side, post-independence Indian rulers retained colonial legacy in law and administration. So we often find attack on rights of the common men.

2.4 Human rights movements in India

Movements for human rights play a complex role in Indian society. Through these

movements values and practice of human rights run counter to centuries-old structures of hierarchy and social and economic oppression, and interrogate and challenge the institutions that hinder India's journey out of poverty, exploitation and oppression. These movements provide the framework for difficult balancing between claims of equality and justice. Through these movements human rights became a weapon of the oppressed. These movements opened a public, and worldwide, dialogue on rights that would scarcely have been possible without its assertiveness on rights and condition of the oppressed. In the year 1948 with the urge for civil liberty in West Bengal the Civil Liberties Committee was established and the prime aspiration was to protest State repression. In 1960s with the brutal attack on the Naxalites by the State Indian civil liberties movement got a major shift. The prime demand of these movements was the issue of democratic rights of the oppressed and subjugated sections of society for justice and equality. Massive violations of civil and political rights of protester and subjugated sections of society took place during the emergency in the 1970s. Armed forces have been deployed for committing atrocities on innocent people, the police became primitive and barbaric and custodial deaths became shocking reminders of human rights abuse in the colonial era. During this time fundamental rights have been suspended and the 'built-in-authoritarian' proclivities became sheerly evident within the political system. It shaped the intellectual and political milieu that led to the origin of the civil and democratic rights movement in post-independence India and most of the civil liberties organizations came up during this period to fight for civil and democratic rights.

The struggle for civil liberties or human rights is not a direct struggle for improving conditions of the masses and their rights but it is part and parcel of the whole struggle of the oppressed in support of their demand for a better life. This movement demands the enforcement of the rights enshrined in the constitution and ensuring implementation of the laws that are passed from time to time to help the oppressed sections of the society. This movement does not offer an alternative political ideology. The main objective of this movement is to act as a watchdog monitoring the state. Another interesting feature of civil liberties or human rights movement is the dilemma on the issue of violence practiced by the organizers or activists of the movement on the one hand, and the violence of the state on the other. It is true that despite the universal concern for human rights, the human rights discourse has remained entrapped in the 'politics' of human rights, making for disagreement, disputes, controversies and discontent. Therefore, even today, the state's record of protection of human rights is far from satisfactory. But it should not be overlooked that

India was the first to adopt a major common law jurisdiction to provide a central place for human rights in its constitutional system. In the early years of independence, Indian Supreme Court appeared not to appreciate the centrality of human rights or directive principles. But in course of time Indian Supreme Court amply explicated the manifold implications of human rights in numerous areas of life. It is no exaggeration to say that the Indian Supreme Court opened up the path and developed the techniques under which human rights has become one of the most critical parts of our constitution. Through court's decisions the reach of human rights has expanded, been woven into the fabric of everyday life, and established the framework for legislation and decision making within the institutions of the state. The common activities of several human rights groups are to document the violation of human rights in particular instances by the police, armed forces, other organs of the state and also the dominant castes or classes. Fact-finding teams visit the place, listen to and record evidence from the victims, police authorities, media and other sections of society. These reports are widely disseminated among the media. Democratic institutions like the parliament, state assembly, electronic and print media are widely used to highlight the case of atrocities. Signature campaign, petitions, write-ups in media as well as dharnas, public meetings and processions are also organized to pressurize the authorities for action against those who violate human rights.

In India there are a number of groups working on human rights and these organizations have significantly contributed to the development of the rights discourse, promoting overall awareness regarding human rights, disseminating information, investigating and protesting rights violations. Rights have become powerful tools to compel states and non state actors to ensure that their obligations are fulfilled. NGOs have become more active and vibrant in promoting human rights advocacy. The most important and known human rights organizations are the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR). In 70s we may find the rapid rise in civil rights organizations focusing on the protection of civil and political rights and protesting their violations. However, from the 80s onwards we find the proliferation of several organization and bodies in connection with human rights. All these organizations had to concentrate their activities against all pervasive state terror. It is also evident that most of these organizations were characterized by adhocism in terms of their origin and functions. Therefore continuity of activity became problematic to those organizations. In this connection it is important to note that while globalization and its impact on human rights have resulted in numerous instances of impoverishment, simultaneously, there has been a globalization of human rights advocacy by NGOs. Public spirited individuals and institutions engage more easily in human rights campaign and are able to develop strategies and methods for creating standards and seeking accountability. Internet and transnational civil society have also helped the cause of human rights as human rights violations are no longer confined to national jurisdictions

but have acquired international significance. Apart from these, the notable success of Indian human rights movement can be attributed to various painful and heart-rending struggles launched by the weaker sections of society. These movements in some areas limited the powers of government, enforcing accountability of police, custodial institutions, and other enforcement machinery. But it is also true that the task of human right enforcement in India is gigantic for any one institution to achieve. It will remain an ongoing struggle.

The formation of the National Human Rights Commission in India in 1993 and the creation of various State Human Rights Commissions have created certain social expectations. Under the pressures of the United Nations Organization, Amnesty International and human rights groups within the country, the Indian Parliament passed the Protection of Human Rights Bill in 1993 which became an Act in 1994. Under this Act, the National Human Rights Commission came into existence. The work of the State Human Rights Commissions is commendable to the extent that human rights have been made into a focal point for assessing governance at the federal and state levels and human rights accountability of the executive is attempted to be ensured. Liberalization of the rules relating to intervention of the judiciary in cases of violation of human rights opened up opportunities for Public Interest Litigation and paved the way for judicial activism as a more viable instrument for both the protection and promotion of human rights of the citizens of India from the late 80s onward.

2.5 Conclusion

Notwithstanding the progress made by the human rights movements relating to protection and promotion of human rights in India, it remains an important area of concern. The contemporary realities demonstrated the weaknesses and inadequacy of various measures. Human rights violations continue to be committed by the police, custodial and other law enforcement institutions and military and paramilitary forces. Human rights accountability enforced by the courts or human rights commissions continues to be sporadic and all forms of victimization take place on account of abuse of power and arbitrariness and discrimination in decision making. Corruption is omnipresent in governmental functioning and institutions that are supposed to uphold the rule of law, like police and other law enforcement machinery are no exception. This underscores the need for developing a culture of respecting human rights amongst law enforcement officials as a sine-qua-non for the preservation of the rule of law. The enforcement of certain laws aimed at protecting national security in India has prompted efforts to better understand human rights in a constitutional sense. It has also resulted in the granting of significant powers to the Indian

executive, giving better scope for abuse and violation of fundamental rights in the form of draconian legislation like the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) and its predecessor, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA).

2.6 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Discuss the success and failures of Indian Human rights movements.
- (b) Do you think that Indian State has an important role in safeguarding human rights in India? Argue your case.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) Write a short note on the measures adopted for protection of human rights in India.
- (b) Discuss briefly the functions of the National Human Rights Commission.

3. Short questions :

- (a) Define Human Rights.
- (b) Write a short note on the difference between rights and human rights.

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Unit 3. □ Environmental Movements

Structure

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Roots of Environmental Movements in India:
- 3.4 Nature of Indian Environmental Movement:
- 3.5 Major objectives of Indian Environmental Movement:
- 3.6 Classification of Indian Environmental Movements:
- 3.7 Major Strands of Indian environmental movements:
- 3.8 Conclusion
- 3.9 Sample questions
- 3.10 Bibliography

3.1 Objectives

- To examine the major dimensions of Indian Environmental Movements as social movements.
- To examine the relationship of Indian Environmental Movements to the Indian social structure.
- Understanding Indian Environmental Movements in its historical dimensions.
- Examining the interconnections between Indian Environmental Movements and 'money-order-economy' under modern capitalism which is rapacious against both nature and man.
- To explain the widespread participation of women—marking an important departure from the pre-independence period—in Indian Environmental Movements.
- Discussing the fact that while Indian Environmental Movements lies in a direct path of continuity with an earlier history of social protest, as an organized and sustained social movement, at the same time, Indian Environmental Movement

represents an expansion in the scale of popular mobilization and the development of popular consciousness.

- To focus on the increasing dependency of the industrial societies on natural resources, through the rapid spread of energy and resource-intensive production technologies, accompanied by the spread of the myth that increased dependency on modern technologies implies a decreased dependence on nature and natural resources, if not also on human labour.
- To provide a systemic conceptual framework for analyzing the processes and structures of modern economic development from an ecological perspective.

3.2 Introduction

Environmental conflicts in contemporary human society relate to societies all over the world but in particular it addresses the most intense and emerging social contradictions in India related to conflicts over the natural resources. Money-order-economy and the pervasive use of science and technology are central to these conflicts. Authoritative commentaries on Environmental Movements in India generally agree that these movements represent an environmentalism for the poor. These movements are attempting to redesign the pattern and extent of natural resource utilization to ensure social equality and ecological sustainability. Environmental Movements in India originated from conflicts over natural resources and the people's right to survival, but it is also a fact that in this region most natural resources have already been utilized to fulfill the basic survival needs of a large majority of people. The introduction of resource and energy-intensive production technologies under such conditions leads to economic growth for a small minority while, at the same time, undermining the material basis for the survival of the large majority of population over a longer time span. In this way, Environmental Movements in India have questioned the validity of the dominant concepts and indicators of economic development.

3.3 Roots of Environmental Movements in India

Indian civilization has always been concerned with natural eco-systems. Vital renewable natural resources like vegetation, soil and water were managed and utilized according to well defined social norms that respected the known ecological processes and preserved the natural harmony between man and nature. However, in continuation of the legacy of colonial economy, the classical model of economic development in the case of the newly independent nations resulted in the growth of urban-industrial enclaves where commodity

production was introduced on a large scale. The absence of ecologically enlightened resource management methods, the pressure of poverty enhanced the pace of economic development activities in the hope of a quick improvement in the standard of living for all. Ecological degradation and economic deprivation generated by the resources insensitivity and intensity of the classical model of development have resulted in environmental degradation. These are the root of environmental movements that have emerged as major social movements in many parts of India during both the colonial period and the post colonial era. In the context of a limited resource base and unlimited developmental aspirations, environmental movements have initiated a new political struggle for safeguarding the interests and survival of the poor, the marginalized, including women, tribals and poor peasants. Money-order-economy has vanquished ecology. Broadly speaking, the theme of the man-nature relationship is central to environmental movements. Guha and Gadgil defined the environmental movement 'as organized social activity consciously directed towards promoting sustainable use of natural resources, halting environmental degradation or bringing about environmental restoration'.

3.4 Nature of Indian Environmental Movement

Eminent Indian environmentalist Ramchandra Guha identified Indian environmental movement as an umbrella term which covers a large number of local conflicts, initiatives, and struggles where the poor confront the rich in order to protect the scarce, diminishing natural resources that are needed for survival. In the west, environmental movements focus on consumption, productive use of natural resources and conservation or protection of natural resources. In India the movements are based on use and alternative use of, as well as control over natural resources. Indian environmental movement illuminates the fact that the state has often extended its support to the agents of more intensive resource exploitation and in this situation local communities have nothing to do except direct action in protest against injustice and ecological degradation. Ramchandra Guha argues that Indian environmental movements address a new form of class conflict which is rooted in a lopsided, iniquitous and environmentally destructive process of development in independent India. Now development for some means underdevelopment and dispossession for the many. Development interventions aimed at commercialization of natural resources involve a major shift in the manner in which rights to resources are perceived and exercised. It transforms commons into commodities, and deprives the politically weak communities of access to resources, and robs resources from nature, to generate growth on the market for more privileged groups in society. The ultimate outcome of this transformation is privatization.

Therefore in India ecological movements are based on the need to protect nature and the need to strengthen people's collective rights to common property resources. The emergence of social movements around ecological issues indicates that it is the marginal communities in India for whom the protection of nature is essential for their survival.

3.5 Major objectives of Indian Environmental Movement

The intensity and range of ecology movements in independent India have continuously widened as predatory exploitation of natural resources to feed the process of development has increased in extent and intensity. It has been characterized by the massive expansion of energy and resource-intensive industrial activity and major development projects like large dams, forest exploitation, and mining and energy-intensive agriculture. The resource demand of development has led to the narrowing of the natural resource base for the survival of the economically poor and powerless either by direct transfer of resources away from basic needs or by destruction of the essential ecological process that ensures renewability of the life-supporting natural resources. Therefore, Indian environmental movements emerged as the people's natural response to this new threat to their survival and as a demand for the ecological conservation of vital life-support systems. The most significant life-support systems in addition to clean air are the common property resources of water, forests and land on which the majority of the poor people of India depend for survival. It is the threat to these resources that has been the focus of Indian environmental movements in the last few decades. Though Indian environmental movements relate to issues that are geographically localized, their reverberations are national and even global in import. The significance of Indian environmental movements does not merely lie in the fact that they are voice of the dispossessed who are victims of the highly unequal sharing of the costs of the development process. The positive feature of these movements lies in the manner in which they make visible the hidden externalities of development based on a particular economic ideology and reveal its inherent injustice and non-sustainability. Indian environmental movements as a trend can no longer be viewed as merely specific and particular happenings. They are an expression of the universal socio-ecological impacts of a narrowly conceived development based only on short-term commercial criteria of exploitation. The impact of Indian environmental movements cannot be assessed merely in terms of the impact of the particular development projects they originate from. The impact, in the final analysis, is on the very fundamental categories of politics, economics, science and technology which together have created the classical paradigm of development and resource use. Indian environmental movements reveal how the resource intensive demands

of current development have ecological destruction and economic deprivation built into them. The most important and universal feature of Indian environmental movements is that they are redefining the concepts of development and economic values, of technological efficiency, of scientific rationality; they are creating a new economics for a new civilization.

3.6 Classification of Indian Environmental Movements

Indian environmental movements may be classified, on the basis of ideological approach to the issue of environment, into three categories. A) The struggle which operates in the domain of political economy, raises the issue of rights and distribution of resources. B) The movements confined to a response to environmental problems and seeking solutions within existing socio-economic frameworks and technological innovations. C) Some environmental movements reject the dominant development paradigm and 'seek to alter the very classification of both man and nature relationship'. Some eminent scholars classified Indian environmental movements on the basis of the participants. According to them there are three categories of members: 'omnivores, ecosystem people and ecological refugees'.

3.7 Major Strands of Indian environmental movements

We may distinguish seven major strands of Indian environmental movements. These are:

- (1) focused on nature conservation on aesthetic or recreational or scientific grounds.
- (2) Focused on nature conservation on the basis of cultural or religious traditions.
- (3) Focusing on the efficiency of resource use on the basis of technological perspectives. According to this strand the question of equity is the dominant concern of the environmental movements in present day India. It is concerned with 'environmentalism' related to the poor. There are four strands within these movements. These are: a) crusading Gandhians, b) ecological Marxists, c) appropriate technologists, d) scientific conservation and e) wilderness enthusiasts'.
- (4) Middle class environmentalism at times vitally contradicts the interests of the poor. For example, when polluting factories in the urban areas are closed or relocated to prevent pollution, the workers suffer most. Though they are the prime victims of such pollution, loss of employment threatens their immediate survival.
- (5) Another notable strand of Indian environmental movement is that they are mostly spearheaded not by political parties, but by non-party organizations. The major political parties of Indian democracy have normally not taken up the issues related

with the environment or the dominant development paradigm with any seriousness. Though quite small and localized, environmental movements in India took off under the leadership of the local poor. It makes Indian environmental movements both strong and weak. The voluntary groups being at the grassroots can interact with the people easily; identify their problems and potentials better. However, they lack resources and a vision of totality.

With the beginning of the Chipko movement in the Garhwals in the 1970s there have been series of people's resistance in India against deforestation, big dams, mechanized trawling and such other environment-related issues. Some of these movements, are most notably Chipko and Narmada Bachao Andolan. In a few cases, immediate demands of the movements have partly been realized while in most others, success has remained elusive. These 'well-known' movements apart there have been many other 'lesser known' movements having never reached people's attention to any significant scale. However as a popular movement Chipko has squeezed up worldwide attention. In this movement the hill women played a very important role and provided enthusiastic support to the Chipko andolan. Women in absence of their men-folk confronted the hired axemen of the contractor and despite abuses and threats, foiled their bid. The resistance was organized by Gaura Devi an ordinary village woman, who later came to be regarded as the embodiment of women power in Chipko. Narmada Bachao Andolan was mobilized against the construction of several dams across the river Narmada. The Sardar Sarovar Project was set to and, in fact, did bring about havoc to the lives of a very large section of the people in the Narmada valley evicting them from their habitat and livelihood. The project authority showed criminal insensitivity to its 'development' victims. This was the starting point of this andolan which in course of time and through a complex combination of diverse factors and forces transformed itself into an anti-big dam movement and has since been famous as a great environmentalist intervention against dominant eco-destructive development paradigm. This andolan united strikingly different social groups in its campaigns. In the case of Sardar Sarovar Dam, the movement brought poor hill adivasis together with prosperous caste Hindu farmers of the plains. In the case of Maheshwar dam, it united poor low caste boatmen with well-to-do caste Hindu farmers. Actually the threat of displacement, the loss of land and livelihood was the common bond or the prime motive force of this andolan. The specificity of this andolan is that it combines equity with ecology. The urgency of acting against the Project has necessitated that the activists of the movement compromise to some extent with its goal of charting a course as a movement creating an alternative political culture based on Gandhian principles. It has been understood and appropriated in quite another way by the urban based intelligentsia who are concerned with representing the Andolan as fitting into a theoretical critique of the paradigm of development in the modern, westernized sense of the term.

3.8 Conclusion

For some years now we have neither any significant report of environmental movements in general nor any intensification of any of the ongoing movements. The Chipko has long lost its steam. There have allegedly been some reversals in the Garhwals. The Tehri movement could never crystallize. The Narmada Bachao Andolan seems to have been stuck in an impasse. A general mood appears to have set in suggesting that it is neither feasible nor desirable to halt the process of globalization or to stay away from it and the concomitant spurt in economic growth. The fear of environmental degradation has proved to be a feeble and surmountable deterrent, if at all, in this pursuit of growth. The 'utopia' of eco-centric economy has given way to what has been called the 'growth mania' which, at its best, gives some lip services to environment, or at its worst, mercilessly sweeps away any such 'inhibition'. Economy has vanquished ecology. Developing countries like India have been swept by 'Mahathirian' obsession with 'the third world catching up the west'. Therefore as democratic politics, environmental movement's failures are too evident. First in their exaggerated focus on localized movements they do not appear to adequately appreciate those local problems and factors which are intertwined with larger politico-economic forces and have been increasing rapidly and in complicated ways with the spread of globalization. Second, Environmental movements are too closely associated with the civil society and their distrust for political parties is remarkably pronounced. Apart from this it is also notable that if 'money-order-economy' has commoditized environment, they have commoditized environmentalism as well. Credibility-deficit of environmentalists has utterly disabled environmental movements to take even small strides towards any counter hegemony against the state-sponsored discourse of development which is growth centric but not eco-friendly.

3.9 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Discuss the main features of environmental movements in India.
- (b) Do you think that Indian environmental movement is 'environmentalism of the poor.' Explain with reason.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) Discuss briefly the relation between politics and environment.
- (b) Elucidate the role of the Indian state in protecting environment.

3. Short questions :

- (a) Write a note on the chipko movement.
- (b) Mention some of the major Acts relating to protection of Environment.

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Unit 4. □ Dalit Politics

Structure

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Aim of Dalit Politics
- 4.4 Background to the emergence of Dalit politics
- 4.5 Types of Dalit Politics and their bearing on Society and Politics
- 4.6 Conclusion
- 4.7 Sample questions
- 4.8 Bibliography

4.1 Objectives

- To understand Dalit politics as a subject of cognitive discourse over the last 60 years.
- To analyze the nature of political mobilization of the Dalits in search of both a distinctive identity and realization of social justice and equality for the Dalits as a collectivity.
- To examine the nature of integration and solidarity of the Dalits as victims of the age-old Hindu upper caste practice of untouchability.
- To highlight different types of political activities resorted to by the Dalits to fight against such victim hood and creation and construction of symbols and ideologies for this purpose at different points of time both before and after independence.

4.2 Introduction

The liberal proponents of Dalit politics believe that it is the ancient Hindu reactionary traditions and the deep rooted prejudice of the Upper caste against Dalits, which have led to the various forms of protest and collective resistance by the latter. Thus liberal proponents of Dalit politics view Dalit protest as a necessary outcome of a doctrinaire Hindu tradition.

It has a sturdy tendency to believe that the Dalit politics is limited to achieving a partial advance in the socio-economic, civic and political fields within the existing social order. For some philosophers, social scientists and activists, untouchability is a religious phenomenon. Religious ideology not only shapes the mind but also societal culture which determines the social and economic structures. They argue that Hindu ideology breeds an inegalitarian social system and values which are the root cause of untouchability. Besides, the Naxalite and Leftist land-grab movements dominated the mass movements in the 1960s. Dalits as landless agricultural labourers and poor peasants participated in these movements in large numbers. Another conspicuous side of Dalit politics is that while the proponents of Dalit politics seem to accept some building blocks from Marxist theoretical repertoire such as the notions of 'struggle', 'mobilization', 'consciousness', and 'solidarity', they seem to reject at the same time the thesis of materialism and the conceptions relating to the materialistic bases of social formations and movements, reducing Dalit struggle to simple battles between contending social classes. It is true that ideologically and organizationally, Dalit politics in India overlapped and contended with broader revolutionary democratic movements along with the national movement and communist and socialist led working class and peasant movements, beginning from the early days of colonialism and continuing till date.

4.3 Aim of Dalit politics

The participants of Dalit politics assert their self-hood not in terms of being the bearers of 'labour values' but as the whole 'human' entity endowed with all the entitlements and capabilities that go with such entity. There is a general agreement that Dalit politics and Dalit collective actions are expressions of the human quest for identity, autonomy and recognitions. The actors of Dalit politics seek identity and recognition through their expressive actions, universalistic and non-negotiable demands and further, all these through direct participation. The actors of Dalit politics are established unions and political parties which generally represent the collective voice of the dalits through the use of strategic-instrumental rationality. Dalit politics propagates a revolutionary message, a will to act against exploitation, and for freedom from oppression, from death to life, from darkness to light. Dalit politics is inclined to the perception of 'equality of respect and equal consideration for all'.

4.4 Background to the emergence of Dalit politics

Dalits represent a community of 170 million in India, constituting 17% of the population. One out of every six Indians is a Dalit; yet due to their caste identity, Dalits regularly face

discrimination and violence which prevent them from enjoying the basic human rights and dignity promised to all citizens of India, governed by a democratic Constitution. It is also interesting to note that in as many as 38% of government schools, Dalit children are made to sit separately while eating. In 20% schools, Dalit children are not even permitted to drink water from the same sources with their upper-caste counterparts (source: a survey of practices of untouchability undertaken in 565 villages in 11 major states of India by National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights).

4.5 Types of Dalit Politics and their bearing on Society and Politics

However revolts, protests and organized resistance by the ex-untouchables or Dalits in opposition to socio-economic exploitation, discrimination and subjugation are not a recent phenomenon. Throughout the history of the caste system, several instances of protests can be found beginning with the rise of Buddhism as a separate religious sect challenging the Hindu orthodoxy and passing through different phases of the Bhakti movements brewing up from ancient times and continuing till the late medieval period under the leadership of some charismatic saints. Initially, the ex-untouchables embarked on passive resistance and gradually in course of time and maturing through experiences, they created alternative cultural symbols and idioms for voicing their aspirations and conveying their anger against Brahminical hierarchy. Indeed, the bottom rungs of our society were forced to follow rampant brahminical domination as a value system which is not only extraordinary but also terribly exasperating because of its rigidity and immutability. Therefore Dalit movement in India is often perceived as an adjunct to a mainstream social movement, be it the universal discourse of rights, liberties and democracy or that of emancipation. However, in the colonial period, Dalit movement was organized in the form of anti-caste movement. Later on, these anti-caste movements were christened as Dalit movement which would become a central democratic movement of Indian society. In the pre-independence period anti-caste movement comprised strong non-Brahmin movements in various parts of India, such as the Adi-Dharma movement in Maharashtra and Punjab, the Adi-Hindu movement in western Uttar Pradesh, the Namashudra movement in Bengal, Narayan-swami Guru's movement for social reforms and political emancipation of the Ezhavas in Kerala, Adi-Dravid movement in Tamil Nadu, Adi-Andhras movement in coastal Andhra and Adi-Hindus movement in Hyderabad. In addition, there were non-Brahman ideological trends elsewhere and weaker or unorganized Dalit assertions in such areas as Mysore and Bihar.

Jotirao Phule had laid the foundation for Dalit politics and he is also known as the father of Indian social revolution. Perhaps the first modern Dalit voice was that of Jotirao Phule, a powerful advocate of social and gender equality, based in Maharashtra. Phule, the 19th century social revolutionary and the main founder of the anti-caste movement in India, strongly campaigned that Indian national unification required an attack on Brahminical domination and Hinduism itself. Therefore, he carried that attack on all levels; simultaneously he elaborated a theory of history along with the reinterpretation of Indian mythology and he assigned to himself the task of communicating that attack and interpretation to the masses with polemic tracts, songs, plays and organization building. Phule's main argument was that the low castes, whom he sometimes called 'Shudras and Ati-Sudras', were the original inhabitants of India and that they have been enslaved and exploited by conquering Aryans and those Aryans were the formulator of caste-based Hinduism and that have been used as a means of deceiving the masses and legitimizing their power. Phule devoted his entire life to a relentless confrontation with caste-based Hinduism and sought to transform the basic structure of the Indian social system, replacing caste-based Hinduism and the accompanying social oppression, economic exploitation and political domination by bringing into being an equalitarian society.

Eminent social philosophers like Jotirao Phule, Narayanaswami Guru, E. V. Ramaswamy Periyar and B.R. Ambedkar exercised considerable ideological and political influence on the Dalit movement over the next few generations. They challenged the caste-based Hinduism and Hindu-nationalism. To them, 'Hindu-Nationalism' emerged as a consequence of caste-based elitist orientation and that trend was decisively inclined to define Indian society and the majority of Indian people as essentially Hindus. Therefore, they raised question on the distortions and excrescences of the history and culture of traditional India at the behest of the Brahminical elites. And they fostered their attack on Hinduism by arguing that it was in essence Brahminical, caste-bound and irrational. They advocated that Hinduism had not been the religion and culture of the majority but rather was an imposed religion; and that escaping exploitation today required the low castes to reject this imposition, to define themselves as 'non-Hindu' and take a new religious identity. In this regard, it may be recalled that E. V. Ramaswami Periyar promoted atheism; Ambedkar turned to Buddhism; Narayanaswami Guru formulated the idiom of 'one religion, one caste, one god'. Alongside that challenge those leaders of Dalit politics were also inclined to identify themselves not simply as low caste but as peasants and workers. Ambedkar and Periyar both supported and helped organize movements of peasants against landlords and workers against capitalists. In the post-independence period the leaders of Dalit Politics criticized the Indian National

Congress as controlled by upper caste Brahmins and Capitalists locked in an exploitative relationship with the working classes and the peasantry. In this connection they sought for an alternative political front inclined in favor of Dalits. Ambedkar insisted that alternative political front had to lead to the empowerment and emancipation of dalits and other subjugated masses.

Study of dalit politics in India necessarily means a study of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's role in it. As a historic leader and key formulator of dalit politics, he delivered its enduring ideology. By the 1930s and 1940s, he came to dominate all-India politics as well, though his organizations never attained as strong a hegemony outside of, as in, Maharashtra. In spite of organizational weakness it is still 'Ambedkarism' as a broad trend which dominates Indian dalit politics. Another Dalit deeply influenced by liberal values was the Ezhava leader of Kerala, Sri Narayana Guru. There was a fair sprinkling of Dalit leaders elsewhere holding out identical messages. Their principal argument was loud and clear. Humankind was made up of a community of individuals all of whom, in principle, were entitled to the same social status and economic and cultural dignity.

E. V. Ramaswamy Periyar propagated the notion that casteism and Hinduism were one and the same. His movement took a turn towards a radical consciousness and became a 'Dravidian' movement, seeking to define the rights of the Dravidians against Aryan dominance. Peryar claimed that the important feature of all new ideologies of the elites was the 'Aryan view of the race', which treated the Shudras and Untouchables as descendants of the native conquered inhabitants. He tried to define the rights of the Dravidians against Aryan dominance. He denounced the Brahmins as the representatives of Hindu arrogance and the champions of the cause of Brahminical superiority. Therefore, he quit the Congress Party and attacked it as a tool of Brahmin dominance. Alongside in the year 1925, he organized the 'Self-Respect Movement', designed as a movement of Dravidian uplift, seeking to expose Brahminical tyranny and the deceptive method by which they controlled all spheres of Hindu social life. This movement would culminate in the formation of the Justice Party to be metamorphosed soon thereafter into the Dravid Kazaghams meaning literally the land of the Dravid. This party is the forerunner of the present day DMK and AIADMK.

In the early 1970s the Dalit Panthers, a youthful group of activists and writers in Bombay organized vociferous and radical protest against caste based domination and untouchability. The name has achieved widespread use in book titles and in news paper reports on both violence against dalits and accomplishments among them. In 1972 Dalit Panthers in their party manifesto proclaimed that "we don't want a little place in Brahman

galli, we want the rule of the whole land". In post-Ambedkar dalit politics, Dalit Panthers played a defining role which provides inspiration to all of India. The Panthers with their fervor of raw revolt and their poetry of hope, born in response to a deadened Republican Party and the Scheduled Caste Federation which preceded it during the 1940s under direct patronage of Ambedkar, carried the battle much forward taking the ideology of the movement far beyond the policies and programmes of social reforms and affirmative action that the dalits could achieve through the mediation of Ambedkar in the immediate aftermath of independence. While the movements of Dalit Panthers achieved much but ultimately there were serious failures. The deeper problem was that in spite of their all-encompassing revolutionary rhetoric, the Panthers failed to move forward to the kind of total transformation that Ambedkar had envisaged. Beyond militancy, the Panthers failed to elaborate a vision for the socio-economic programme of a new society and a strategy for moving forward.

The Dalit and non-Brahman anti-caste politics can be classified as-(i) anti-systemic politics, (ii) value-oriented politics, (iii) norm-oriented politics, which challenged and sought to transform the basic structure of the Indian social system, replacing caste and the accompanying social oppression, economic exploitation and political domination by an equalitarian society. Dalit politics since its emergence was part of the broader revolutionary politics or liberal democratic politics in India. The issues of dalit politics also added new dimensions to both nationalist and communist or socialist politics in India. Dalit politics in spite of its ambivalences and internal disagreements on various issues and concerns moved on a coherent and healthy body of political ideas which markedly differed from mainstream political discourse. In the pre-independence and post independence period the central issues of Dalit politics were confined to the problem of untouchability and other issues were to some extent related to the problems of agricultural labourers. Even after sixty six years of independence and many laws destined to correct centuries old caste based oppression, it still remains one of the biggest sources of injustice. Therefore reforms of caste system and uprooting of the problem of untouchability became chief issues of Dalit politics. Self-respect for the untouchables became the central concern of Dalit politics. Besides, it is also a reality of Indian society that from time immemorial, caste inequalities along with poverty and deprivation encapsulated our society. In fact those lower down the hierarchy were deprived of all those resources essential to the constitution of their selves and pursuit of their ends, respectful of themselves and eliciting respect from others in turn. In this context, Dalit politics resolved for an attempt to create an alternative socio-cultural structure by acquiring education, economic status and political power. It is also apparent from the study of Dalit politics that the actors of this movement are vigorous to seek power

and employ it to bring about a radical transformation of society. They argue that the basic claims of the Dalit cannot hang around on the consent and approval of the dominant upper castes. Such consent may never come forth and even if it does, the same may not be on the terms of the Dalits. Under the conditions of humiliation in which the Dalit live, they have to have power to translate their rights into the obligations of others. It is also important to note that the concepts like "social mobility", "Sanskritisation" and "relative deprivation" are major frames of reference in studying Dalit politics. In studying Dalit mobility the process of Sanskritisation could be a pattern. In this process certain Dalit groups or individuals try to adopt either ritually or culturally the life style of higher groups or individuals in order to achieve a similar social position or to adopt the values that promote the aspirations of an atomized individual in a civil society. It is argued that if the Dalits fail in their achievement of this imitation of the Sanskritisation model of upward mobility, they then suffer from relative deprivation. It is also apparent from the history of Dalit politics in India that these politics are resolved to challenge the Hindu-nationalism. It not only criticizes the distortions and excrescences of Indian liberation politics but also attacks Hinduism itself by arguing that it was in essence Brahminical, caste-bound and irrational. If establishment of self-respect is the fundamental striving of Dalit politics then Brahminism is its principal opponent, because Brahminism has the tendency of ranking, which makes some inferior and others superior, irrespective of their merit and effort. Throughout history, preachers and followers of Brahminical ideology with their sense of innate superiority, tried to dominate society and culture in India. So our society knew it very well that silence is a powerful enemy of social justice but the notion propagated in the *Bhagavad-Gita* is something different. According to *Bhagavad-Gita*, those engaged in *karma* should not expect a *phala* for it and the *phala* must be left off for the upper caste lord i.e. the *Brahmin*, the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaishya*. Actually any type of *phalarahita karma* was treated as *adharm*. In this context invoking pre-Brahminical communities, or communities outside the vortex of Brahminical hegemony, is quite central to this politics and such politics is endowed with issues conducive to the challenges of the untouchables. Therefore, what should be the normative grounding for the ordering of the polity and for the functioning of its social and political institutions? The proponents of Dalit politics invoke continuously the values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for the purpose. The tensions and conflicts that arise in reconciling between the demands of these values are often overlooked and whenever such tensions and conflicts are taken into account, their resolution is sought by appeal to human nature as deserving respect. Justice is seen as distribution of the fruits of social cooperation, honour, resources and legacies based on the prior assumption that every person is entitled to be considered as an equal unless qualified by other acceptable

considerations. The fruits and bounties to be distributed are not merely economic but cultural and political as well. All Dalit politics is inclined to the perception of 'equality of respect and equal consideration to be extended to all'.

The emergence of Dalit politics, the forms and style of their mobilization, the type of claims Dalit people make, and the issues they have come to respond to, including the justification of their 'politics' in the contemporary setting of the Indian society can be understood at two different levels. The first relates to a process of major changes in the nature of Indian society during the post-independence phase of democracy, reforms and development. In the post-independence period, Indian Dalits have demanded their share as other members of society. They are claiming dignity, honor, and prestige as full-fledged members of society. They also demanded their share in the central political arena and sought to participate in the power game of acquiring office of governance. Since independence, gradually the experiences of democracy and development became instrumental for the Dalits. The emerging representation of Dalits of Indian society has come to be characterized by the emergence of an aggressive and restless consciousness of Dalits about their 'rights', their 'claims' and their 'share' in the resources of the nation. Besides, the growing awareness of their ability to collectively contest, compete and even to enter into conflict, and confrontation, including the use of violence against the state or against another adversary collectivity such as upper caste, became also instrumental for Dalit politics. The process of unequal development, growing internal colonialism, imbalances in economic growth and various other social factors have combined to create situations of inequality and uneven distribution of political and economic resources resulting in upper caste domination. These inequality and uneven processes of development have linkages with the Dalit unrest in India. The system of modern mass media and globalization of the market and economy have added to the deepening of conflicts and to the strengthening of the competing character of Dalits. In this context it can be noticed that at present in the field of social and political power, Dalits consider power as 'freedom', 'liberty' and 'personal security'. Therefore with the help of constitutional rights and various developmental activities Dalits make a dent in the structure of the educated rabble, the bureaucracy and it permits them to organize, form collectivities and action groups, and produce movements in defense of low caste interest. This transformation is also accentuated by the various politically-awakened activities. In this connection, we may remember Gandhi Vs Ambedkar debate, Hrijan Vs Dalit, Varna Vs Jati, Manuwad Vs Casteless society debates etc. This consciousness implicated with deep anguish ultimately paved the way for dalitization, which is nothing but the socio, economic, politico, cultural environment, where erstwhile subjugated downtrodden low

caste people find their proper place, status, dignity and power and their identity is now being used in a spirit to install their own pride and militancy. It is that transformation which provoked ex-untouchables to formulate their own ideology and administration.

4.6 Conclusion

We may conclude that while dalit politics in India began concurrently with the upsurge of both nationalist and leftist politics, it is experiencing a new or second upsurge today in an era of the crisis of nationalist and left politics. This change involves new dilemmas and possibilities for the dalit politics itself. In the new millennium, with the growth of active participation of the ex-untouchables at decision making bodies, the politics of 'number' of these low caste ex-untouchables began to assume some importance in decision making process and politics. The leaders among the dalits, in order to take due advantage of the situation started to mobilize their caste identity in their favor and provoked their caste fellows to undercut the dominance of the upper caste and bring about a new regime reflecting a social resurgence from below. To safeguard their interest and revoke the hegemony of caste Hindus they seek to turn the entire rural decision making process and developmental activities 'upside down' and shape an order of things wherein the hitherto deprived shall not only inherit the earth, literally and metaphorically, but also shape the principles of politics and governance which would re mould the entire pattern of dominance. Finally, since its inception, dalit politics has been resorting to an alternative way of living or of redeeming Indian society from the hold of Brahmanism. It sought to deal with the problem of caste and Brahminical hierarchy and went beyond, to the issues of development. However the post Ambedkar dalit politics though augmented challenge against caste based oppression and exploitation but fell short of showing the pragmatic way to transformation. It has also not succeeded to build a single unified dalit movement in India, now or in the past. Today, the partaker of Indian dalit politics followed more than one path under different banners. All of them vehemently asserted on the question of identity but that new identity as dalit is still in the making. Apart from these shortcomings, the standpoint of dalit politics against caste is quite ambivalent. On the one hand it was actually aware that caste was deeply implicated in the caste system, into the ranked order of deference on one hand and contempt and condescension on the other. On the other hand, caste had a strong communitarian dimension which often facilitated mobilization of communities into struggle and to bring about internal reforms. Therefore we find strident calls for the annihilation of caste on one hand to enabling all castes to progress on the other. Ambedkar in a famous essay called 'Annihilation of Caste', while stressed its rejection, remained deeply skeptical

of the outcome of such an effort, and felt that the conditions that he suggested for the same were impossible to realize.

4.7 Sample questions

1. Broad questions :

- (a) Describe the nature and significance of Dalit Politics in India.
- (b) Assess the role of Dalit movements as a form of protest against the caste systems.

2. Short-essay type questions :

- (a) Discuss briefly the background of Dalit Politics in India.
- (b) Point out the objectives of Dalit Politics in India.

3. Short questions :

- (6) Who are identified as Dalits?
- (7) Write a short note on the role of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Dalits politics.

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