
UNIT 16 INDIA AS A NATION

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16.1 INTRODUCTION

A nation is a community bound together by common ties of the territory where they live, the language or languages they speak, the history they share, and the culture they are proud of. Above all, there is the people's feeling of belonging together or awareness.

Accordingly common territory, language, history, and culture and a feeling of belonging together are ties which make India a nation. Its diverse culture helped in the unity of our nation. It also helped the national movement achieve freedom.

After independence in 1947, we adopted a Constitution, resolved to stay together as an independent nation and to have a democratic, socialistic and secular society based on the ideals of freedom and equality — social, political, economic and religious.

In order to develop India as a strong nation, two things are important. First, national integration is necessary. Second, problems like illiteracy, social inequality, economic backwardness, provincialism, communalism, casteism, religionism, etc., have to be removed.

This unit presents the ideals of the Indian nation, namely democracy, socialism and secularism. It also presents the introductory framework and perspective for the subsequent treatment in the unit. The unit also suggests instructional strategies which include instructional objectives, teaching-learning activities and evaluation to deal with these concepts.

16.2 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you will be able to :

- explain the terms "nation" and "nation state";
- describe the ideals of the Indian nation;

- explain the terms democracy, socialism and secularism to your students;
- distinguish between political equality, social equality and economic equality;
- describe the causes responsible for economic inequality in India to your students;
- select an appropriate and effective instructional methodology to clarify the concept of national integration for strengthening Indian nation;
- organise and guide student activities such as exhibitions, lectures, discussions and debates, etc.;
- construct evaluation items to test the learning outcomes;
- describe to your students the steps to be taken for solving problems coming in the way of national integration; and
- prepare teaching aids related to this unit.

16.3 CONTENT

What is a nation? How does a nation come into existence? Is India a nation? What are the ideals of the Indian nation? The answers to these questions follow.

16.3.1 The Meaning of the Term 'Nation State'

In the introduction we have defined the meaning of the term 'nation'. In this section, we define the meaning of the term 'nation state'. Each nation wants to have its own state. A state which has a definite geographical boundary, a national language and a distinct way of life, governed by a uniform code of laws, is called a nation state. Such strong and independent states having distinct political units were established in Europe during the Renaissance. In India, however, the beginnings of a nation state started during British rule.

British rule helped the growth of nationalism in two ways. First, India became one political and economic entity for the first time. It gradually came under one system of law and one type of administration. Second, it led to a united nationalist movement.

The nationalist movement created a national feeling. It was a movement for national freedom. It wanted to make India independent from the British. One part of nationalism was the urge for freedom. The other was that the people of different areas, people subscribing to different religions and speaking different languages, belonged to the same nation.

Check Your Progress

- Notes :
- a) Write your answers in the space given below.
 - b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. When was the Indian nation born in our country?

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2. On what grounds do you consider India a nation?

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The Indian nation has some ideals. These ideals are given in our Constitution. What are these ideals?

The problem before India as a nation could be understood in two phases — before independence and after the attainment of independence. Before India was independent, the aim of Indian nationalism was to achieve a state of its own. The people united against British rule.

The situation changed after 1947. Now the British rulers were gone and the task for Indians was to stay together as a nation and give the people a better life. How has India done this task?

The national movement set some ideals before the Indian people. After getting freedom, the Indian people tried to turn these ideals into reality. These ideals, especially the political ideals, are set out in our Constitution. The Constitution clearly shows that the task was not only to stay together as an independent nation but to set up a society which was secular, democratic and socialistic. Let us now first see what these ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism, mean.

16.3.3 Meaning and Role of Democracy, Socialism and Secularism in the Developing Indian Nation

Democracy is a form of government which considers all citizens as politically equal. It grants each citizen the right to vote and guarantees the freedom to vote fearlessly. Thus democracy means equality and freedom. It emphasises political equality and also social equality.

A democratic government was set up in accordance with the Constitution of independent India. Democracy is an excellent ideal. But it is not easy to achieve. It is difficult in a society like ours, in which there are many kinds of traditional inequalities such as caste, class, religion, etc. These are the challenges before Indian democracy. We have to overcome these challenges to strengthen democracy.

Socialism emphasises economic equality. It aims at removing poverty and narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. It stands for equitable and rightful distribution of national wealth.

The idea that all men, as human entities, should be equal not only politically but also in economic life, is basic to socialism. Without socialism, democracy cannot be complete because the basic idea of democracy is equality. Socialism extends the idea of equality from the political life of people to all other aspects of life.

Secularism in Indian conditions means equal respect for all religions. All citizens are equal before the law. It grants the right to all believers to practice their own religion without fear or favour. It does not discriminate between citizens on grounds of religious faith. Any citizen can aspire to hold any office regardless of the religion or faith he/she professes. Further, secularism develops a rational and moral outlook. It has helped improve life in India by fostering religious tolerance, encouraging democratic values, and promoting a healthy pluralistic outlook which has led to the autonomous growth of science, art, religion and philosophy and by breaking age-old rituals and dogmas.

The ideals, that is, democracy, socialism and secularism play an important role in developing the Indian nation. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to achieve these ideals in a society like ours in which there were many kinds of traditional inequalities like caste and class inequality, and conflicts between religious and linguistic groups. These are the challenges before the Indian nation. If the Indian nation is to become strong, we must overcome these challenges.

Freedom and equality are the bases of these ideals. These ideals (democracy, socialism and secularism) give people freedom. Within the limits of consideration for similar rights of

fellow citizens, they can do what they want and think and say what they like. These rights the government cannot take away. But all these are related to the ideas of political, social, economic and religious equality.

Socialism envisages an equitable distribution of national income to all sections of the people. It provides freedom from all forms of exploitation — social, political and economic — and thus strives to build a strong nation. In the same way secularism affirms the faith of the nation in an Indian body politic which is above petty religious considerations while showing due respect to all religions. Democracy provides every citizen — irrespective of caste, creed or religion — equal rights. Thus all citizens participate in activities and programmes helpful in developing the Indian nation.

Check Your Progress

Notes : a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

3. Why is democracy considered an excellent ideal ?

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4. Why are the ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism considered difficult in a society like ours ?

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5. Is India a secular state? How ?

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16.3.4 Freedom and Equality — The Basis for Ideals Like Democracy, Socialism and Secularism

Freedom and equality are considered the bases for the ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism. During British rule, the Indian people had no freedom. They could not freely express their views. Now, they are free to express their thoughts, form associations, adopt profession/occupation and reside anywhere and choose any religion. Without this freedom, democracy, socialism and secularism have no meaning.

Similarly, the ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism are closely linked with the idea of equality. It does not mean equality in the political sense alone, but it must be accompanied

by equality in the social, economic and religious fields as well. If Harijans are not allowed to enter temples and are treated as untouchables, as was done earlier, what would they gain by political equality? All such discriminations based on social inequalities must be done away with.

Likewise, the economic disparities between the rich and the poor must be narrowed down to enable the people of all walks of life to lead a respectable life free from want and hunger.

16.3.5 Political, Social, Economic and Religious Equality

Political equality means that in a democratic country, everybody has equal political rights. Irrespective of religion, caste, creed and sex, everybody has the right to vote on the principle of one man one vote. Anybody can aspire to stand for election to Parliament or to a state legislature if otherwise found qualified, and can aspire to hold any political office one can even hope to become the President or the Prime Minister of the country. The state does not discriminate between citizens on grounds of sex, religion, caste, language or region and they all are considered equal before the law.

Social equality is one of the ideals given in our Constitution. It means that all citizens should be equal and have equal rights in all social activities and in the social field such as the place of work, in localities and social and religious institutions.

The major hindrance to social equality is the institution of caste. Casteism creates a sense of high and low in society. People belonging to so-called upper or higher castes exploit people belonging to lower castes. People also get divided into various classes and consequently differences crop up which mar the unity of the nation. In a society ridden with casteism, the people tend to vote on a caste basis. All these are detrimental to democracy.

What does it mean to treat all men equally? What is meant by equality of opportunity? The idea of equality is commonly expressed in such statements as "all men are equal".

What does this really mean? Although democracy is an all pervasive concept, it is found to rest ultimately on two fundamental values : equality and freedom. The Constitution of India declares the right to equality as a "fundamental right". Article 14 declares that the "state shall not deny to any person equality of opportunity in matters of public employment", and Article 15 prohibits discrimination on certain grounds.

Economic equality is necessary along with political equality for the following reasons :

- i) If there is no economic equality, exploitation of one section by the other will continue.
- ii) Fraternity and brotherhood in society cannot be achieved if there is economic disparity.
- iii) If there is economic inequality, political rights lose their importance and there can be no real democracy. Rich candidates may exploit poor voters by offering them financial gifts. This would mean that democracy would be negated in practice, even if professed in theory.

To promote or develop the ideals of political, social and economic equality the following measures may be taken:

- i) Regionalism and communalism should be discouraged as they give rise to selfish interests and this goes against the unity of the nation and blocks a fair and judicious exercise of political rights.

Casteism should be checked by means of legislation as well as education. The Government should make laws against casteism so as to eradicate this evil. People of all sections of the society should be taught about the ill effects of casteism.

To have economic equality the Government should adopt and encourage the method of decentralization of the means of production. Taxes should be levied in such a way that the bulk of their burden falls on the richer sections rather than on the poor. Such measures are bound to reduce economic inequality. Optimal utilization of the available resources be made by systematic planning. The mass media like radio and TV should be utilised to educate people about the ill effects of casteism, communalism and other social evils.

Check Your Progress

- Notes : a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

6. Why are freedom and equality necessary for a society like ours?

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7. How did social inequality hinder the proper functioning of Indian democracy?

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16.3.6 The Indian Nation — Its Diverse Culture

There is no denying the fact that India is a land of diversities. In area, it is quite vast and is sometimes referred to as a subcontinent. In such a situation, there are bound to be differences in vegetation, climate, food habits, dresses and customs of the people. These are also bound to be a multiplicity of dialects, languages and religious practices.

But all these diversities and varieties are not a source of weakness. On the contrary, they have made Indian culture quite rich and composite. Writers and poets of various Indian languages have enriched Indian literature in their own way.

In the field of art, Hindu and Muslim traditions have a great impact on Indian art. This has also happened in music. Indian music has been enriched by various musical forms. Thus were developed Hindustani classical music and carnatic music.

In the area of religion India is rich. There are Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity, the first four having originated in India. In our country, we eat a variety of food and enjoy all the seasons as a gift of nature. It is precisely these diversions and varieties that make India such an interesting country. The culture of India is not the creation of any single race, region or religion but encompasses all that is good in all of them.

Check Your Progress

- Notes : a) Write your answers in the space given below.
b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

8. How did the culture of India help in the National Movement?

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The process of creating and strengthening the feeling of national unity is called national integration. As discussed earlier, our country is a land of diversities. There are diversities in languages, dresses, food habits, and what not. Under such circumstances, national integration is not only important but necessary. It is necessary both for internal peace and prosperity and external security. When our country is surrounded by hostile neighbours, the achievement of national integrations is all the more necessary to combat internal disturbances and external aggressions.

To promote national integration, the following ways may help:

- Each language has its own unique literature portrayed through novels, dramas, etc. These may be disseminated throughout the country. This would help in uniting the people and promoting national integration.
- Festivals may also bring people of far-flung areas and of diverse castes, creeds, and religions to a common platform and develop a feeling of unity. National festivals have a great importance in this regard.
- Like festivals, dance and music may also help in developing a feeling of oneness.
- Sayings of religious saints belonging to different religions may also help develop common ideals and values and a feeling of oneness and unity.

Check Your Progress

- Notes :**
- a) Write your answers in the space given below.
 - b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

9. What is the importance of national integration in India?

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16.3.8 Development of India as a Nation

India is a nation. But within it there are many types of people who have their distinct cultures and distinct languages and history which bind them together. The development of India as a nation has a long history. India has long been united in many other ways. But it was not always politically united.

During the ancient and medieval periods, there were short-lived empires and kingdoms. There was no central authority for a long time. It was during British rule that all Indians came to live under the same laws, the same system of governance. This united India politically. Soon, nationalism and the national movement became a significant factor in Indian politics.

The national movement inculcated the spirit of independence among the people and they began to make a collective effort to free their country from the foreign yoke. In the Indian National Congress people of all religions and creeds came forward and thought about their country. They acted as a great unifying force. The atrocities committed by the foreign rulers also helped in unifying the Indian people.

Check Your Progress

- Notes :
- a) Write your answers in the space given below.
 - b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

10. Mention the main factors which led to the growth of Indian nationalism.

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16.4 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The instructional strategies for this unit include instructional objectives, teaching-learning activities and evaluation items.

16.4.1 Instructional Objectives

At the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- state the meaning of “nation” and “nation state”;
- distinguish between a nation and a nation state;
- describe the ideals of the Indian nation;
- define the terms democracy, socialism and secularism;
- state the meaning of political equality, social equality and economic equality;
- enumerate the steps needed for developing social and economic equality;
- appreciate the diverse and composite culture of India;
- state the need and importance of national integration for strengthening the Indian nation; and
- describe the importance of the Indian national movement as a unifying factor in India.

16.4.2 Teaching-Learning Strategies

Teaching-learning activities for the contents are as follows:

Meaning of “nation state”

This part may be introduced by asking :

1. What is a nation and what is a “nation state”?
2. Mention the important ties which keep a nation together.

Getting some probable answer and discussing it with students, the concept of a nation may be explained.

A nation is a community bound together by common ties of the territory where they live, the language or languages they speak, the history they share and the culture they are proud of. Besides, there is the people’s feeling of belonging together or the awareness of oneness.

The important ties are common territory, language, history, culture and a feeling of belonging together. A state which has a definite geographical boundary, a national language and a distinct way of life governed by a uniform code of laws is called a “nation state”.

This may be explained by giving the example — that India, as a whole, is a nation, because it meets the prerequisites of a common territory, common languages, a common history, a

common culture and a feeling of belongingness. And we all live in one state because India is one nation.

Activity

- Identify the common customs of various communities living in your locality. How do these common customs bind these communities together?

Ideals of the Indian nation

You know that our country has been known for its ideals and values since the advent of mankind. Some of the important ideals are given in the Constitution adopted after independence. The Constitution clearly shows that the task after independence was not only to stay together as an independent nation but to set up a society based on the ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism.

The preamble to the Constitution may be read out.

Let us try first to see what these ideals actually mean.

The concepts of democracy, socialism and secularism may be explained with the emphasis that these ideals are based on the basic principles of freedom and equality.

Meaning and role of democracy, socialism and secularism in the developing Indian nation

The concept of democracy may be explained by saying that it is a system of governance in which all the citizens have equality or equal access to the laws, that is, equal political rights.

Why is it necessary? This may be discussed in a group, and it may be explained that the participation of all is necessary if we want to promote democracy as a way of life as well as a system of governance. Therefore, any person, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex, economic status, etc., has the right to vote and get elected to the highest position.

The meaning of socialism may be explained by saying that not only political equality but social equality and economic equality are necessary. This may be explained by giving examples of social groups and associations. The social and economic equality which is the basis of socialism is necessary to remove poverty, to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, and to remove caste and creed barriers.

Secularism has special importance because our country is a land with many religions. It means equal respect for all religions professed in India.

The teacher may ask questions about the different religions we have in our country and then explain to the students that secularism does not necessarily mean to be irreligious. India, being a secular state, has no official religion. Everybody is free to practise his/her own religion, keeping in view the peace, security and integrity of the country.

Activity

- Organise a debate on the topic "Why democracy, socialism and secularism have been made a part of the Preamble to the Indian Constitution".

Freedom and equality — The basis for democracy, secularism and socialism

This can be dealt with by explaining that when India was under British rule, Indians had no freedom. The example of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre may be given. If possible, an illustration may also be shown.

The struggle by our leaders against British rule to get freedom may be explained and discussed. After getting freedom, our country, has tried to develop a new society, based not only on freedom but also on equality, that is, political equality, social equality and economic equality. Today, everybody, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, has equal rights to participate in all political, social and economic activities. There is no discrimination whatsoever of any kind.

Let us now try to know how political, social and economic equality help in developing India.

First, a meaning of political, social and economic equality can be given. This can be explained by giving some specific and relevant example as to how elections to local bodies are conducted, who can participate in elections and so on. Similarly, in our country anybody can aspire to hold any political office. This means that the state does not discriminate among citizens. All are considered equal before the law.

It may be explained further that not only political equality but social equality and economic equality are considered necessary in Indian society. Therefore regionalism, casteism, communalism, etc., have to be removed from our society.

The Government has to adopt a method of decentralization of the means of production and utilization of available resources with a proper planning system. A discussion about the steps taken so far may be made.

Activity

- Organise an exhibition on the theme of “poverty alleviation programme in India”.

The Indian nation — Its diverse culture

India is a land of diversities and varieties.

This concept may be explained by mentioning the different regions, the varied climate, and the differences in food habits, dress, customs and traditions. The Indian languages as recognised by the Constitution may also be mentioned.

As regards religion, a mention of various religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity and how we get all that is good in all religions can be specially made. Similarly a mention of music and art may be made.

Emphasis may be put on the fact that beneath all these diversities, there is an undercurrent of Indian unity which binds us all.

Activity

- “India is a land of diversities”. Justify this by organising a discussion session in the class.

Let us now consider the role of national integration in strengthening the Indian nation.

National integration for strengthening the Indian nation

First of all, the meaning of national integration may be explained as a process of creating and strengthening the feeling of national unity.

The second step may be to tell students about the need for national integration as a feeling of unity in diversity. This would help promote the peace, prosperity and security of the nation.

The third important step may be to talk about how the process of strengthening national integration can be promoted. This may be illustrated by giving examples from literature, i.e., how poems written by Tagore and Iqbal helped in other fields such as art, music, etc.

Activities

- Identify the functions of the National Integration Council.
- National Integration has helped in developing India as a nation. But how much is India developed as a nation? Let us consider it.

Development of India as a nation

This part is important. For this, a brief history of India may be given with emphasis on the fact that for a long time in the ancient and medieval periods, India though united in many ways, was not united politically. It was during British rule that Indians came under the same laws and the same system of governance.

Soon after, a feeling of nationalism, and consequently a national movement, were aroused so as to get the country freed from the British.

Activity

- Organise an extension lecture on the "Freedom movement in India" by an eminent person or freedom fighter of your locality.

16.4.3 Evaluation

Answer the following questions :

1. What do you understand by the terms "nation" and "nation state"?
2. Is India a nation? Justify your answer.
3. What are the basic principles the Indian nation stands for? Give examples.
4. "Freedom and equality" are the two important ideas around which democratic governance is based. Discuss.
5. Explain the meaning of "political equality".
6. Briefly mention the causes which are responsible for economic and social inequality in India.
7. Explain in brief how diversity makes the Indian culture rich.
8. State the main hindrances to national integration in India.
9. Describe in very brief how the Indian national movement was a unifying factor in India.
10. From the list given below write the names of the countries which are not secular: Pakistan, China, Japan, Iran, the USA.

Give reasons in support of your answer.

16.5 LET US SUM UP

In the present unit, an attempt has been made to provide the basic concepts and meaning of the terms "nation" and "nation state". The ideals of the Indian nation, namely, democracy, secularism and socialism, set forth in the Constitution, have also been discussed.

The teacher, while teaching or facilitating learning on the above, may emphasise the following:

- i) A brief history of India, with emphasis on the national movement and on the emergence of India as a nation.
- ii) The ideals set forth in the Constitution of India.
- iii) Difficulties in developing a democratic, socialist and secular India.

These may be explained/clarified with the help of suitable examples and illustrations. Further, these may be discussed at length in the peer group and counselling sessions.

16.6 UNIT-END ACTIVITIES

Select a democratic country and describe its political, social and economic features. Compare them with those of India. Explain why India has opted to establish a democratic, socialistic and secular society. Suggest some ways for the successful working of democracy in India.

16.7 POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does social inequality hinder the proper functioning of Indian democracy? Give illustrations.
2. Is economic equality necessary along with political equality? Why? Give reasons.
3. Freedom without equality is of no value. Discuss.

16.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. In our country, the Indian nation, nation state, was born during British rule in the 19th century.
2. India as a whole is a nation. It has a definite geographical boundary, a distinct composite culture, distinct languages and a history that binds the people together in common bonds.
3. Democracy is considered an excellent ideal because it provides freedom and equality to all citizens. Every citizen, irrespective of caste, creed or religion has equal opportunities to progress.
4. The ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism are considered difficult in our society because we have many kinds of traditional inequalities. Things like caste, creed, inequality, and conflicts between religious or language groups make the achievement of these ideals difficult.
5. India is a secular state because there is no official religion of the state. The people in India are free to practise any religion unless it is detrimental to the peace, security and integrity of the country.
6. Indian society is both large as well as complex. It is full of diversities. In spite of diversities, we are united as one nation. We have established a society which is democratic, socialist and secular. For the development of such a society freedom and equality are necessary.
7. Social inequality, that is, a feeling of indifference to others' caste, creed, religion, etc., hampers democracy, because
 - i) people belonging to higher castes exploit the people of lower castes;
 - ii) people get divided into various classes and consequently differences crop up which harm the unity of nation;
 - iii) people tend to cast their votes on caste basis; this is harmful for democracy.
8. Cultural commonality had heightened the feeling of unity all along in India. This was necessary for the national movement and for getting freedom.
9. To have a feeling of unity in diversity.
National integration is necessary both for internal peace and prosperity as well as external security.
10. The factors which led to growth of Indian nationalism are :
 - i) the cultural unity of India;
 - ii) the political unification of India during British rule;
 - iii) the spread of English education;
 - iv) means of communication; and
 - v) the contribution by national leaders like Tilak, Gandhiji etc.

16.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Anthony, H.B. (1993) : *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy*, Routledge, London.
- NCERT (1992) : *Our Government, How It Works*, A Textbook in Civics for Class X, New Delhi.
- Smith, Donald. E. (1963) : *India as a Secular State*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.