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## UNIT 16 ISSUES IN CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN INDIAN FEDERALISM

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### 16.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit deals with the areas of tension and cooperation that have emerged in India due to constitutional provisions and more so working of federal system during last more than fifty years. After studying this unit you will be able to:

- Understand reasons and environment leading to emergence of conflicts cooperation in union-state relations.
  - Recognise the areas of tensions between union and states, their nature and implications.
  - Understand various suggestions and recommendations made for improvement or changes in the union-state relations to reduce conflicts and tensions.
  - Appreciate the emerging trends in the working of Indian Federalism.
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### 16.1 INTRODUCTION

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You have already read in unit 14 that though Indian Federal system was described as one of "Cooperative Federalism", it was in fact a federation with a strong centre and significant unitary features. It was so structured as to establish supremacy of the union government while providing autonomy of the states in certain fields. The scheme of distribution of powers in the legislative, administrative and financial fields

under the seventh schedule of the Constitution was so effected as to make the Union Government more powerful than the states. In addition the residuary powers were also conferred on the Union government. In the name of emergency provisions even sweeping powers were given to the centre to exercise overriding legislative and executive authority to enable it to transform the federal system into virtually a unitary system. At the time of framing of the Constitution (in the interest of national unity and development) centralisation of powers was considered necessary. During the working of the Constitution the central government not only used the provisions of the Constitution enormously but also kept on consolidating and increasing its powers. After some time particularly from mid 1960s there started emerging questions about nature of Indian federalism. We are here discussing all these issues in the context of their background, implications and future trends.

## 16.2 FEDERALISM AND CENTRALISATION

The political elite which inherited power after independence was much in favour of a strong centre, strong enough not only to implement centre's policies but also to maintain the national elite's position as definitely superior. Therefore, even the centralised federation provided by the Constitution was considered or found insufficient by them and the rulers at the centre augmented powers further by means fair or foul. The fact of one party in power both at the centre and in almost all states helped in this augmentation.

### 16.2.1 Centralisation

The main justification provided for centralisation at the Centre was that with the experience of partition to maintain the unity and integrity of the country a strong centre was necessary. Also for a balanced and planned development of newly independent country centralised efforts were required. In practice attempts to centralise were two; one to keep the dominant party in power in as many states as possible and, two to consolidate the central leadership's authority within the party. For this purpose various constitutional and extra-constitutional methods including the use of governors office and emergency provisions were used. The Centre developed the role of a patriarch controlling and running the States through party Chief Ministers. At times, some of the union's extraordinary powers like imposition of President's rule under Art. 356 were used to settle intra-party problems. During the era of one-party dominance the Centre-State relations were merely a reflection of relations between the state branches of the Congress and its central leadership. The federal structure never had a chance to operate, nor the states to enjoy their constitutional autonomy.

As a whole in the background of freedom movement which itself was a unifying force, the trauma of partition, one-party dominance, strong charismatic leadership, national planning and perception of the national political elite, the Constitution itself was designed to centralise power. It was implemented in almost a unitary form. The result was that Centre became superior in all domains. It felt free to hold up its sanction to the States projects. It became a monitor of the law and order situation in the States. It started asserting a right to veto state bills. It dismissed state governments as and when it so wanted. It distributed grants to States at will. It even imposed Chief Ministers. Many observers suggested that in effect federalism was converted into a unitary form of government with States as subordinate agencies of the union government.

### 16.2.2 Changing Environment

The system of centre's pre-domination and process of centralisation worked without much difficulty or opposition till there was one party's rule at the Centre and in

almost all the states and Congress was controlled by a set of leaders who because of their role in the freedom struggle were respected as national leaders. There was also expectation among masses of fulfillment of their hopes of development. From the mid 1960s, however, situation started changing. The charismatic leaders started disappearing from the scene. The planned development's failure to fulfil peoples aspiration started becoming clear. There had emerged a powerful middle class with varying political ambitions and conflicting economic interests. As a result of introduction of democracy, some land reforms and agricultural development there also rose a rich farmer class interested in protection of their interests at State level. All this culminated in the change of party system. The Congress started losing its image as a nationalist movement. In addition to the so-called national parties becoming faction- ridden there also emerged new regional parties. In 1967 general elections Congress not only became weak at the central level but also did get the majority party in eight states. With this came up a new debate on Union-state relations. The non-Congress governments in States, were not prepared to blindly accept the dictates of the centre. Some state governments like those of Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, in particular emphasised the need for maintaining intact the principle of state autonomy. The victories on non-Congress parties in several states also intensified factional disputes within Congress and therefore questioning of the control by central leadership.

To begin with debate on union-State relations was limited. By 1972 the Congress party and the Union government regained their predominance. However, the situation was not as before 1967. Now the process of centralisation became more severe. The Central government adopted increasingly interventionist practices in the States. Not only a more centralised but also personalised process was set in. From 1977 onwards with the change in parties in power and coming of coalition governments at the central level there had been emerging new debates and processes in Union-State relations. But in general, in spite of challenges and new developments, Union governments have continued with the idea of predominance of centre, its right to intervene in State's affairs and misuse of the office of governor and power to impose President's rule. Thus the general trend has been that of centre encroaching steadily upon the state's domain. This increasing centralisation and intervention of the central government has caused some major tension areas in Union-State relations. Important of these are:

- 1) Role of Governor
- 2) Imposition of President's rule
- 3) Reservation of Bills for the consideration of the President
- 4) Sharing of Finances
- 5) Use of electronic Media

### **16.3 ROLE OF GOVERNOR**

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Governor has been described as the linchpin of the constitutional apparatus of the State having key role in Union-State relations. The Constitution empowers the Centre to appoint Governors in states to work as Centre's representative and to maintain coordination between the Centre and the States. However, in practice, the position and role of Governor has become a substantial issue of tension between the Centre and the States.

#### **16.3.1 Appointment of Governor**

The starting point of tension between Union government and states with regard to office of Governor is that centre appoints the Governor as if he/she was just a representative of the centre in the State. In fact ruling party at Centre has found

the office of Governor as an effective instrument to recapture power for itself. The result is, as Soli Sorabjee puts "It will not be an exaggeration to say that no institution or constitutional office has suffered greater erosion or degradation than the office of the Governor". To make sure that Governors act on behalf of the Central Government the trend of appointing Governor after consulting State Chief Ministers has also been relegated. At present there are some pressures for following this tradition or consulting the Chief Minister before appointing the Governor of that State. So far, it seems, that the Union Government has followed no particular principle and there is no fixed criterion for the appointment of Governors.

The Sarkaria Commission in its report has suggested that a person to be appointed as Governor should satisfy the following criteria: he should be eminent in some walk of life, he should be a person from outside the State; he should not be intimately connected with the local politics of the State and he should be a person who has not taken too great a part in politics generally, and particularly in the recent past. However, even after the submission of the report of the Sarkaria Commission the Governors continue to be appointed from the active politicians of the ruling party and without prior consultation with the Chief Ministers.

### 16.3.2 Discretionary Powers of Governor

Apart from the normal functions, which the Governor exercises as a constitutional head, he exercises certain discretionary powers. Some of them have been expressly conferred on him while some others flow by necessary implication. As far as the discretionary powers by implication are concerned, these are significant particularly in three matters. One is with regard to the appointment of Chief Minister when neither a single party nor a combination of parties emerges from the election with a clear majority. Related to this is also the question of dismissal of Chief Minister on the loss of majority support or otherwise. The second matter is with regard to making a report to President under Article 356 about his satisfaction that a situation has arisen in which the Government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, thereby recommending the imposition of President's rule. The issue of proclamation of President's rule itself has become a matter of serious tension between union and state governments. This we will discuss separately in para 16.4 of this unit. The third power is with regard to reservation of bills for the consideration of President.

### 16.3.3 Reservation of Bills for Consideration of President

Article 200 of the Constitution provides that certain types of bills passed by the State legislature may be reserved by the Governor for the consideration of the President. The President may either give his assent or may direct the Governor to send it back for reconsideration by the State legislature along with his comments. But even after the bill has been passed by the State legislature for the second time the President is not bound to give his assent.

The main purpose of this provision is that the Centre can keep watch on the legislation in the national interest. But Governors, and through them the Central Government have used this provision to serve the partisan interests. The opposition ruled States have from time to time raised a hue and cry against the misuse of these provisions. This has specially been so in case where the Governor has reserved a bill against the advice of the State Ministry, presumably under the direction of the Central Government. In its memorandum to Sarkaria Commission, the Bharatiya Janata Party alleged that the bills have been reserved for consideration of the President in order to create difficulties for the State governments. The West Bengal government in its reply to the Sarkaria Commission's questionnaire felt that Articles 200 and 201 either should be deleted or Constitution should clarify that the Governor would not act in his discretion but only on the advice of the State Council

of Ministers. At the opposition party's conclave held at Srinagar in 1983, the opposition parties demanded that legislatures should be empowered to enact laws on subjects for which they constitutionally have responsibility without having to seek the President's assent. In recent years with regional parties having gained importance and playing an important part in the formation and continuation of Central Government the Governors are not using this power extensively. Nevertheless the issue remains one of contention in Union-State relations.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with model answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Describe the factors that led to new debates in Union-State relations after the 1967 elections.
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- 2) How far is the role of Governor an area of tension between Centre and States.
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## 16.4 USE OF EMERGENCY POWERS

You have already read that the Constitution provides for three types of emergency that can be proclaimed by the President. This in practice means the powers of the central government. You have also read that proclamation of any type of emergency affects the powers of the states. In practice so far financial emergency has not been declared. National emergency has been declared twice due to external threats (1962 and 1971) and for internal law and order situation once (1975). While the emergency due to external aggression has not raised any controversy as it is linked with the National Security, proclamation of Internal emergency has become a question of serious controversy both in terms of working of democracy in the country as a whole as also in terms of union -State Relations. The real issue of tension between the Centre and the States has become emergency under Article 356 that gives Centre power to dismiss a state government on the ground of failure of constitutional machinery in the States.

### 16.4.1 Emergency Under Article 356

You have already read that the Proclamation of emergency under Article 356 means that President assumes to himself all or any of the functions of the Government of the State including those belonging to the Governor or any other authority. It is because of this that this emergency is popularly called "President's rule". Article 356 as such gives extensive powers to the union government to interfere in the working of the State Governments. It has been suggested that provision for imposition of President's rule in States was made to deal with the serious situations as a life

saving device to be used as a measure of last resort. However, in practice the way and number of times this provision has been used, it has become the most contentious issue in Union-State relations. The provisions, apart from genuine cases of instability or national interest, have been used for:

- a) Dismissing the state governments having majority in the Assembly.
- b) Suspending and dissolving the Assemblies on partisan consideration.
- c) Not giving a chance to the opposition to form government when electoral verdict was indecisive.
- d) Denying opportunity to opposition to form government when ministry resigned in anticipation of the defection on the floor of the House.
- e) Not allowing the opposition to form government even after the defeat of the ministry on the floor of the House.

This use of powers under Art.356 has generally been described as unjustified by most observers and criticised by the States.

#### 16.4.2 Conflict Over President's Rule

The Sarkaria Commission drawing attention to the repeated abuse of Article 356 has pointed out that during the period from 1951 to 1987 of the 75 occasions when the President's rule was imposed, only in 26 cases was President's rule inevitable, 18 cases were typical instance of wholesale misuse of Article 356 for political purposes, extraneous to the one for which the power has been conferred by the Constitution. As early as 1953, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said in the Rajya Sabha apropos the imposition of President's Rule in the PEPSU, that, "the people got a very legitimate ground for suspicion that the government is maintaining their own party in office in all parts of India. This is a "rape of the constitution". How lightly this emergency provision has been taken can be seen from the situations that soon after coming to power in 1977, the Janata government dismissed Congress Governments in nine States at one go and in 1980, Mrs. Gandhi on returning to power repeated the performance in nine States governed by the Janata Party. During 1980s use of Article 356 was made so frequent that it almost showed an intolerant attitude of the Central Government towards the non- Congress (I) State Governments. In Punjab, President's Rule continued for almost five years (May 1987 to February 1992) at a stretch. Consequently Article 356 has become the most abused and criticised clause of the Constitution. In spite of the safeguards provided by the 44th Amendment Act, it continues to be so and has become a sore and serious tension area in Centre-State relations.

The Supreme Court of India on March 11, 1994 in the Bommai case, gave a significant judgement on the application and use of Article 356. The Supreme Court unanimously and full-throatedly upheld the dismissal of the BJP state governments of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh in December 1992 because their anti-secular actions were inconsistent with the secular Constitution. But the majority held as unconstitutional the Centre's use of Article 356 in Nagaland (1998), Karnataka (1989) and Meghalaya (1991).

In the Bommai case, breaking radically with past interpretations of the constitutional provision, the apex court laid down new, demanding and enforceable standards for the application of the knife against elected State governments with a majority and against functioning State Assemblies. Thus the "President's power to issue under Article 356 proclamation must be understood to be a conditional power; action under the provision is judicially reviewable; the Presidents' satisfaction, which is necessarily subjective, must be formed on relevant material which can be scrutinised by the courts; no irreversible action like dissolution of legislative assembly, is permissible unless both Houses of Parliament approve the proclamation; until then

the most the central executive can do is to keep the assembly in suspended animation: and even after parliamentary approval, the courts can, in fit cases, restore the status quo ante. The Supreme Court's decision, thus, has placed significant restrictions on powers to proclaim President's rule. This has given some leverage to President. For instance President K.R. Narayanan first in October 1977 in case of Uttar Pradesh and again in September 1998 in case of Bihar, using his power to ask the cabinet to reconsider its decision, sent recommendations back for reconsideration by the cabinet. It is hoped that both the Supreme Court's decision and President Narayanan's action in sending back cabinet recommendations will put reasonable check on the Central Government's tendency to misuse powers under Art. 356 for partisan purposes.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answer with model answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) How have powers under Art. 356 been misused by Central Government

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- 2) What safeguards are suggested against the misuse of powers to proclaim President's rule in states?

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## 16.5 FINANCIAL RELATIONS

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The Financial dimension of Indian Federal Polity is also one of the major issues in Centre-State relations. The demand of the States for greater fiscal autonomy has now become one of the most debated issues. The tension on this arises because of:  
 a) comparative powers of taxation, b) statutory versus discretionary grants; and  
 c) economic planning.

### 16.5.1 Taxation Powers

Sources of revenue of the Centre are relatively elastic and expansive as against those of the States. The Centre also controls vast resources generated through deficit financing, loans from organised money markets in the country as well as huge funds of foreign aid. The residuary powers of taxation are also vested with the central government. In addition to this, Constitution also authorises the Centre to collect surcharges on taxes to raise additional funds in times of emergency. In practice surcharge has become a permanent feature of income tax structure. Another loophole in taxation system on account of which states suffer is the corporate tax, which keeps on expanding and is the exclusive purview of the centre. The gap between State revenues and their expenditure has been increasing. Of course one reason for this is the State's own inability to mobilise even those resources which they can, as also incurring wasteful expenses through populism. There is also the central twist. The States, therefore, have to be dependent on Central assistance.

### 16.5.2 Issue of Grants

For devolution of funds from the Centre to the States there are four methods: (i) obligatory sharing of Union taxes on income; (ii) permissive sharing of Union excise duties; (iii) assignment of certain Union duties and taxes wholly to the States; (iv) provision for giving financial assistance to the States in the form of grants and loans. With regard to sharing of resources and assignment of certain resources entirely to the States, Articles 280 and 281 provide for the appointment of an independent statutory Finance Commission every fifth year or earlier as the President of India desires. The provision for Finance Commission was in order to regulate, co-ordinate and integrate the finances of the Government of India and the State Governments. Originally, the Finance Commission was intended to cover all the financial transfers from the Centre to States. However, slowly the Planning Commission has also been brought in for the purpose and now it plays a rather important part in devolution of resources from the Centre to the States. Since the Planning Commission is a completely central institution and is politically influenced, the States have a sense of discrimination in allocation of grants. In addition, provision for grants-in-aid by the Centre is purely a political and arbitrary means of devolution and Centre has been making use of this more and more and that too in a controversial manner.

Centre gives grants-in-aid to States under Article 281 on its discretion for undertaking schemes, meeting natural calamities or for removal of disparities etc. There is a general feeling that the Centre discriminates between States being ruled by different political parties. H.A. Ghani points out that a close scrutiny of the Central relief to the States affected by natural calamities indicates that no well-considered norms were followed in this regard. The central teams pre-occupied by political considerations have always assessed the damage done by droughts, flood, etc. in an adhoc perfunctory manner.

The States, therefore, have sharply questioned the need for the Centre to wield heavy financial clout in the shape of discretionary grants. There are misgivings about the inherent danger of their being used as a political weapon against a State that happen to be out of favour with the centre. The States want more resources to be earmarked for statutory devolution so that the trend of increasing allocations through discretionary grants can be curbed.

### 16.5.3 Economic Planning

It is generally agreed that the process of planning in India has tended to push the political system to greater centralisation due to both the central control over resources for development and the preponderance of the centralised planning machinery. R.K. Hedge points out that the gravest and most harmful consequence of the atrophy of the State's domain in the economic field is in regard to industries and economic planning. For example the scheme of the Constitution is perfectly clear that industries are essentially a state subject. Only those industries are to be regulated by the centre the control of which by the Union is declared as expedient in the public interest by Parliament. But without an amendment to the constitution industries have been virtually transferred into a Union subject. More than 90 per cent of the organised industries in terms of value put have been brought under the domain of the Union. In practice, the regulation of industrial activity by the Union government has on several occasions inhibited the setting up of new industries. Similarly, it is alleged that in the name of national planning, the Centre for political considerations, has been inordinately delaying viable and important State projects. On the contrary, Centre has been super imposing its schemes on the States which were deemed by State governments to be irrelevant to the conditions prevailing in the State. Owing to this and other reasons the opposition conclave held at Srinagar in October 1983 in a consensus statement said that the present authority of the Planning Commission

and Union Ministry of Finance who offer discretionary grants to the States must be drastically reduced.

## 16.6 USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Electronic Media — the radio and T.V. are most powerful media of publicity and propaganda these days. The world over governments and political parties use these for political purposes both positively and negatively. In India as per the Constitution legislative powers to control and regulate broadcasting rest with the Union government. It has been alleged that the government and party in power at the Centre has used the media on the one hand to black out anything critical of its performance and on the other to malign the state governments being ruled by other parties. Particularly during the 1980s, the opposition parties raised hue and cry against the blatant misuse of the All India Radio and Doordarshan for partisan purposes. It had been alleged that the media had been the mouthpiece of the union government.

With the arrival of private channels and establishment of Prasar Bharti that provides, some autonomy to Radio and Doordarshan the governmental control and Centre's monopoly over media has been reduced. Also in a situation of coalition governments in which Regional parties are playing an important role the central government can no longer ignore them. Still the powers to legislate, control and regulate the media rest with the Union government and complaints about use and misuse of AIR and Doordarshan for partisan purposes remain.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with model answer given at the end of the unit.

- I) What are the areas of conflict between Union and State Governments on issue of grants?

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- 2) How has planning become an area of tension between Centre and State.

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## 16.7 DEMAND FOR AUTONOMY AND COOPERATION

From the above discussion it becomes clear that there are many areas and issues of tensions between Centre and States. The framers of the Indian Constitution hoped that federalism in India will be based on consensus and cooperation. They clearly defined the powers of Union and State governments and expressed that emergency powers given to the Union government will be used rarely in the overall national interest. Unfortunately the expectations of Constitution makers have been eroded and the Union-State relations seem to have developed into politics of confrontation

rather than that of cooperation. Right from the beginning there had been a trend towards centralisation and it has continued inspite of changes in governments at the Centre. The states have been developing a feeling of deprivation. As already mentioned till the time there was one party in power both at the Centre and in almost all the States there was not much of a problem. But with the emergence of different party governments, success of regional parties, arrival of new groups and sections in politics and non-fulfilment of peoples expectations about socio-economic development and transformation there had started a process of questioning and even challenging central governments domination and interference.

As a result there had emerged demands by various States and political parties for grant of more powers or autonomy to States as also efforts to remove areas of tension and increase cooperation between the two levels of government.

#### 16.7.1 Demand for Autonomy

Immediately after 1967 elections in the view of Congress losing power in eight States, non-Congress governments that came to power started questioning the erosion of constitutional provisions with regard to Union-State relations. On the other hand the ruling party at the Centre began further misusing the office of the Governor and emergency provisions under Article 356 in order to capture lost power. There emerged a strong criticism of the union government. In fact between 1967 and 1972 federalism in India witnessed a period of significant tension. In many states, replacing the Congress the regional parties had come to power. These parties in particular raise the issue of Union-State relations at various levels.

In 1969, the Tamil Nadu government appointed a committee called Rajamannar Committee to go into the Question of Centre-State relations. That committee submitted its report in 1971. The major recommendations included readjustment of schedule VII of the Constitution, to transfer residuary powers to the States, repeal of Article 249, modification of Finance Commission and Planning commission and review of Article 356.

In December 1977, the Left Front in West Bengal Government published a memorandum on Centre-State relations. This memorandum emphasised that in a country like India, with such diversities in race, religion, language and culture, national integration can be achieved only through conscious voluntary efforts; devolution of powers was necessary to ward off fissiparous tendencies. The memorandum demanded that the word 'Federal' should replace the word 'Union' in the Preamble of the Constitution. It also suggested the repeal of Articles 356, 357 and 360. According the Memorandum, the State's consent should be made mandatory for the formation of new states and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing stages.

In 1978 the Akali Dal released the revised version of Anandpur Sahib resolution, originally adopted in 1973. According to this resolution, Centre's authority should be confined only to Defence, Foreign Relations, Communications, Railways and Currency; Entire residuary powers should be vested in the States. In the 1980s with regional parties having become significant, demand for State autonomy has been put more vigorously. Regional and some national parties separately and collectively had attacked the central government for encroaching upon the powers of the States. It is suggested that the process of centralisation of powers and distortion of the Constitution are dangerous for national integration. In general supporters of decentralisation of powers and autonomy of states argue that the preservation of national unity and the process of consolidating the forces of national integration presuppose the acceptance of the manifold diversities present in the nation and the urgent need for realistic and logical attempts to handle these diversities at the local level, by harnessing local initiatives and utilising local talent. Any attempt to tackle these diversities from a central point of control would only serve to heighten the tensions in the system.

There are those also who feel that for integration and unity of India there is need for a strong centre. The fact however is that a strong centre and centralisation of powers are two different things. Events both in India and in other parts of the world have shown that it is the process of centralisation which triggers off the process of disintegration whereas decentralisation aims at fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people in a more purposive and meaningful manner. All over the world the trend is towards decentralisation. In India also various studies and reports of committees and commissions have pointed towards that.

### **16.7.2 Steps Towards Cooperation**

Soon after 1967 elections when Union-State relations started becoming areas of tension and debate there started academic, political exercises also to study various aspects of the issues involved, make policy suggestions and efforts to reduce the tensions and achieve cooperation. The Union government, in view of the widespread criticism also started looking into the matter. To begin with it asked the Administrative Reforms Commission (appointed in 1967) to look into the Centre-State administrative relations also. The Commission recommended that powers should be delegated to the maximum extent to the States. It also expressed the opinion that centralised planning had tended towards excessive interference in the freedom of States to work out their policies and programmes. The Commission made some recommendations with regard to the office of Governor and also suggested the need to establish an Inter-State Council under Article 263 of the Constitution.

The recommendations of the Commission, however, remained on paper and the process of centralisation continued. In fact in 1971-72 with the Congress coming back to power in many States, the process of imposing Central control attained new heights. It is pointed out that the States were reduced almost to the status of dignified Municipalities. The Chief Ministers were imposed from above. They had no freedom to choose their colleagues. As for the non-Congress ruled States there was continuous criticism by the Centre both at the party and the governmental level.

During a short period of Janta Party rule (1977-79), though the Union government was verbally committed to decentralisation the party leaders showed that if allowed to have their own way, they would rather have had the same sort of centralised rule. The decade of the eighties in particular witnessed a struggle to get the federal issue on the nation's agenda. When the political challenge assumed new dimensions and tensions between the centre and the states grew further, it became necessary to ease the situation somewhat. The Government of India on March 24, 1983 announced the appointment of a Commission to examine and review the working of existing arrangements between the Union and the States in regard to powers functions and responsibilities in all spheres and recommend appropriate changes and measures. The Commission came to be known as the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State Relations after the name of its Chairman, Justice (Retd.) R.S. Sarkaria.

### **16.7.3 Sarkaria Commission**

The Sarkaria Commission was asked to review the working of existing arrangements between the Union and States keeping in view the social and economic developments that have taken place over the years as also the scheme and the frame-work of the Constitution and the need for the unity and integrity of the country. The Commission, after talking to various state governments, political parties and other interested and concerned quarters finally submitted its report on October 27, 1987.

The Sarkaria Commission favoured a strong Centre as the only safeguard to national integrity which was being threatened severely in the light of recent fissiparous tendencies in the body politics. But the Commission did not equate strong centre with centralisation of powers. In fact, it viewed centralisation as dangerous for the

national integration. The Commission observed, "Many a time, the actions of the centre, its discretionary approach towards some States, its lack of understanding of local problems, its abject insensitiveness and the blatant misuse of authority vis-à-vis the States have all distanced it from the people. This in turn has, it is believed, reversed the process of national integration, the divisive tendencies have been further compounded by such a short-sighted approach.

The Sarkaria Commission's recommendations are primarily based on the premise that the existing constitutional principles and arrangements are sound and what is needed is to build a mechanism to ensure a system of collective decision-making. It was not concerned with the politics of Centre-State relations but only with the administration. It made a total of 265 recommendations classified subject-wise under twenty areas. It also emphasised the need for amendments to allow the Indian Polity grow in federal principles.

Among the major recommendations are those with regard to appointment and working for the Governor, use of Article 356 and division of economic resources. The commission recommended that a person only of high integrity should be appointed as the governor of a state. He should not, on demitting his office, be eligible for any other appointment or office of profit. Article 356 should be used very sparingly in extreme cases as a measure of last resort when all available alternatives fail. Safeguards should be incorporated in Article 356 to enable Parliament to review continuance in force of a proclamation.

The Commission recommended a review in the operational feasibility of the scope for levying taxes and duties, a constitutional amendment to make corporation tax sharable between the Union and the States, reforms in taxation and consideration of the potential for resources mobilisation by the Union and the States. It also suggested that the Inter State River Water Disputes Act may be amended to make it mandatory on the Union government to constitute a tribunal within one year of receipt of an application from a State and to make the award of the tribunal effective within five years.

The Commission also recommended that the Planning Commission and the National Development Council be reformed assuring at the same time of full and effective consultation with the States at all stages of the planning process. The National Development Council should be renamed and reconstituted as the National Economic Development Council. It should be made to function more effectively and emerge as the highest political level inter-governmental body for giving a direction and thrust to planned development of the country. The Commission, recommended the establishment of a permanent Inter-State Council under Article 263 of the Constitution as a forum to discuss many of the problems of common Union-State interests.

Many observers feel that recommendations of Sarkaria Commission are limited and, despite being in favour of decentralisation remain biased towards Centre. Yet, it is expected that if the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations are implemented sincerely much tension in Union-State relations can be reduced. However, so far much has been done in this direction except the establishment of the Inter-State Council. Of Course, with regional parties having become strong and a part of coalition governments at the Centre, the Central government is not able to interfere much in State's affair. At the same time the active role by the President and judiciary has also put some check on the Union's discretion. But there are no constitutional or structural changes as yet. The federal system as a whole remains under strain.

#### 16.7.4 Inter-State Council

From the above discussion it comes out that in the very nature of federalism there are possibilities of differences and tensions between two levels of government. To

ensure cooperation between them there can be various mechanisms including the Constitutional. The Indian Constitution provides for such a mechanism through Article 263 making provision for an inter-state council. The union government did not appoint such a council for many years. The Administrative Reforms Commission in its report submitted in 1969 recommended the setting up of an Inter-State Council. But the Central Government did not bother about this warning. One of the major complains of various states before the Sarkaria Commission was non-appointment of such a council. The Sarkaria Commission in its report recommended that an Inter-State Council charged with duties set out in clauses (b) and (c) of Article 263 should be formed. The commission felt that it was essential to avoid repeated references to the President for piecemeal orders under Article 263 by authorising the Council to deal with specific issues as and when they crop up. The then Union government remained lukewarm to the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations in general. Therefore, no efforts were made to establish such a council.

The National Front formed before 1989 elections in its manifesto promised to undertake a comprehensive review of Union-State relations in consultation with all Chief Ministers. In pursuance of this promise the National Front Government established the Inter- State Council through a presidential notification on May 25, 1990. The Council was to consist of the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers of all States, Chief Ministers or Administrators of Union Territories and six ministers of cabinet rank of the Union Government. The Council is headed by the Prime Minister and in his absence by the cabinet minister nominated by him. The council prepares guidelines for identifying issues to be brought before it and meets at least thrice every year. Its meetings are held in Camera. It arrives at decisions by consensus which are final and binding. The council for its effective functioning, has constituted a sub-committee consisting of some Union Ministers and Chief Ministers.

Needless to say that establishment of Inter-State Council is an important step towards cooperation in Union-State relations. But the fact remain that till now India remains a highly centralised state system. From the appointment of the Governor and the imposition of President's rule to the very large number of subjects included in the Union list, or in the concurrent list, it is basically a centralised structure. As already mentioned, with regional parties having become significant and playing an important role in formation and continuation of coalition governments at the centre as also the growth of regional movements, the Centre's tendencies to interfere in a State's affairs and impose itself has reduced. The demand from various parties and states for necessary amendments in the Constitution to make Union-State relations more amicable continue to be made. But what is important is acceptance of a federal spirit and develop necessary conventions keeping in view the needs of fulfillment of aspirations of various communities, groups and regions, a people-centred development and overall national interests.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 4

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit

i) Why have the States been demanding Autonomy for themselves?

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- 2) Name some of the steps that have been suggested for improvement in Union-State relations.

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- 3) Why was Sarkaria Commission constituted and what major recommendations has it made.

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- 4) What is the role and utility of Inter-State Council?

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## 16.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have studied the working of Federalism in India. While the framers of the Constitution expected development of cooperative federalism, the central government from the very beginning saw federalism more in terms of a powerful centre. Moreover the powers given to the Union government for emergency situations were often used for partisan purposes. When monopoly of one party rule at the Centre and in almost all states came to an end in the mid -1960s there started questioning of the central government's interference and use and misuse of powers. This has led to strains and tensions in Union-State relations, emergence of regional movements and demands for decentralisation and Autonomy. Suggestions were made at various levels including by the Administrative Reforms Commission to make necessary changes in the Constitution as well as practices. Somehow the Union government did not pay much attention to these suggestions and process of centralisation and resultant tensions has continued. In the 1980s, the situation seems to have become grave. In 1983 the then Union government appointed a Commission under the Chairmanship of Justice R.S. Sarkaria to review Union-State relations fresh and make necessary recommendations. The Sarkaria Commission made significant recommendations with regard to appointment of the Governor, use of emergency provisions under article 356, distribution of financial resources and many other aspects including establishment of an Inter-State Council as provided by Article 263 of the Constitution. Most of the recommendations of Sarkaria Commission also remain in cold storage. The Government, however, established an Inter-State Council in 1990. This is still working and is being considered as an important step in normalisation of relations. With regional parties having gained importance and playing significant role in the coalition governments at the centre tendency of Central government to interfere in states and imposing its will has reduced. A need for

constitutional changes and developing healthy conventions for cooperation between Centre and State is felt.

## 16.9 KEY WORDS

<b>Autonomy</b>	: Independence to take decisions on subjects and matters in jurisdiction of a person, institution, state or country without other's interference.
<b>Corporation Tax</b>	: Tax levied on the income of companies.
<b>Finance Commission</b>	: A statutory commission appointed by President every five years or early to recommend the criteria for distribution of revenues between Union and States.
<b>Fissiparous Tendencies</b> :	Tendencies for disintegration or separation

## 16.10 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Abdulrahim P. Vijapur (ed.) *Dimensions of Federal Nation Building*. Centre for Federal Studies and Manak Publication, New Delhi, 1998.

A.S. Narang, *Indian Government and Politics*, Gitanjali, New Delhi, 2000

## 16.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should develop following points.
  - a) End of monopoly of Congress rule in States.
  - b) Failure of planning to achieve desired results.
  - c) Emergence of new groups and classes in politics.
- 2) a) Controversial role of the Centre in appointment and dismissal of Chief Minister in cases of doubts about majority.
  - b) Using discretionary powers in reservation of bills for the assent of President.
  - c) Interfering in day to day administration of government.
  - d) Reporting to President for proclamation of emergency under Article 356.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Powers under Article 356 have been misused to:
  - a) Dismiss the state governments on partisan grounds.
  - b) Deny opposition parties chance to form government.
  - c) Settle internal party conflicts.
  - d) Settle scores with parties or state governments not liked by the party in power at the centre.
- 2) a) Reasons for proclamation of President's rule should be made public.
  - b) State assembly should not be dissolved till proclamation is approved by the Parliament.
  - c) Judiciary has the power to review the proclamation.
  - d) Constitution should be amended to put restrictions on the use of provisions in the article.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) a) Sources of revenue of the Centre are relatively elastic and expansive than those of states.  
b) Grants of states are given on partisan considerations.  
c) A part of the Finance Commissions powers have been abrogated by the Planning Commission.
- 2) a) Centre imposes its decisions about projects and schemes on states irrespective of their needs or requirements.  
b) It has been used by the Centre to interfere in State subjects.  
c) It has given enormous powers to the Centre to distribute grants to States on partisan lines.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- 1) See section 16.7.1
- 2) a) Establishment of Inter-State Council.  
b) Making necessary amendments to the Constitution.  
c) Developing healthy conventions with regard to appointment of governors, use of article 356 and use of discretionary powers.  
d) Decentralisation of powers.
- 3) a) Sarkaria Commission was appointed to review the working of Union-State relations in the context of socio-economic and political developments.  
b) The Commission had made 265 recommendations for improvement in various areas. For these see Sub-section 16.7.3.
- 4) a) Article 263 of the Constitution provides for the establishment of Inter-State Council to discuss various issues of differences and cooperation between Union and States.  
b) The Council is a useful forum to discuss various issues and achieve Consensus between States and Unions.  
c) It also provides a continuous process to settle disputes and achieve cooperation.

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## UNIT 17 AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS AND STATES REORGANISATION IN INDIA

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### Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
  - 17.1 Introduction
  - 17.2 The Theoretical Issues
    - 17.2.1 Territoriality Versus Culture
    - 17.2.2 Government in a Multi-cultural State
    - 17.2.3 Cross-cutting Cleavage
  - 17.3 The Colonial Experience
    - 17.3.1 'British' and 'Native' Indians
    - 17.3.2 From Presidencies to Provinces
    - 17.3.3 Religion Versus Language
  - 17.4 India after Partition
    - 17.4.1 From Provinces to States
    - 17.4.2 The Backward Tracts
  - 17.5 Linguistic Reorganisation of States
    - 17.5.1 Creation of Andhra State
    - 17.5.2 States Reorganisation, 1956
    - 17.5.3 Creation of New States
    - 17.5.4 Reorganisation of North-East India
    - 17.5.5 Upgradation of Union Territories
  - 17.6 Analysis and Conclusion
    - 17.6.1 Power and Benefits of Statehood
    - 17.6.2 Identity and Statehood
  - 17.7 Let Us Sum Up
  - 17.8 Some Useful Books
  - 17.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
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### 17.0 OBJECTIVES

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The objective of the present unit is to explain to you the reasons and processes related to the reorganisation of states in India. After going through this unit, you will be able to understand:

- The nature of this interconnection;
  - Some of the issues concerning the delimitation of the boundaries of a state;
  - The reasons why people seek statehood; and
  - The way new states are created and state boundaries are altered in India.
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### 17.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Constitution of India empowers the Union government to create new states out of existing states or two merge one state with other. This process is called reorganisation of the states. The basis of reorganisation could be linguistic, religious, ethnic or administrative.

### 17.2 THE THEORETICAL ISSUES

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Modern states are mostly large states with several cultural and economic problems. Historical experiences add complexity to their problems. One of the most difficult

Challenges to statecraft lies in rationally organising them to suit the needs of government and, conversely, to adjust the process of government to meet the complexity.

### 17.2.1 Territoriality Versus Culture

One of the major problems of state management today is the incongruity between the territorial limits and the cultural frontiers of modern states. Modern states are mostly large states and contain several religious, linguistic and ethnic (tribal) groups. In some cases they are mixed as in the United States of America. In some cases they are concentrated in distinct regions as in Canada or Switzerland. When the religious, the linguistic or the tribal groups are concentrated in particular geographical areas, they may be formed into provinces or states and granted local autonomy. This may be called the process of provincialisation or regionalisation.

Even when such provincialisation or regionalisation is possible, there always remain in every province or region sections of population belonging to other cultures. This is particularly true of the border areas of a province or a region.

The problem becomes acute in the countries formerly under colonial rule. The colonial rulers annexed territories whenever and wherever they ruled. While governing such territories they paid little attention to the cultural or ethnic specificities of the people under their rule. Most of the provinces under their rule remained multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-tribal.

### 17.2.2 Government in a Multicultural State

A state where different cultural, linguistic and social groups live is known as a multicultural state. Even the colonial rulers had to deal with people. They could not perpetually ignore the people's cultural and ethnic aspirations. So they had to adjust the provincial boundaries to the cultural frontiers of the groups they lived under their authority.

In an independent, democratic state such adjustment becomes all the more essential. A government which runs with the consent of the people cannot ignore their aspirations for long. As democracy takes firmer roots, such aspirations also grow. The hitherto neglected sections of the populations realise their own importance, demand new provinces or states, want new borders and secure autonomy.

### 17.2.3 Cross-cutting Cleavage

A common problem for a colonial government and a free democratic government is what is known as 'Cross-cutting cleavage'. Religious divisions cut across linguistic divisions and even tribal divisions. How, then, does the supreme government draw the provincial or state boundaries? This is a problem that India faced throughout the first half of the twentieth century and finally led to the partition of the country. The most common cross-cutting cleavage is between language and religion. People speaking the same language may profess different religions. People professing the same religion may speak different languages.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

- ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.
- 1) What is the major problem of state management today?

- 2) What is the most common cross cutting -cleavage?

### 17.3 THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

The British annexed India in stages and by parts. Till they left the country they could not annex the whole of the sub-continent. Consequently, they evolved a variegated style of administration and control.

#### 17.3.1 ‘British’ and ‘Native’ Indians

Till that time India was divided into ‘British India’ and ‘native India’. British India was split into Governor’s Provinces and Chief Commissioner’s Provinces. Native India was split into two types — i) 566 princely states of different sizes and in different kinds of subordination to the British rulers, and ii) ‘tribal areas’ outside the north western and the north eastern borders of British India. Though outside British India the ‘tribal areas’ were very much under the control of the Governor-General of British India, there were several backward districts in British Indian provinces like Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa where distinct tribal groups lived. Several districts were formed with multiple tribal groups. And, as with the provincial boundaries, the district boundaries also cut across several tribal groups.

#### 17.3.2 From Presidencies to Provinces

The British administration, initially, was organised through what they called ‘Presidencies’, i.e., properties of the President of the Board of Trade of the East India Company. There were three Presidencies’ Bengal, the largest, Madras and Bombay. As annexation went on, the British government constituted new provinces.

The Bengal Presidency comprised today’s West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, a part of Assam and Bangladesh. In 1904 Lord Curzon, Governor-General of British India, decided to split this Presidency for administrative convenience. He put Western Bengal including Bihar and Orissa into one province and joined eastern Bangladesh (roughly, today’s Bengali speaking population) into two parts. The government justified its action on the ground of religion. Eastern Bengal was Muslim-majority, Western Bengal Hindu-majority.

#### 17.3.3 Religion Versus Language

Bengali feelings were seriously hurt. The Indian nationalists saw it as an attempt to divide the Indian nation into rival religious groups. There was a powerful anti-partition agitation based on linguistic sentiment and the government had to annul the Bengal partition. However, it separated Bihar and Orissa from Bengal and constituted them into a united province. In 1936, Bihar and Orissa were separated into two linguistic provinces.

Around the same time, however, the government separated the province of Sindh from Bombay mainly on religious ground. The British continued to regard religious division as more important than any other division and partitioned India on that ground.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

1) Into how many provinces was India divided during the colonial period?

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2) On what basis was Bengal partitioned in 1905? Elaborate.

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## 17.4 INDIA AFTER PARTITION

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The partition of 1947 sent parts of the provinces of Assam, Bengal and Punjab and the whole provinces of Sind, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province into Pakistan. On the other hand, 554 princely states joined India. One 'tribal area' to the northeast was joined with India.

### 17.4.1 From Provinces to States

The Constitution of India, in 1950, regrouped the provinces which existed during the colonial period into "states". It created four kinds of 'states' within the federal state of India. The former Governor's provinces were declared Part A states. The Chief Commissioner's Provinces of Ajmer, Coorg and Delhi, along with some of the former princely states that had been taken over for better administration, were made part C states. The other former princely states and groups of princely states became part B states and the extremely backward Andaman and Nicobar islands were made a Part D state.

Part A states were placed under Governors while Part B states were placed under Rajpramukhs. They would have legislatures. Part A states would have Councils of Ministers responsible to the legislatures while the Part B states would have Executive Councils. Part C and Part D states would be centrally administered. As the Governors and Rajpramukhs would follow the advice of their Councils of Ministers in the Part A and Part B states, they would have the highest amount of autonomy. The centrally-administered states would have the least or no autonomy.

### 17.4.2 Backward Tracts

In British India the Backward Tracts inhabited by tribal people were specially administered under the personal authority of the Governors. Under the Government

of India Act, 1935, they were classified into 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' Areas. They were wholly or partially excluded from the jurisdiction of the provincial legislatures and provincial minister'.

The 'Tribal Areas' the 'Excluded Areas', and the 'Partially Excluded Areas' were all wholly or mostly inhabited by the tribal people. But the 'Tribal Areas' were outside British India and almost autonomous. The 'Excluded Areas' and the 'Partially Excluded Areas' were within British India and very much under government control.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

**Note:**i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Into how many types of "states" were the provinces created according to Constitution of India in 1950?

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## 17.5 LINGUISTIC REORGANISATION OF STATES

During the work of the Constituent Assembly demands for linguistic reorganisation of states were raised. But the leaders thought that, immediately after Partition, creation of linguistic states might create further tension. So the decision was postponed. But Parliament was given the power to create new states or merge old states or parts of such states or alter their boundaries in future.

### 17.5.1 Creation of Andhra State

Shortly after the making of the Constitution the agitation for an Andhra State began. Potti Sriramulu, a respected Andhra Congress leader, fasted unto death demanding creation of Andhra State on the linguistic basis. As a result on October 1, 1953 the Andhra State was carved out of the State of Madras.

### 17.5.2 States Reorganisation, 1956

This led to further agitation's for linguistic reorganisation. Therefore, the government set up a three-member States Reorganisation Commission in 1953. The commission was supposed to examine the reorganisation of the states of the Indian Union taking into consideration the historical background, the contemporary situation and the language, etc. The Commission consisted of Fazul Ali, H.N. Kurjru and K.M. Pannikar. The Commission recommended creation of new states in south on the basis of language. The Commission submitted its report in 1955. In 1956 the States Reorganisation Act was passed.

The States Reorganisation Act, however, did not make a drastic reorganisation. The former Part B State of Hyderabad was joined with Andhra State to form a larger Andhra Pradesh State. The former Part B State of Mysore turned into a larger State of Karnataka with additional territories transferred from the States of Madras (Tamil Nadu) and Bombay. The former Part B States of Madras (Tamil Nadu) and Bombay. The former Part B State of Travancore-Cochin was turned into the State of Kerala with new Territories acquired from the State of Madras.

You have read in sub-section 17.4.1 of this unit that the Constitution of India, in 1950, created four types of states. In 1956, these states were reduced into two types - (1) States and (2) Union territories. The autonomy of states was larger than that of the Union territories.

### 17.5.3 Creation of New States

It will be seen that the states Reorganization Commission of 1955 did not create any new state. The Commission actually integrated several former Princely States on the basis of language. The Commission was not in favour of many states though it recommended the creation of one new state — Vidarbha by uniting contiguous territories of Madhya Pradesh and the then State of Bombay. That recommendation was not accepted by the government. On the other hand Bombay state was enlarged by transfer of territory from Madhya Pradesh.

Creation of new states started shortly thereafter. In 1960 the Bombay state was partitioned into Maharashtra and Gujarat. In 1966 Punjab. A chunk of the territory of the former Punjab state was joined with the Union territory of Himachal Pradesh to constitute it into a State.

There are, at present, a few statehood movements like those for Vidarbha, Gorkhaland Harit Pradesh and Bhilwara — in different parts of India.

In the year 2000 three new states were created: Chhattisgarh, out of the hill area of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, out of the hill areas of Bihar and Uttarakhand, out of the hill areas of Uttar Pradesh. There was a time the hill areas of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were dominated by people who are now called Scheduled Tribes. Industrialisation and migration have turned them into minorities. Uttarakhand is almost entirely non-tribal.

All the new states carved out of the old ones since 1972 can, therefore, be called 'hill states'.

### 17.5.4 Reorganization of North-East India

Meanwhile in northeast India autonomy movements became powerful among peoples of several hills. In 1960 an Interim Government was set up for the Naga hills. In 1963 the State of Nagaland was created. In 1969 Meghalaya became an 'autonomous state' within Assam. In 1972 Meghalaya became a full-fledged state. Two Union territories - Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram - were created out of the territories of Assam, while Manipur and Tripura were promoted to full statehood. All the new political entities had populations with large proportions of scheduled tribes. The scheduled tribes themselves are, however, many.

### 17.5.5 Upgradation of Union Territories

No new state was created between 1972 and 2000 but Sikkim joined India in 1974. In 1986 Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became full-fledged states. In 1987 Goa was administratively detached from Daman and Diu and made a state while Daman and Diu remained a Union territory.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note:i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

- I) Discuss the factors which resulted in the formation of linguistic states in South India.

- 2) Summarise the process of reorganisation of the North -East India.

## 17.6 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The reasons for demand of statehood appear to be related to mainly two considerations— power and benefits, and identity.

### 17.6.1 Power and Benefits of Statehood

Under India's federal set-up great political power has been vested in states. The states control vital areas of the economy. They also appoint large numbers of officers, subordinate staff and teachers besides creating several political positions like Ministers, MLAs and MLCs, Councilors, Committee members and Panchayat functionaries. They control local trade and business including banking. Statehood, therefore, is a major aspiration of any collectivity.

### 17.6.2 Identity and Statehood

As statehood is a collective aspiration the collectivity itself has to be identifiable. A collective identity is a cultural identity. The two major streams of culture are religion and language. After the Partition of 1947 language became the main vehicle of culture. Language is also an instrument of hegemony. The language group, which feels dominated by another group, therefore, demands autonomy in the form of statehood.

## 17.7 LET US SUM UP

In the colonial period territorial administration was based mainly on the rulers' convenience and not cultural affiliation of the people. The two broad streams of culture are religion and language which often cut across each other. The colonial rulers of India gave greater importance to religion than to language and partitioned the country in 1947. The Indian nationalists gave greater importance to language than religion. They undertook linguistic reorganization of India, which, by now, is almost complete. However, in the inter-state borders and tribal belts statehood demands persist. Statehood is a political issue because it is a source of power and benefits.

## 17.8 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Paul R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in India*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1975.

Shibani Kendar Chaube, *Constituent Assembly of India: Springboard of Revolution*, Manohar, 2000

, *Hill Politics in Northeast India*. Calcutta, Orient Longman, 1973.

, 'Ethnicity and Dynamics of Federalism in India' in Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyaya (ed.), the Political Miscellany: Essays in Memory of Professor Ramesh Chandra Ghosh, Calcutta, K.P. Banchi & Co., 1986.

## 17.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Cultural frontiers and territorial limits are incongruous.
- 2) The most common cross-cutting cleavage is between language and religion.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) India was divided into two types of provinces, i.e. "British India" and "Native India".
- 2) In 1905 Bengal was partitioned on the religious basis.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Into four types of "states" - A states, B states, C states, and D states.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- 1) Fast unto death by Potti Sriramulu and Recommendation of the States Reorganisation Commission in 1955.
- 2) See Sub-section 17.5.4 of this unit.

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## UNIT 18 LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS: RURAL AND URBAN

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### Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
  - 18.1 Introduction
  - 18.2 Historical Background of Rural Self - Government in India
  - 18.3 Panchayati Raj in Post-Independence India
  - 18.4 The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992
    - 18.4.1 Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996
  - 18.5 The Panchayati Raj Institutions in the Post-73rd Amendment Era: The Case of UP
    - 18.5.1 Gram Panchayat
    - 18.5.2 Kshetra Panchayat
    - 18.5.3 Zila Panchayat (Zila Parishad)
    - 18.5.4 Relationships Between the PRIs and DRDAs
    - 18.5.5 The PRIs: An Assessment
  - 18.6 Urban Local Self-Government
    - 18.6.1 Historical Background
  - 18.7 The Post- 74th Constitutional Amendment (1992): Urban Local Self-Government Bodies
  - 18.8 The Municipal Finance
    - 18.8.1 Tax Revenue
    - 18.8.2 Octroi
    - 18.8.3 Non - Tax Revenue
    - 18.8.4 Grants-in-Aid
    - 18.8.5 Borrowings and Loans
  - 18.9 Let Us Sum Up
  - 18.10 Some Useful Books
  - 18.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
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### **18.0 OBJECTIVES**

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The institutions of local-self governance are indication of the existence of the grass-root level democracy. After reading this unit, you will be able to understand:

- The evolution of Local Self-Government (LSG) in India;
  - The structure and working of the LSGs in rural and urban areas of India;
  - Changes in the scope and powers of the LSG; and
  - Relationships of the LSG with the central and state governments.
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### **18.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The political power in India is shared by three vertical units of governance — the central government, the state government and the local government. The local government includes the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the villages and the Municipal and Metropolitan Councils in the cities. These are known as the institutions of local self-governance (LSG). Local self-government is democracy at the grass-root level. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have widened the scope of local self-governance.

## 18.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RURAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

The panchayati raj, albeit in different forms, had a considerably long history going back to the ancient period when the rural communities organised institutions to manage their own affairs. The village autonomy was considerable in Mughal era and therefore the impact of the Mughal era on the local communities was minimal. But the formal structure of the rural self-government was introduced in 1882 according to Ripon's Resolution. Its main purpose was to provide the institutional backing of the local Indian elites to the colonial administration. Contemporary local self-government in India can be deemed to be more a continuation of the system introduced under British rather than in pre-British era. Several provincial Acts on local bodies were passed and they provided framework for many other provincial and central legislations. The local self-government in the rural areas known as the village panchayat, was set up in the villages according to the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Decentralisation in 1907. It aimed to decentralise the power and associate the people with local administration through the institutions of village panchayats. Unit of panchayat was to be single village; only in case of very small villages it was to be several contiguous villages. Panchayats were not to be placed under the control of local boards but under the deputy commissioner. The villages panchayats enjoyed certain Judicial and administrative powers. They also were entitled to a portion of land cases and special grants.

The Rural self-government Bill, 1925, provided for a nine-member village authority elected on the basis of restricted adult franchise. A successful village authority was to be given more powers. The panchayat could include more than one cadastral village. It could be entrusted with certain functions such as water supply, medical relief, and sanitation. Single member village authority could also be put in place where no recognised forms of village organisation existed.

## 18.3 PANCHAYATI RAJ IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA

In January 1957 the Planning Commission appointed the Committee on plan Projects headed by Balwant Rai G. Mehta. Named after its chairman, the Committee was known as Mehta Committee. The Mehta Committee aimed to:

- i) Give report on the possible linkages between village panchayats and higher level popular organisations for efficiently implementing Community Projects and National Extension service.
- ii) To determine in advance the stages of reorganisation of district administration; it would help the democratic bodies to take over the entire general administration and development of the districts, or sub-division.

The Mehta Committee conducted a nationwide survey and observed that the Community Projects and the National Extension Services did not involve people. They functioned in an ad hoc manner. To overcome this lacuna the Mehta Committee recommended the establishment of representative and democratic institutions in the villages - the village panchayats. The Mehta Committee Report also recommended the village panchayats should be vested with adequate powers and assigned appropriate finances. The Mehta Committee Report thus highlighted the need to give financial teeth of the rural institutions way back in 1957 as a means to evoke local interests, and initiatives albeit from the point of view of development. However, it envisaged them as agents of the state government in implementing special developmental schemes. Such an emphasis clearly underlined the overriding and understandable concern with implementation of the state-devised and state-sponsored scheme for local development. The emphasis on the role of local bodies as institutions of local democracy and self-governance was rather muted despite recommendations

to transfer certain vital administrative and other functions to them. The Mehta Committee Report, however, cautioned against the pitfall of excessive government control while emphasising the guiding role. The latter, however, had all possibilities of degenerating into petty interference.

The Mehta Committee Report suggested that functions of local bodies should cover the development of agriculture in all its aspects - the improvement of cattle and local industries, public health, welfare work, administration of primary schools and collection and maintenance of statistics and act as an agent of state government in executing special schemes of development entrusted to it.

To preserve the relative autonomy of the village communities the Mehta Committee Report suggested that the relationship between the state and the Panchayati Raj bodies 'must not be cramped by too much control by government and government agencies. It must have the power to make mistakes and to learn by making mistakes, but it must also receive guidance which will help it to avoid making mistakes'. The structures that evolved, however, were those which chiefly performed development functions.

One school of thought argues that Panchayat Raj has not only failed to contribute much to rural development, but on the contrary has also hindered it. These institutions are primarily engaged in power politics and distribution of developmental patronage. They have also disturbed the village harmony through factional conflicts. On the other hand, some academics feel that there is no inherent problem and rather the failures of the Panchayat Raj are because of the lack of finances, lack of co-operation from government departments, half-hearted policies and defective structure created for the implementation.

#### **18.4 THE 73RD CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT, 1992**

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As you have studied in section 18.3, the introduction of Panchayat Raj Institutions followed the implementation of the Community Development and National Extension Services programmes. Based mainly on the Gandhian philosophy, the Community Development Programme aimed at achieving the all round development of rural India. The programme created a large number of the government functionaries like the Block Development Officers (BDOs) and Village Level Workers (VLWs). But the results of the Community Development Programmes were far from satisfactory.

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee recommended measures for "democratic decentralisation" in order to meet the deficiency of the Community Development Programmes and Extension Services Programmes. It suggested that the power for development should be located at the intermediate level- the Panchayat Samiti. The Mehta report envisioned creation of links between the panchayat samitis and village level Panchayats through the services of the Village Level Workers (VLWs) or Gram sewaks. The Mehta Committee Report became the basis of extension of the PRIs all over India. But the PRIs as established by Mehta Committee Report, suffered from the factionalism within its members, feud in the villages and corruption. The elections to the PRIs were not held for long. By second half of the 1970 the inefficiency of the PRIs had reached its zenith.

Efforts to revitalise the PRIs were made again in 1970s: the Central Government led by the Janata Party appointed Ashok Mehta Committee to assess the functioning of the PRIs and recommended measures for their improvement. Though Ashok Mehta Committee like the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Report gave more emphasis to the delivery mechanism than to development, it made some new suggestions. These included need to allow the political parties to contest panchayat

elections, women to participate in the PRIs. The Ashok Mehta report drafted 43rd Constitution Amendment Bill (1977) in order to incorporate its recommendations in the law. But the Ashok Mehta report was ignored after the fall of the Janata Government. However, some state governments ruled by the non-Congress parties initiated move to activate the PRIs - Karnataka, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh. The recommendations of Ashok Mehta Report, however, were taken into consideration by the Congress from the 1980 onwards. They found a place in the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments though with some modifications.

The 73rd Amendment provides for more democratisation, empowerment of disadvantaged groups and betterment of the functioning of the Panchayats in the country. The 74th Amendments provides for similar guidelines regarding the urban areas. These Amendment Acts provided a framework and guidelines to all states to formulate their policies regarding the devolution to the Panchayats and the urban bodies. All states, were asked to make changes in the provisions regarding the Panchayats.

The main features of the 73rd Constitutional (Amendment) Act are:

- a) A three-tier system of Panchayati Raj at village, block (intermediate level) and district levels for all States having population of over 20 lakhs;
- b) Panchayat elections regularly every 5 years; elections to be held within six months after the term of the existing Panchayati Raj expires;
- c) Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women (33%) and general seats;
- d) To appoint State Finance Commission to make recommendations as regards the financial powers of the Panchayats; and
- e) To constitute District Planning Committee to prepare draft development plan for the district as a whole.

The Constitution empowers the state legislatures to enact laws in order to enable the Panchayats to enjoy the powers which are necessary for the devolution. It can help the Panchayats to work as institutions of self-governance. The deviation of powers to Panchayats is mainly related to:

- a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice; and,
- b) the implementation of such schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule. The Eleventh Schedule consists of 29 subjects, relating to agriculture, land reforms, minor irrigation, rural infrastructure, poverty alleviation, women and child development, welfare of the weaker sections and primary, secondary and non-formal education.

The Panchayats can be authorised by the law enacted by the state legislature to:  
i) levy, collect and appropriate such taxes, duties tolls and fees collected by the state government; ii) avail of taxes, duties, tolls and fees collected by the state government; and iii) to get grant-in-aid from the Consolidated funds of the state.

The financial relations between the state and the Panchayats are governed by the State finance Commission. The state Finance Commission is supposed to review the financial conditions of the Panchayats, and determine the share of Panchayats in the levy, tolls, taxes, duties and fees.

#### **18.4.1 Panchayats (Extension of Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996**

The provisions of the 73rd Amendment do not apply to the Scheduled Areas, the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram, the hill areas the state of Manipur.

and the hill areas of district of Darjeeling (West Bengal). However, the provisions of the 73rd Amendment were extended to the Scheduled Areas as well by the Panchayats ( Extension of Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.

The provisions of the Panchayats (Extension of the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 have come into force on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1996. The Act extends Panchayats to the tribal areas of eight states of India, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. It intends to enable the tribal society to assume control over their own destiny, to preserve and conserve their traditional rights over natural resources. The state governments were required to enact their legislations in accordance with the Provisions of the Act before the expiry of one year, i.e. 23rd December 1997.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with model answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Explain the difference in the nature of Panchayati Raj during and before the British period.

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- 2) Why was Balwant Rai Mehta Committee set up, and what were its recommendations?

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- 3) Identify the main features of the 73rd Amendment Act regarding the disadvantaged groups.

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## 18.5 THE PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN THE POST - 73rd AMENDMENT ERA: THE CASE OF UP

Most of the states covered by the 73rd Amendment Act have passed the conformity Acts and have set up PRIs in the light of the provisions of the Act. Nirmal Mukherjee and Balveer Arora consider the PRIs as the third layer of federalism - an extension of the two-layer federalism between the Centre and states.

Even before the confirmation and implementation of the 73rd Amendment Act five state governments had introduced the PRIs, i.e., western States of Maharashtra and

Gujarat; eastern state of West Bengal, southern States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Local Self-Government Institutions: Rural and Urban



Though there are slight variations in the nomenclature of the structures of the PRIs. At various levels, the 73rd Amendment provides the common framework for them. This section deals with the structure of PRIs in UP as one of the examples. The PRIs in UP consist of the following structure:

#### **18.5.1 Gram Panchayat**

It consists of the gram sabha and members of the village panchayats directly elected by the electorate, headed by the Pradhans. The body which consists of all adults of the villages is known as gram sabha (village council). The law enjoins the gram sabha to hold general meetings annually. It can make recommendations and suggestions to the gram panchayat on various aspects, statement of account of the gram panchayat on various aspects related to the functioning of the panchayats. The gram panchayat's Jurisdiction covers all 29 subjects mentioned in the 11 Schedule. The panchayats are supposed to consist of several committees to help it in performing various duties. Therefore, the gram panchayat has a wide sweep of functions, if not powers. Each gram panchayat is expected to function through four committees, viz. Samata Samiti (welfare of women and children and interests of SCs/STs and backward classes), Vikas Samiti (agriculture rural industry and development schemes), Shiksha Samiti (education) and Lok Hita Samiti (Public health, public work). The village panchayat has also a village pradhan, who is elected indirectly by the members of the village panchayat.

#### **18.5.2 Kshetra Panchayat**

Membership of the Kshetra Panchayat, the intermediate tier, comprises all the elected pradhans of the gram panchayats from within the block; members elected by direct elections from the territorial constituencies in the panchayat area, apart from MLAs and MLCs, and representatives of zila parishad (Zila panchayat).

#### **18.5.3 Zila Panchayat (Zila Parishad)**

Like kshetra panchayats, zila parishad includes elected members chosen directly in territorial constituencies, MLAs and MLCs along with the Parmukhs of all kshetra panchayats in the district.

The primary functions entrusted to the zila parishads are to supervise the activities of gram panchayats and Kshetra Samites, to classify fairs and festivals, and to classify roads as village roads, district roads, etc., for maintenance. The zila parishads are enjoined to prepare an annual district development plan incorporating those of the kshetra panchayats which in turn incorporate the ones prepared by the gram panchayats.

An overwhelming majority of states have direct elections of the office bearers of gram panchayats, and indirect ones to that of zila panchayats and the intermediary level. However, there are a few exceptions. For example, in Goa the elections for all the tiers are direct.

#### **18.5.4 Relationships between the PRIs and DRDAs**

The nature of relationships between the panchayats and administrative structure is an important aspect of the PRIs. The UP government had set up Bajaj Committee in 1995 for suggesting measures to strengthen the relationship between the DRDAs (District Rural Development Authorities) and the Panchayats. The committee suggested the functional integration of the Zila Panchayat and DRDAs, as the merger was not feasible. In a significant move to devolve powers, it made the zila

parishad Chairman also as the chairperson of the DRDAs, and the District Magistrate as the Deputy Chairman. The District Magistrate has also been excluded from the structure of the panchayat; instead, the Chief Development officer (below the rank of District Magistrate) has become the chief Executive Officer of Panchayat. The Bajaj Committee also made recommendations for functional integration of two cadres of village level functionaries- GPAs (Gram Panchayat Adhikaris) and the VDOs (Village Development officers), and representation of the Block Pramukhs in the DRDAs. But these recommendations have not been yet made effective.

#### 18.5.5 PRIs: An Assessment

The performance of the PRIs needs to be assessed in the context of the social, economic and political milieu in the villages. The PRIs have contributed to the overall development of the village society to a significant. But their performance has varied in different circumstances. Nevertheless, their most significant contribution has been in raising the level of political consciousness of the people.

Rajni Kothari warns, "merely setting up local-self government committees does not necessarily amount to the advancement of democratic politics. On the contrary, such an attempt may prove to be counter-productive. The basic issue is: how should decentralized systems enhance the powers originally given to them, in turn, contain power of dominant groups and muscle power used for manipulating the election process? The failure to understand such imperatives has often led to the growth the 'mafia' phenomenon on in local governance which keeps the weak away from the political process."

One of the main hindrances in the performance of the PRIs has been the lack the will on the part of many state governments to devolve power to them. In states other than Andhra Pradesh, regular election was not conducted to the village panchayats. Panchayats in the states like Karnataka, West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have shown better performance much before the introduction of the 73rd Amendment. The TDP government in Andhra Pradesh and the state government in Karnataka introduced reservation of seats in the PRIs for SCs, STs, Backward classes and women in 1987 and 1985 respectively. The panchayats have played pivotal role in the implementation of land reforms and rural development in West Bengal.

Following the confirmation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment by them, a large number of states have attempted to devolve powers to the local bodies in the 1990s. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala have made special efforts to involve people in planning, decision-making and implementation of the state policies. In the era of globalization, signified by a collaboration between the NGOs, panchayats and the DRDAs the PRIs in these states have contributed to the development of village communities, in rural development, education, health, etc. Because of the usage of the internet in the functioning village panchayats in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the PRIs are involved in e-governance also.

As mentioned earlier, though reservation for the SCs, STs, OBCs and women in the PRIs was introduced even earlier in some states, it has become mandatory in all states following the passage of 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Those states, which have been sincere in holding the election to the PRIs, have enabled SCs, STs, OBCs, and women to be participants in, and leaders of the local bodies. The PRIs, however, have been facing serious challenges i.e. factionalism, casteism, corruption, which thwarted their democratisation, have been their bane. While before the 73rd Amendment the dominant communities in most states hijacked the PRIs, in the following period in most cases the women panchayat members have become proxies of the male members of their families. Transfer of important subjects like education to the PRIs has resulted in the politicisation of the issues especially in West Bengal,

## 18.6 URBAN LOCAL SELF - GOVERNMENT

### 18.6.1 Historical Background

The urban local government owes its genesis to Samuel Laing, member of the Viceroy's Council who proposed that local services should be based on local resources. Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870 introduced the concept of elected representatives in the municipalities. Even as the local government in the rural areas are called panchayats, the local government in towns and cities is called Municipal Government. The local institutions of governance in the cities were introduced almost two centuries before they were introduced in the rural areas.

Municipal bodies in Indian cities were the creation of the British. Till the passage of 74th Amendment there have been existing five types of urban governments - Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, Town Area Committees, Notified Area Committees and Cantonment Boards. Madras was first to have the Municipal Corporation in 1687; it was followed by Bombay and Calcutta in 1762. Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870 encouraged the introduction of an elected president in the municipalities. The present form and structure of the institutions of local governance owe their existence to Lord Ripon's resolution on local self-government, adopted on 18 May 1882. There were about 200 municipalities in the British India by 1870.

## 18.7 THE POST - 74TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT (1992): URBAN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT BODIES

The Government of India passed 74th Constitution on Amendment Act in 1992 to make the institutions of urban governance more representative, accountable, efficient and transparent. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act was enacted on the basis of recommendation of the Rural - Urban Relationship Committee. As mentioned earlier in the previous section of this unit, before the commencement of this Act, there had existed five types of bodies of urban governance. The 74th Amendment replaced the five urban bodies with three - Nagar Panchayats for areas in transition from rural to urban clusters; Municipal Councils in smaller urban settlements, and Municipal Corporations in larger urban areas. The decision as to which type of the urban body has to be introduced in a city is taken by the state government. The Municipal areas with population more than three lakhs also will have the ward committees, apart from the municipalities. This makes urban governance a two-tier system.

The municipal bodies include - elected representatives from the electoral wards; members of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative assemblies covering wholly or partly the municipal area concerned; the members of the council of states and the state legislative council who are registered as voters within the municipal area; chairpersons of the committees of the municipal authorities; and, persons having special knowledge or experience in municipal administration sans right to vote in the council.

The seats are reserved in the municipal bodies for the weaker sections of the society - OBCs SCs, women. The percentage of seats reserved for women is 33. The ward committees which exist for the municipal areas covering more than three lakh population consist of the members nominated by the state government; elected members of the council who represents the ward belonging to the ward committee.

The tenure of the municipalities is five years. In case these are dissolved or superceded, they have right to be heard. Within six months of supercession or dissolution of the municipalities the elections should be held. The twelfth schedule of the 74th amendment contain 18 items which are:

- 1) Urban planning, including town planning
- 2) Regulation of land use and construction of buildings
- 3) Planning for economic and social development
- 4) Roads and bridges
- 5) Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes
- 6) Public health, sanitation conservancy and solid waste management
- 7) Fire services
- 8) Urban forestry, protection of environment and promotion of ecological aspects
- 9) Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society, including the disabled and mentally retarded
- 10) Slum improvement and upgrading
- 11) Urban poverty alleviation
- 12) Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens, playgrounds
- 13) Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects
- 14) Burials and burial grounds, cremations, cremation grounds and electric crematoriums
- 15) Cattle pounds: prevention of cruelty to animals.
- 16) Registration of births and deaths
- 17) Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences
- 18) Regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries.

The state governments enjoy discretion regarding the taxes, duties, tolls and fees which have to be levied by municipal bodies, and the grant-in-aid to be given to them. The state government is supposed to appoint a finance commission, every five years. The finance commission is supposed to give recommendations regarding principles of sharing of the state taxes, duties, tolls and fees between the state government, municipalities and its distribution between the municipalities.

The state finance commission would also recommend the principle of the grant-in-aid to be given from the consolidated Fund of the state. The state governments were enjoined to adopt the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act with regard to their respective municipal bodies. The new amendment provided for a direct election of the Major from the municipal area for a period of five years. A motion of no confidence cannot be moved against the speaker or Mayor within a period of two years from the date on which he or she enters office. It cannot be moved if the remaining period of a corporation is less than six months and needs a majority of two-third of the elected councillors present and voting if such a majority is more than half of the total number of elected councillors. In case of the Mayor, it needs a majority of more than two third of the elected councillors, i.e., more than two thirds of the total number of elected councillors.

The Municipal Corporation can deal directly with the state government whereas the Municipalities are answerable to the District Collector and Divisional Commissioner. The General Body of the Municipal Corporation consists of councilors, who are

elected for a term of three to five years. They are either directly elected or nominated councillors with some specialised knowledge in municipal functions.

Statutory Committees are set up by the statute which constitutes the Corporation, such as executive committee, standing committee, planning committee, health committee and education committee. Non-Statutory Committees include transport committee, women and child welfare committee, etc. The Standing committee of the Corporation acts as the steering committee exercising executive, supervisory, financial and personnel power.

The Council elects, from among the councillors, a President whose term may be co-terminus with that of the council. In certain states Presidents are elected directly by the citizens. He enjoys considerable authority and power both in the deliberative and executive organs of the municipality. He convenes and presides over the meetings of the Council, gives his rulings on all controversial matters and executes its decision as its Chief Executive Officer. His power depends on the support of the majority. Committees can be formed by the Municipal Council. The Standing Committee is the most important of all committees. The powers and functions of the Municipal Council Committees are the same as those of the Municipal Corporation. Cantonments are predominantly military-occupied areas along with a sizeable civil population that necessitates the municipalisation of its administration. The Cantonment Board is special form of urban government, constituted under the Cantonments Act, 1924.

Local Bodies are responsible for the efficiency of programmes and services, raising local resources and providing meaningful planning and services at the local level. The functions, duties and responsibilities of the municipal government are both obligatory and discretionary. Obligatory functions include supply of potable water; construction and maintenance of public streets; lighting and cleansing of public streets, sewers etc.; maintaining public hospitals; establishing and maintaining primary schools; registration of birth and naming streets and numbering houses. Discretionary functions may include securing or removing dangerous buildings or places; construction and maintenance of public parks, gardens, libraries, museums, rest houses, leper homes, orphanages and rescue homes for women, etc.; planting and maintenance of roadside and other trees; housing for low income groups; organizing public receptions, public exhibitions, public entertainment, etc. Compulsory Primary Education is the responsibility of the local bodies in a large number of states.

## 18.8 THE MUNICIPAL FINANCE

There is no separate list of taxes for municipal bodies. This fall within the discretion of respective state governments. Many bodies like the Local Finance Inquiry Committee (1951) and Taxation Inquiry Commission (1953-1954) have been set up from time to time to look into the issue of municipal finance. Municipal Revenues are basically of the following types:

Tax revenue;

Octroi;

Non-tax revenue;

Grants-in-aid;

Borrowings or loans.

### 18.8.1 Tax Revenue

Major taxes levied by urban local government are the following:

Tax on property including service levy for water supply;

Conservancy, drainage, lighting and garbage disposal;

Tax on Professions;

Tax on vehicles (other than motor vehicles).

The scope of taxation of Municipal Corporations is broader; the Municipal Corporations are generally empowered to impose or increase taxes within the limits laid down in the State Acts. Property tax is one example of such tax. Generally property tax is the largest single source of revenue for municipal bodies in the states where there is no provision for octroi. Property tax is levied on buildings and land on the basis of rental value.

#### 18.8.2 Octroi

Tax on entry of goods into a local area for consumption or sale therein is popularly known as octroi. Octroi is the most traditional tax and a major source of local revenue. It accounts for about 60 to 80 per cent of total revenue of the urban local bodies where it is imposed.

#### 18.8.3 Non-Tax Revenue

Municipal Acts provide for issuance of licenses. Every local authority is empowered to charge and collect fees both regulatory (for license issued) and for services provided. A user fee is to be charged for public utilities, parking, entry fees for play ground, swimming pools, etc.

#### 18.8.4 Grants-in-Aid

An important element of municipal finance is grants-in-aid. There are two types of grants: a General-Purpose Grant (GPG) and a Specific purpose grant (SPG). The former augments the revenue of the local bodies for discharging their normal functions. The latter is used for specific purposes, e.g., the increase of wage bills due to inflation, education grants, public health, road maintenance etc. Grants are ad-hoc and discretionary in nature.

#### 18.8.5 Borrowings and Loans

Municipal bodies can borrow from the state government and other agencies under Local Authorities Loans Act. (1914). They can borrow for development activities and for repayment of debt. These borrowings can be for the purposes of:

Construction;

Provision of relief and relief work during scarcity or famine;

Outbreak of any epidemic;

Land acquisition;

Repayment of outstanding loans.

With the addition of eighteen functions in the Twelfth Schedule after the 74th Amendment, the functional responsibilities of municipalities have increased. They participate in the preparation of plans for local development and in the implementation of development projects, apart from providing civic amenities. Thus they require increased financial allocations.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with model answers given at the end of the unit.

- I) What is the composition of a gram panchayat?

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- 2) Identify the urban bodies of local self-governance which existed before and after the 74th Constitutional Amendment.
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- 3) Identify the types of municipal revenues?
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## 18.9 LET US SUM UP

Local Self-Government is of broadly two types - rural and urban. The rural self-government in India goes back to the ancient period but was remodeled by the British rulers. Independent India launched the drive for its democratisation and empowerment. The 73rd amendment integrated it with the constitutional system. Modern urban LSG began with the British rule. It is now elaborate and varied in structure according to the size of an urban unit. The 74th Amendment has constitutionalised the system of urban local self-governance.

## 18.10 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Jha, S. N. and Mathur, P. C., (eds.), *Decentralization and Local Politics*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1999.

Lichten, G.K. and Srivastva, Ravi, *Unequal Partners: Power Relations, Devolution and Development in Uttar Pradesh*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1999.

Pinto, Marina, *Metropolitan City Governance in India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2000.

## 18.11 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Though the Panchayati Raj system had existed even before the British period, the British made it different from earlier system in the sense that they had formalised it.
- 2) To review the functioning of the Community Development Programmes and National Extension Services Programmes.

It recommended setting up village Panchayati with adequate political and financial powers with the aim to bring out the overall development of the village society.

- 3) It introduced reservation for women (33%), OBCs, SCs & STs and the general categories to ensure their representation in the PRIs.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) A gram panchayat consists of the gram sabha and elected members of the village panchayats. It is headed by the village pradhan. A gram panchayat has also an indirectly elected up - pradhan.
- 2) There existed five types of municipal bodies before the introduction of the 74th Constitutional Amendment - Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, Town Area Committees, Notified Area Committee and the Cantonment Boards. The 74th Amendment has reduced them into three - Nagar Panchayats, Municipal Councils and Municipal Corporations.
- 3) Tax revenue, Octroi, Non-tax revenue, Grants-in-aid and Borrowings or loans.

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## **UNIT 19 NATURE OF PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA**

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### **Structure**

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Nature of Party System—First Two Decades After Independence
  - 19.2.1 Evolution from Political Centre
  - 19.2.2 Dominant Party System: Basic Characteristics
  - 19.2.3 Centrality of Congress
- 19.3 Changed Socio-Economic Profile: Dislocation of Political Centre
- 19.4 Party Systems After 1967
- 19.5 Loss of Centrality of Congress and Emerging Party System
- 19.6 Contemporary Party System
  - 19.6.1 Party System at the Central Level
  - 19.6.2 Party System at the State Level
- 19.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.8 Some Useful Books and Articles
- 19.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## **19.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit deals with the nature of the party system in India. It aims at familiarising the student of Indian politics with the fundamental features underlying the evolution of the party system in the post-independence period. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the nature of the party system in India and identify its various characteristics;
- Analyse the changing nature of the party system and explain the emerging patterns; and
- Discuss the socio-economic and the political factors underlying the changing nature of party politics.

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## **19.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Indian party system is unique. It does not fit in any kind of classification that is generally used to categorise the party systems. It is defined by the singular nature of Indian politics on the one hand and the nature of the state-society relationship on the other. In the last two decades, there has been a substantial change both in the nature of politics as well as in nature of relationship between the state and the society. One of the very important manifestations of change is visible in the context of the politicisation of greater number of people, especially those belonging to the less privileged sections of society. That explains the change in the nature of the party system as well. The distinctive features that defined the party system of India in the first two decades after independence are no more to be seen at present.

In order to understand the present nature of the party system, it is important to trace its history and to refer to its political logic in the context of the changing state-society relationship.

## 19.2 NATURE OF PARTY SYSTEM – FIRST TWO DECADES AFTER INDEPENDENCE

### 19.2.1 Evolution from Political Centre

Rajni Kothari has argued in his ‘Politics in India’ that the party system evolved from an identifiable political centre. This political centre, carved during the nationalist movement, was comprised of the political elite sharing common socio-economic background i.e. educated, urban, upper-caste people belonging mainly to middle and upper classes.

The common social background of the elite resulted in the homogeneity that became a defining feature of the political centre as well as of the party system. The ruling party and the opposition, both coming from the same social background, shared the social perceptions and converged on many issues. A consensus, therefore, existed within the system around the basic values.

The Indian National Congress was the institutional manifestation of this political centre. Not only was it an important expression of the nationalist movement but was also a dynamic political organisation that formed the indigenous base for the political system. Accommodating almost all-political groups of political importance, it provided a very crucial political space for political negotiations and bargaining.

### 19.2.2 Dominant Party System: Basic Characteristics

- 1) The party system during the first two decades after independence was termed as the Single Dominant Party system. It was a multi-party system where the ruling party played an overwhelmingly dominant role. Although a number of other political parties existed and operated politically, yet the central space of politics was occupied by the Indian National Congress only. The dominance of the Congress was determined by its immense organisational strength as well as its capability to capture large number of seats both in the Union Parliament and the state legislatures.
- 2) Dominance of the Congress as the ruling party did not mean absence of competition. The numerous parties in opposition provided competition. Yet, such competition did not result in effectively challenging the dominant position of the ruling party. Morris-Jones aptly described this phenomenon as ‘dominance co-existing with competition but without a trace of alteration’. In electoral terms, it implied that although a number of opposition parties entered the electoral arena but none of them singly or in combination could secure substantial number of seats to replace the Congress as the ruling party. These parties were fragmented and poorly represented in the Union and the state legislatures. Congress continued to return its candidates in large numbers, in fact, in proportionately large numbers than the votes polled in its favour.
- 3) Due to their inability to provide an alternative to the ruling party or even to challenge its position of dominance, the opposition parties did not play the traditional role of opposition. On the contrary, their role was limited to that of constantly pressurising, criticising the ruling party. The parties in opposition, therefore, operated as the parties of pressure.
- 4) One of the important features of the Congress party that helped it to sustain its position of dominance was its capacity to represent divergent social groups and interests. As it drew its support from different sections of society, it played the

role of a great umbrella party. During the nationalist movement it had accommodated diverse groups into its fold and had stressed on the need for their unity within the same organisational structure. It had therefore assumed the character of a broad coalition. In the post-independence period, it continued to absorb the dominant social elements and balance different interests that helped it to maintain its unchallenged position of power. Through its accommodative and adaptive politics, it could curb the role and relevance of opposition.

- 5) Being a plural party representing diverse interests and ideologies, the Congress had a number of factions. Of these, some were relatively more dominant and played important role in the decision making of the party. Others were the dissident factions. Several of these factions of the Congress were also ideologically closer to some of the opposition parties. The reason for this being, that almost each of the party in opposition had been a part of the Congress at one time or the other and while choosing to form an independent party outside it, had left a faction of similar ideological orientation within it. Therefore, there always remained continuity between the politics of the Congress and that of the opposition parties. This continuity made it possible for the opposition parties to put pressure on the Congress and influence its decision making.
- 6) The party system, therefore, worked on the basis of a consensual model. It was a politics of broad consensus round the political values shared by all the political actors whether operating from within the ruling groups or from the opposition. Ideological divisions within the Congress or outside it were blurred.

### 19.2.3 Centrality of Congress

Due to the unique position of dominance of the Congress party, it was known to be the central institution of Indian politics. The Centrality of Congress was reflected at various levels:

- i) At one level, it occupied the most central space of electoral politics, thereby monopolising it and not allowing other parties to seriously challenge its position of power in the centre and the states.
- ii) At another level, its centrality was outlined in its occupation of the pivotal space between the state and society. Representing diverse interests of society, it remained the most important formal mediating institution of the state. It therefore, provided the most crucial space for political negotiations and bargaining.
- iii) At the third level, the centrality of the Congress was reflected in its ideological standpoint. Being an umbrella party it had space for all kinds of ideological groups. Hence, it pursued a 'centrist' ideology even when it contained ideological viewpoints of the 'left' and 'right'.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What was the socio-economic background of the political elite at the time of India's independence?
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- 2) What is meant by 'dominance coexisting with competition but without a trace of alteration'?

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- 3) Why were the opposition parties known mainly to be the parties of pressure before 1976?

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- 4) Why was the Congress party called an umbrella party?

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- 5) What is meant by 'Centrality of Congress'?

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### **19.3 CHANGED SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE: DISLOCATION OF POLITICAL CENTRE**

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Change in the nature of party system in the decades after 1960s, according to Rajni Kothari, was the consequence of the 'changed socio-economic and demographic profile of the polity'. Such a change in the profile of the polity was a consequence of the political mobilisation of the masses as well as the emergence of new political classes. The political mobilisation of the masses was a logical consequence of the electoral politics based upon the principle of universal adult franchise. Frequently held elections helped in increasing the political consciousness of mass of Indians, especially those belonging to the backward and lower castes.

The emergence of the new political classes was directly related to the rise of the proprietary peasant class in rural India in the backdrop of the land reforms. By the beginning of the seventies, the land-owning socially dominant sections belonging mainly to the backward castes had attained sufficient economic strength to demand a share in political power. The entry of these castes into the competitive power politics had far-reaching consequences for the Indian politics. Firstly, there was an increase in

political elite, therefore, was seriously challenged. Secondly, there was also greater manifestation of a variety of conflicting interests. These new entrants did not share the political blues of the traditional elite. They had not only different demands and different expectations from the political system but they also used a different political language. This had the effect of posing a serious threat to the consensual politics of the traditional political elite in general and that of the Congress, in particular. Unable to integrate and balance varied interests, the Congress was dislocated from its position of centrality.

The changed context of politics was also the result of the assertion of the lower castes. In the politics of numbers, the lower castes and Dalits were brought into politics, initially, in the context of the patron-client relationship. As clients of the locally dominant castes, their numerical strength was used in the interest of their patrons. However, as the momentum to the participatory politics was created, the nature of lower caste politics was also changed. The lower castes and Dalits started acquiring more autonomous role in politics and their mobilisation now came to be related to their political interest. In terms of party politics, this led to the formation of parties reflecting the support and interest of these newly mobilised castes. Formation of the BSP, Samajwadi Party and Janata Dal are the examples of such political formations. These parties clearly reflected the interest of the Dalits and the Backward castes.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

**Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this Unit.

- 1) What was the impact of the electoral politics based on the principle of Universal Adult Franchise on the politics of India?

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- 2) Why was the Congress party not so successful in integrating various interests for 1967?

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- 3) Give some examples of the political parties that were formed for pursuing the particular caste interests.

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## 19.4 PARTY SYSTEM AFTER 1967

The nature of the Indian polity as well as the party system underwent a substantial change after 1967. This change has been described in varied terms. According to Kothari, this was the beginning of the decline of the dominant party system. While Morris-Jones attributes this to the emergence of 'a market polity' in which the number of opposition parties were brought 'fully into the market place, and competition that had previously occurred within the Congress, was now brought into the realm of inter-party conflict.' A number of new political forces and formations started emerging-making the electoral politics more competitive. All this led gradually to the decline of Congress.

The change in the nature of party system, initially, was much more visible at the state level where the hegemony of the Congress party was challenged through the formation of a number of non-Congress government. The Fourth General election led to the beginning of the politics of coalitions. This election produced truncated majorities of the Congress party. Hence, coalitions were formed in many states with Jana Sangh, SSP, CPI, CPI (M), and a number of regional parties joining the government.

Meanwhile the Congress also started showing signs of its weakness at the central level. One of the initial indicators of the weakness of the Congress was the changing nature of factionalism and the sharpening of the dissidence within the party. Acute factionalism ultimately led to the split of the Congress in 1969. This split, though an internal affair of the party has far reaching consequences for the Party system of India. One of the major consequences of the split was *the decline of the consensual model of Indian politics* and of the party system. The old organisational structure of Congress that was relatively more democratic and with greater linkages at the societal levels, was replaced by a more centralised organisational set-up. This new set up was *pyramidal* in nature. The decision making within the organisation was personalised and there was no space for democratic dissent. All this had the effect of rendering the Congress organisationally very weak.

The decline of the consensual model of Indian politics was not only a manifestation of the organisational problems of the Congress party but also of the changing nature of the state-society relationship. The homogeneity that earlier characterised the nature of the elite was no more available after the mid-sixties. This was also the time when the new classes had started becoming more assertive, specifically claiming a share in political power. It was the impact of such a changed context of elite politics that the Congress failed to maintain its electoral dominance in a number of states.

By the end of the decade of the seventies, the party system both at the central level as well as the level of the states was marked by flux. This was due to the fragmentation that was taking place in political parties. It was a process that was to continue for quite some time. Yet, despite the flux, the competitiveness was a distinct feature of the party politics. The number of political parties that entered the electoral arena was also increased. All this meant that the period of the dominance of the single party was already over. A multi-party system, instead, has evolved.

At the central level of politics, the new context of politics was reflected in the emphasis on consolidation of the opposition parties against the Congress. With the split of the Congress, a 'Grand Alliance' was formed between the Congress (O), SSP, Jana Sangh and the Swatantra. The logic of the alliance was the unity of non-Congress parties with a view to challenge its position of power. This logic led to the formation of the Janata Party in 1977. This party was itself a coalition of five erstwhile parties, the Congress (O), the Jana Sangh, Socialist Party, the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), CFD. This new party was successful in breaking the continuity of the

Congress in power in the Centre for the first time, after the sixth general elections held in 1977. This had the effect of further bringing about substantial changes in the nature of the party system. The position of the Congress party further declined and its organisational structure was further weakened. It was no more capable of integrating varied social groups. Its organisational structure was fast decaying due to lack of inter-party democracy, on the one hand, and its insensitivity towards the changing context of civil society, on the other. Although it was still the only major institution of political bargaining (and the only party capable of capturing power and retaining it in the Centre, at least for another decade), yet its position of power was very precarious.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of unit.

- 1) What was the outcome of the 1967 elections at the state level?

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- 2) What was the impact of Congress split on the party politics of India?

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- 3) What was the major change brought out by the 1977 parliamentary elections?

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## 19.5 LOSS OF CENTRALITY OF CONGRESS AND EMERGING PARTY SYSTEM

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It was in the period starting with the 1989 parliamentary elections that the Congress was displaced from its position of centrality. Such displacement of Congress from the position of the centre has various implications:

- 1) Firstly, Congress has ceased to be the dominant political party. It is no more the single major political party that dominates the political scenario. A number of other political formations have also had their effective presence. For the last two decades, there has been an ascendance of non-Congress political formations. The major non-Congress formations that have been playing a crucial role in Indian politics include the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Left Parties, and a

number of other national and regional parties. The central political space, earlier dominated by the Congress party, is now being shared by a number of political parties.

- 2) The loss of centrality of the Congress, in another perspective implies a decline in its capacity to represent a consensus. It is no more capable of accommodating varying interests. As the nature of state-society relationship has changed and consequently emerging interests have been sharpened, the societal conflicts and contradictions have become more pronounced. The central space needed for defusing such conflict is not available with the Congress. The traditional methods of co-option or bargaining that helped it to deal with the conflicting interests do not work any more.
- 3) The decline of Congress has not led to the emergence of an alternate national party that could occupy the central space. In other words, the single party dominant system has not been substituted by a two-party system. The rise of the BJP in the early eighties had led some analysts to hope that it might work as an alternate national party and that there might develop a bi-party system with a direct competition of power between the Congress and the BJP. Yet, it could not be possible. While the Congress continued to decline from its position of strength, the BJP could not attain the majority on its own.
- 4) Failure of the large national parties like the Congress and the BJP to get majority of seats in Parliament has brought numerous smaller parties to the central stage of Indian politics. The large parties have been depending upon these smaller parties for the formation of governments. Instead of single party majority governments, we have been having minority coalitions. In 1991, the minority government of Congress was installed [which attained majority subsequently]. The 1996 Parliamentary elections led to the formation of a minority coalition of thirteen parties of the United Front, supported by Congress and the Left Front. This coalition was replaced in 1998 by another coalition led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The 1999 Parliamentary elections again resulted in the coalition government of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with BJP as the largest member of the coalition.

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## 19.6 CONTEMPORARY PARTY SYSTEM

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### 19.6.1 Contemporary Party System – Party System at the Central Level

- 1) The party system as it is operating at present is based upon *multiplicity of political parties*. As already observed, since 1989, there has been a definite increase in the number of political parties entering the political arena. Numerous regional and small parties have filled in the vacuum created by the Congress. The strength of the major national parties has been decreasing and that of the smaller parties has been increasing. The composition of Parliament since 1989 is a reflection of the changed party scenario.
- 2) The kind of the party system that is available at present is not hegemonic but *competitive with sufficient scope for alternation*. However, due to the inability of any single party to attain majority, the alternation takes place not between the individual parties but between the groups of political parties.
- 3) The compulsion of the electoral mathematics and the requirement of coalition governments have resulted in the politics of *alliance*. Alliance takes place among a number of political parties that come together for contesting elections and forming the government.

- 4) The politics of alliance has had a number of consequences for the nature of party politics. The **competitive political space has been widened** with greater number of political parties having a bearing on power politics. Rather than one party hegemonising power (as in case of pre-1967 level of politics), or even two or three parties making serious claims on political power, there are a number of political parties which enter the political arena. As part of the one or the other alliance structure, these numerous political parties have a serious stake in the process of elections and in the formation of government. Politics of alliance, therefore, has its direct consequence on the nature of government. Governance is based upon a **wider dispersal of power** among the alliance partners.
- 5) The nature of alliance to begin with, was simply on the basis of exigencies of power politics. Gradually, over the period a pattern seems to have evolved in this context. Rather than the alliances formed after the election, now there is almost the accepted practice of having pre-poll alliances. Initially, alliances were amorphous with members having come together without any common objectives, except the one related to power. But of late, there has been some kind of effort at drawing some **common minimum programme** acceptable to all partners of the alliance.
- 6) Acceptance of common programme among the alliance partners does not necessarily mean that the alliance partners share common ideology. Ideological cohesiveness, in fact, does not characterize the nature of alliance. Ideological position of the parties that come forward to join an alliance, at times, is quite paradoxical. What causes these ideologically dissimilar parties to form an alliance is the logic of political power. Otherwise, these are **non-ideological political fronts**.
- 7) The politics of alliance has led to the **polarisation of parties**. In the initial years, such polarization took the shape of three alliance structures. Political parties, in the period after 1989 seemed to be organizing themselves around three poles, the one led by the Congress, the second led by the BJP and the Third, which was termed as the Third Front/United Front. The third pole was later weakened. Comprising of the Janata Dal, the Telgu Desam, the Left Parties and many other regional and state parties, it had been successful in forming the government in 1989 but it could not sustain either its unity or its political strength for long time. It was very soon fragmented and its number in the Parliament was substantially reduced. Many of the parties representing the Third Front regrouped around the Congress or the BJP. The way alliances have been formed in last few Parliamentary elections, there has emerged a **bi-polarity**. The Congress and the BJP are the two parties around which varied political parties have been grouped in recent elections.
- 8) The contemporary **party system is a reflection of the complexity and the heterogeneity that prevails with the Indian society**. It is a representation of the diversity of political interests and opinions. It also reflects the wider reach of the participatory politics that has politicized diverse groups and articulated their political voice. This extensive nature of politicization has resulted in an accommodative nature of party politics. The power politics is no more dominated by the big and hegemonic parties. On the contrary, there is sufficient **importance of smaller parties**. As partners in multiparty governance, these small parties have developed their bargaining power. That is the reason that these parties not only share power but also get a voice in the political decision-making. As representatives of diverse groups including those who have been hitherto excluded from power politics and minorities, these smaller parties also help **create more democratic political space**.
- 9) Seen from this perspective, there is a greater **federalised context of party system**. This federalized context has been provided by the complex relation be-

tween the national and the regional party system and signifies assertion of the regional parties, on the other. In the past two decades, a number of regional parties with their focus on regional demands have emerged. These regional parties, besides occupying significant political space at the state level are also playing crucial role in the central politics. It is due to their active presence at the national level of politics, that the party system is really acquiring a federal character. As the national parties are dependent upon the regional parties for the formation of government, the latter have increased their bargaining power. With the result, there has been *mainstreaming of regional parties*. The distinction that existed earlier between the regional and the national party has also been blurred. The National parties have become regional in character and the regional parties are increasingly participatory in national politics and thereby acquiring national stature. The Congress and the BJP, the two national parties, for a long time now, have 'regional' rather than 'national' sphere of influence.

- 10) As the 'national' parties are acquiring regional character, *the regional parties are playing important role in setting the national agenda*. What is more important, the regional demands are being forcefully voiced in the national space of Indian politics. Earlier, this was not possible because the regional demands were placed in opposition to the national demands, and therefore, were considered as a threat to the national unity. With the entry of the regional parties at the national level of politics, this is no more the case. The regional and the federal issues are an important part of the political agenda at the national level of party politics. Region or the regional assertions are no more treated as dangerous for the nation.
- 11) This has important implications for the Indian federal structure. With the shift from the single-centred dominant party system to a multi-party system with lot of space for smaller parties located in the states, there is also a definite shift in the centre-state relations. The emerging party system has an *essential component of partnership between the national, regional and the state level parties*. There is, therefore, a basis for a more egalitarian relationship between the centre and the states. Party system itself is providing the institutional set up for the representation of the interest of the states. Many of the regional parties that are playing important role in party politics have been demanding a reorganisation of the centre-state relationship with greater autonomy for the states. With their ascendance, there has developed greater sensitivity towards the regional issues and there has emerged greater consensus on federalism. Even those national parties that have been traditionally favouring a strong centre have been forced to accept the logic of federalism. The dependence of the BJP on Akalis, DMK, TDP, Trinamul Congress, Samta Party and the National Conference, for instance, has resulted in its flexible attitude towards the issues related to centre-state relations.

### 19.6.2 Party System at the State Level

The federal context of the party system makes it imperative not only to emphasise the complexity underlying the relation between the national and the state level party system, but also to analyse the nature of party system at the state levels. Although some similarities can be perceived between the national and the state levels of party politics, yet it is important to note that each of the state may be having its own peculiarities.

At the level of the states, there has been, for quite some time, a keen competition for political power. Yet, there are variations in the way this competition operates. In many states, there is an alternation of power between at least two parties. The party

politics, in these states may be described as the two-party politics. In many other states, politics is not neatly divided between the two parties. There is a multiplicity of parties with the parties bunching themselves in two groups/poles. The party politics of these states may be defined in terms of bi-polarity. There are other states also having a multi-party system but which cannot be neatly classified either as two-party system or systems of bipolarity.

There is, therefore, a lot of fluidity in party politics at the state level. This fluidity operates not only in the nature of party competition but also in the way the political parties are placed in the states. Regional parties are important political actors at the level of the states but that does not mean that national parties do not operate at the level of states. There are different patterns of competition between the regional and the national parties. In some of the states, regional parties are very crucial political actors, but in other states, regional parties do not play that important role. There are some states where national parties do not have significant presence. In some states, party competition takes place mainly among the national parties while there are states where the power alternates between a national and a regional party. In some of the states, the national parties have acquired a regional character and compete with the national or the regional parties. Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, are the states with a strong tradition for regional parties, while UP, Himachal Pradesh, MP, Karnataka, Orissa and Rajasthan have been the states where the competition has been taking place between the national parties. Regional parties have also made strong inroads in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What do we mean by Bi-Polarity in terms of party politics?

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- 2) Why is the contemporary party politics more representative and more plural?

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- 3) Why have the regional parties gained more bargaining power?

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- 4) What is the impact of the contemporary party system on the centre-state relations?

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## 19.7 LET US SUM UP

The party system in India has undergone major transformation in the last five decades. As a legacy of the National Movement, the Party System in 1947 was characterised by an overwhelming dominance of the Congress party. As the central political institution of India, the Congress completely controlled the power politics for the first two decades after independence. The strength of the Congress lay in its organisational structure and in its ability to accommodate diverse political interests. This peculiarity of the Congress was linked with the homogeneous nature of the political elite whether belonging to the Congress or the opposition.

The party system changed substantially after 1967 with the change in the nature of the socio-economic profile of Indian polity. With the politicisation of the masses as well with the assertion of the new socio-economic groups, mainly the middle peasantry, the backward castes and the Dalits, the party system also changed. The inability of the Congress to accommodate conflicting interests and the erosion of its organisational structure led to its decline. By the end of the 1980s, the Congress had lost its centrality. A multi-party system replaced the Congress System.

The contemporary party system is defined by its multiplicity. A number of national and regional parties have filled in the vacuum created by the withdrawal of Congress from its central position. The regional parties have become more assertive as they have joined the national politics as the allies of the national parties. This also has strengthened the federal structure of India.

## 19.8 SOME USEFUL BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Morris-Janoes, 'Dominance and Dissent: Their Inter-Relation in the Indian Party System', in Morris-Jones, *Politics Mainly Indian*, Orient Longman, Madras, 1978.

Kothari Rajni, *Politics in India*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1970.

Kothari Rajni, 'The "Congress System in India"', in *Party System and Elections Studies*, Occasional Papers of the Centre for Developing Societies, no.1, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1967.

Manor James, 'Parties and the Party System', in Atul Kohli, *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1988.

Pai Sudha, 'The Indian Party System Under transformation: Lok Sabha Elections 1998'. *Asian Survey*, vol.XXXVIII No.9, Sept. 1998.

## **19.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

- 1) They shared common socio-economic background, i.e., educated, urban, upper middle class belonging to the middle and upper classes.
- 2) Existence of the congress as a dominant party along with a large number of parties.
- 3) They were not able to provide alternative to Congress. Rather they were more parties of pressure.
- 4) It drew support from different state of the society
- 5) It occupied the central position in the party system of India.

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

- 1) Political mobilisation of the masses.
- 2) New groups established their own parties.
- 3) The Janta Dal, the Samajwadi party and the BSP.

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 3**

- 1) Decline of the Congress and emergency of the competitive politics.
- 2) Decline of the consensual model of Indian politics.
- 3) United the non-congress parties, and further eroded the organisaton of Congress.

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 4**

- 1) Polarisation of the party alliances between two major parties — The BJP and the Congress.
- 2) It is more reflective of the heterogeneity in the society.
- 3) Due to the active presence in the national politics
- 4) The regional and federal issues have become an important part of the political agenda.

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## UNIT 20 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PARTIES

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### Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Meanings of a National and a Regional Party
- 20.3 National Parties
  - 20.3.1 The Congress (I)
  - 20.3.2 The Bharatiya Janata Party
  - 20.3.3 The Communist Parties
  - 20.3.4 The Bahujan Samaj Party
- 20.4 The Regional Parties
  - 20.4.1 The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)
  - 20.4.2 The Shiromani Akali Dal
  - 20.4.3 The National Conference
  - 20.4.4 The Telugu Desam Party
  - 20.4.5 The Assam Gana Parishad
  - 20.4.6 The Jharkhand Party
- 20.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.6 Some Useful Books
- 20.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 20.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit deals with the national and regional political parties in India. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Know the meanings of the regional and national political parties;
- Understand their ideologies, social bases and the organisational structures; and
- Their significance in the politics and society of our country.

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### 20.1 INTRODUCTION

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Political parties play crucial role in the functioning of Indian democracy. Democratic systems can not function in the absence of political parties. They work as link between state and people. Political parties contest elections and aim at capturing political power. They function as a link between people and government in a representative democracy. If a political party fails to form government, it sits in opposition. The role of the opposition party is to expose the weaknesses of the ruling party in order to strengthen the democratic processes.

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### 20.2 MEANINGS OF A NATIONAL AND A REGIONAL PARTY

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India has a multi-party system. There are both national and regional parties. The Election Commission recognises a party as a national party, if it fulfils one of the two conditions: (1) it secures 3.33% of votes or seats in elections to the legislative assemblies, and (2) it secures 4% of votes or seats in Lok Sabha election of four states. The national parties can also be called All India parties. Their programmes,

policies, ideologies and strategies have a national focus. They have their presence in most of the parts of the country in terms of maintaining organisational structures and contesting elections. A regional party is limited to a geographical region which may cover a state or a couple of states. They come into being to defend and preserve religio-cultural identity of a region. They may also come into being on the issue of neglect of a region which causes its economic backwardness. Regional parties are often seen promoting regionalism -giving primacy to narrow local interest. Some people see them as a threat to the idea of a strong nation but at the same time there are people who do not have such a negative approach towards them. They believe the strong regional parties ensure that the region they represent gets a fair deal by the central government. The year 1989 ushered in the phase of multi-party system at the centre. This has meant a definite role for regional parties in the national politics.

## 20.3 THE NATIONAL PARTIES

The period from the 1960s onwards has been significant in Indian party system because of the existence of a large number of national and regional parties. The earlier decades were known the phase of the one party dominance, i.e., the dominance of the Congress. In this unit you will study some national parties – the Congress (I), the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), and the Bahujan Samaj Party. You will also study the main regional parties – the National Conference, the DMK, the AIADMK, the Akali Dal, the Assam Gana Parishad, the Jharkhand Party and the Telugu Desam Party.

### 20.3.1 Congress (I)

The Congress (I) has emerged from the Indian National Congress which was born in 1885 in Bombay. The latter had succeeded in bringing together different classes of Indian society in the Indian National Movement. In the beginning Congress was an elite organisation and under the Gandhian leadership it became a mass organisation. The Non-Co-operation, Civil Disobedience, and the Quit India Movements were the important milestones in the history of Congress Party during the pre- Independence period. The provision of Provincial Autonomy under the government of India act 1935 provided an opportunity to the Congress party to acquire some training in the art of running the administration between 1937-1939.

After the Independence the Congress Party became the ruling party as the British transferred power to this party. Between 1947-1967 the Congress Party dominated the Indian political scene. The outcome of the fourth general election , which was held in 1967, dented the Congress dominance in a big way. The Congress party was voted out of power in eight states. Even at the centre it could secure only a slender majority in the Lok Sabha. In the year 1969 the Congress party split for the first time into a new Congress led by Indira Gandhi and an old Congress led by S. Nijalingappa. The new Congress led by Indira Gandhi swept the parliamentary elections of 1971 and assembly elections of 1972 in most of the states. The sixth general election in 1977 resulted in the defeat of the Congress Party and comfortable majority for the Janata Party. The defeat of the Congress party was seen as a rejection of Indira Gandhi's style of politics. After the defeat in 1977 election there was another split in the Congress Party. There emerged two Congresses - one led by Indira Gandhi and the other led by Swaran Singh. This is how the congress led by Indira Gandhi or the Congress (Indira) or the Congress (I) was born in 1978. Generally the Congress (I) and Congress are used synonymously. The Janata experiment at the centre failed within two years mainly due to personality clashes among the leaders and factional fights. In 1980 the Congress (I) returned to power restoring Congress dominance with two third majority in the Lok Sabha. After Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, Rajiv

Gandhi became the Prime Minister. In 1985 General Election he led the party to an unprecedented victory. The Congress Party together with its allies won four hundred and fifteen Lok Sabha seats. The ninth general election witnessed a tough fight between the National Front, a combination of opposition parties and the Congress (I) in alliance with the AIADMK and the National Conference. The National Front entered into seat adjustment with both the left parties and the Bharatiya Janata Party in their areas of influence. This ensured straight fights in most of the constituencies. The Congress (I) emerged as the single largest party getting 197 seats. No party could secure clear majority in the Lok Sabha. In 1991 Lok Sabha election there was a triangular battle among the Congress (I), the Janata Dal-National Front combine and the BJP. The Congress (I) won 232 seats. Rajiv Gandhi was killed during electoral campaign. P.V.Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister. In 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha elections the number of seats won by the Congress (I) came down to 140 and 141 respectively. In 1999 the number of seats won by the Congress (I) in the Lok Sabha came down to 114.

### The Ideology

The Congress Party has been committed to socialism, secularism and democracy. It subscribed to the idea of democratic socialism that is why economic policy of the Congress Party introduced state control of the commanding heights of the economy like basic industries, banking and insurance. The party stood for rural and urban land ceiling. It was against the monopolies and was for promotion of medium and small industries. At Avadi session in 1956 Congress proclaimed its commitment to socialistic pattern of society. In 1971 election the Congress gave the slogan of *Garibi Hatao* (remove poverty). Even the 20-point programme under emergency had a strong socialistic component. In the 1980s Congress shifted to the right. The 1984 manifesto did not mention socialism or the need of curbing monopolies. The 1989 election manifesto emphasised the need to empower people through Panchayati Raj. In 1999, the Congress election manifesto advocated the need of a capitalist economy integrated with world capitalist system. It also favoured abolition of public monopolies except in the fields of defence, and encouragement to the private sector. In 1999 the election manifesto of the party reaffirmed its commitment to secularism and strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions. It also promised doubling expenditure on poverty alleviation. In foreign policy the party has stood for the Non- Alignment.

### The Social Base

The party had started as an elite organisation of the educated urban middle class. In the 1920s it acquired a mass base. In spite of a mass base the leadership of the Congress was in the hands of upper caste big landowners, urban intelligentsia and businessmen. After independence the Congress Party won three general elections without much of a challenge. This was because of the support it enjoyed among rural and urban, educated and uneducated, upper caste and lower caste, rich and poor almost all over the country. It was the shift of the middle caste votes, especially from the later half of the 1960s onwards, away from Congress that led to its losing elections in many states. The main support base of Congress has been the upper caste more particularly the Brahmins, Scheduled Castes and the Muslims. In 1991 the Congress was virtually wiped out from Gangetic belt - UP and Bihar. The BSP and the Samajvadi Party in UP have snatched the Scheduled Caste and Muslim votes from the Congress. Similarly in Bihar the Muslims and lower castes have shifted to the RJD, while the upper caste votes in both these states have shifted to the BJP.

### Organisation

The constitution of the Congress party provides for an elaborate organisational network. The party president heads the organisational set up of the party. There is a working committee to assist the president. The All India Congress Committee, which is a

deliberative body, supplements their functions. The central office of the party is situated in New Delhi. The central office supervises the functions of the Pradesh Congress Committees, District Congress Committees and Block Congress Committees. The District Congress Committees maintain records, raise funds and recommend candidates.

### 20.3.2 The Bharatiya Janata Party

The Bharatiya Janta Party came into being in 1980 in the wake of split in the Janata Party on the issue of the dual membership, i., e., whether those members of the Janata Party who also were the members of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) should simultaneously retain their memberships of both these organisations or not. The controversy on this issue resulted in the exit of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh constituent or the RSS members from the Janata Party. After leaving the Janata Party, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh constituent launched the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP is aptly seen as reincarnation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. Syama Prasad Mukherjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951. The RSS founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925 has been an organisational backbone earlier for the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and then the Bharatiya Janata Party. In 1984 the first Lok Sabha election after its birth the BJP got only two seats but in 1989 it obtained 88 seats. In 1991 election this party secured 120 seats and emerged as the second largest party in the Parliament. In 1996 Lok Sabha election the BJP emerged as single largest party securing 162 seats. The President invited Atal Behari Vajpayee to form the government. The government lasted for only thirteen days as it could not face the Parliament because it did not have the majority. In 1998 Lok Sabha election the BJP made strategic alliance with regional parties and secured 180 seats. The BJP formed the government but the government did not last long. There was another election in 1999. The BJP contested this election as a partner of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

#### The Ideology

In the beginning the BJP attempted to project a different image from the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the first President of the BJP, had linked the emergence of the BJP with Jay Prakash Narayan's vision of a glorious India in the first convention of the party held at Bombay. The BJP is also seen as a reincarnation of the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the Hindu Nationalist Party founded by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951. The Jana Sangh aimed at rebuilding Bharat (India) as a modern democratic society according to religious precepts. Ideologically the BJP is committed to five principles—nationalism and national integration, democracy, positive secularism, Gandhian socialism and value-based politics. The BJP proclaimed to make these policies the core of its development strategy and to build national consensus around them. The party rejects both capitalism and socialism because they promote concentration of economic powers either in the hands of private individuals or state officials. In 1984 the party laid stress on the development of both agriculture and industry. It also emphasised reduction of taxes and introduction of employment guarantee programme and recognition of right to work as a fundamental right. In 1996 the BJP kept repeating its commitment to swadeshi economy but it actually appropriated the Congress (I)'s slogan of liberalisation. In 1993 while addressing the Confederation of Indian Industries, L.K.Advani said that if the BJP came to power the basic direction of the economic policy would remain unchanged. The BJP's policies as senior coalition partner in the NDA government gave clear indication of its acceptance of the policies of liberalisation. In 1999 at its Chennai meeting the BJP gave clear indication of leaving behind the agenda of aggressive Hinduism and swadeshi. The BJP has accepted the principle of justice to all by agreeing to reservation on caste lines. It promises 33% reservation to women in parliament and state assemblies.

## The Social Base

The BJP, like its predecessor the Bharatiya Jana Sangha, has enjoyed support base in the Hindi belt. It also has strong presence in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Since 1989 the party has been trying to penetrate into south India. BJP's traditional support base was among upper castes, small and medium traders and shopkeepers. Among minorities it gets votes largely from the Sikhs. It is mainly seen as a Hindu Party. From the 1990s, its base has broadened in rural and urban areas, and among the larger numbers of social groups.

## The Organisation

At the national level the BJP has a Party President and the National Council and party plenary or special session. At the state level the party has a Council and the State Executive followed by Regional Committees, District Committees and Block Committees. The BJP also has front organisations like Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha and Bharatiya Janata Mahila Morcha. They function according to the guidelines of the National Executive.

### 20.3.3 The Communist Parties

The main communist parties which exist in India are: the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Communist Party of India ( Marxist) or the CPI(M), and several Naxalite groups. The CPI was founded in Kanpur in 1925. At the time of Independence there emerged two political lines within the Communist Party of India about the nature of the Indian state, the freedom struggle and the question of how to bring revolution in India according to the tenets of Marxism and Leninism and the future course of action. One line advocated by then the secretary of the CPI, P.C. Joshi viewed the Independence as real and thus wished that the Communist Party should support Nehru. The other line held by B.T.Ranadive and Gautam Adhikari held that this was not real independence. Real independence could only be achieved under the leadership of the Communist Party of India. So they were of the view that the Party should fight against the Congress Party. In the early 1950s a change could be noticed in the Soviet Union's attitude towards Nehru and the Congress government. This change was also reflected in the attitude of the Communist Party of India. A draft party programme of the CPI called for building a broad anti-feudal and anti-imperialist front embracing nationalist bourgeoisie led by the working class. In 1962 with the Chinese attack on India the two lines within the party came to the surface again. A group within the CPI even refused to condemn the Chinese aggression in the name of proletarian unity while the other group supported the stand of the Government of India. Finally in 1964 the CPI split into Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist). After 1964 the CPI was seen closer to the Communist Party of Soviet Union and the CPI(M) to the Communist Party of China. A group within the CPI(M) approving the path of armed revolution broke out from the CPI(M) in 1968. They were called Naxalites because they started their experiment of capturing power through armed revolution from a place called Naxalbari in Bengal. The Naxalites led by Charu Mazumdar formed another Communist Party known as Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). Not all the Naxalite factions joined this party.

The CPI started participating in elections from the very first election held in 1952. The Communist Party of India continued getting around 9% of votes in general election. Even after the division in 1964 the two Communist Parties together continued to poll around the same percentage. The CPI(M) secured 33 and 35 seats respectively in 1989 and 1991 elections. The CPI won 12 seats each in both these elections. In 1996 elections the CPI(M) secured 33 seats while the CPI got only 13. In the last Lok Sabha election held in 1999, the CPI(M) secured 32 and the CPI got only five. So

far as the state assembly elections are concerned the left parties have done well in three states Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura. The CPI came to power in Kerala after 1957 election. The left front led by the CPI-M has been ruling West Bengal for almost twenty years.

### The Ideology

The Indian communist parties believe that only the establishment of a socialist society according to the revolutionary principles of Marxism and Leninism can enable the country to overcome the problems of backwardness, inequality, ignorance and poverty. This goal can be achieved if the working class captures political power. They believed that to achieve this goal India needed an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution. In the light of this understanding the CPI assessed the Nehru government and supported Indira Gandhi government even during emergency. The electoral debacle in 1977 election made the Communist Party of India reassess its role in the Indian politics and its attitude towards the Congress Party. In the post-1977 phase the anti-Congressism became an essential part of CPI's policy. In line with its goal of National democracy the CPI even joined the coalition government at the centre in 1996. The CPI(M) believes in complete destruction of the Indian state and establishment of People's Democracy. Establishment of a front led by the working class could achieve this objective. This front will also include agricultural labourers the poor peasants and middle peasants. At its Vijaywada Congress in 1982 the CPI(M) decided to work for an anti-authoritarian front including even the BJP. The party has taken note of the danger posed by Communalism. It has emphasised the need of an India as a self-reliant economy, free from the clutches of the World Bank and IMF. In the 17th Congress of the CPI(M) held at Hyderabad in March 2002, the party has called for building the People's Front as a secular democratic alternative to the NDA at the centre. The CPI(M) has decided to co-operate with the Congress Party without having an alliance with it. The Party has also held that minority fundamentalism is not the correct response to majority fundamentalism.

### The Social Base

Apart from their strongholds of Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura the Communist Parties have pockets of influence in some other states like Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, UP, Punjab, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The Communist parties get support largely from the working class, middle classes, agricultural labour and small peasants.

### The Organisation

All India Party Congress is the supreme party organ for the CPI and CPI(M). In the case of the Communist Party of India it is convened by the National Council and in case of the CPI(M) it is convened by the Central Committee. The Party Congress discusses and acts on the report of the National Council in case of the CPI and the Central Committee in case of the CPI(M). The Party Congress also decides the Party line. Between the Party Congresses the National Council and the Central Committee are the top most executive bodies respectively for CPI and CPI(M). To work between the two sessions of the Central Committee, it elects a Polit Bureau from its members. Similarly the National Council of the CPI elects a Central Executive to carry on with the work of the National Council between its two sessions. The National Council of the CPI and the Central Committee of the CPI(M) also elect a secretary each for the two communist parties.

#### 20.3.4 The Bahujan Samaj Party

Kanshi Ram founded the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on April 14, 1984. The party claims itself to be the party of the majority section or the Bahujan Samaj. The

assumption behind this claim is that that Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Castes and minorities constitute 85% of India's population. They constitute the majority or the Bahujan Samaj of India. The BSP argues that the minority high castes have been using the votes of the Bahujan Samaj to rule over them. Since, in democracy the majority should rule, the BSP strives to establish the regime of the Bahujan Samaj. Before actually taking the form of a party, the BSP existed in the form of social and cultural organisations like the BAMCEF (All India Backward and Minority Employees Federation) and DS4 (Dalit Soshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti). The BSP contested election in 1985 when its candidate Mayawati fought a by-election from Bijnore Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh. The BSP candidate came third after the Congress and Janata Dal candidates. But the BSP candidate's showing was quite encouraging. She polled 61,504 votes against Congress candidate's 1.28 lakh and Janata Dal candidate's 1.22 lakh. In the U P assembly election that year the BSP did not win any seat but it polled four percent of the popular votes. In 1989 UP assembly election the BSP won only 13 seats but it polled 9.33% of the popular votes. Gradually the BSP has become one of the important players in the political life of the country in general and the politics of states like UP, Haryana, MP, Punjab and Rajasthan in particular. In 1996 Lok Sabha election this party secured 20% votes in UP, 8% in MP and 3% in Rajasthan. This party won five Lok Sabha seats from UP and one from Haryana in 1998 Lok Sabha election. The BSP won 14 seats from UP in the 1999 Lok Sabha election. This party has been widening its base by giving tickets not only to the dalits but also to backward Muslims and even the upper castes. In the 2002 UP assembly election this tactic of the BSP has paid rich dividends. The party has secured 98 out of 403 assembly seats.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note:i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What has been the social base of the Congress (I)?

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- 2) In which way the name of Jaya Prakash Narayan is associated with the BJP?

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- 3) Narrate the background of the split in the CPI in 1964.

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## 20.4 REGIONAL PARTIES

The factors that give rise to regional parties may be cultural, economic and political. Which of these factors play more important role depends on the political circumstances. It may vary from case to case and time to time. India is a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. The cultural minorities may harbour the fear of being absorbed in majority culture and losing their distinct identity. A desire to maintain this cultural distinctness has been at the roots of the regional movements led by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the Akali Dal, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the AGP. The realisation that developmental needs of any region have been ignored for a long time may also give birth to regionalism and regional parties. Politically, the regional parties may be seen as a movement against centralisation and in tune with the spirit of a true federation.

### 20.4.1 The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)

The origin of the DMK is traced to the anti-Brahmin movement in the Madras presidency in the early part of the last century. The Congress was seen as an instrument in the hands of the Brahmins to perpetuate their domination in administration and other professions. There was a realisation among the non-Brahmins that for their social advancement the Brahmanical dominance had to be checked. The Non-Brahmin Manifesto of 1916, South India Peoples' Association of 1917 and the birth of the Justice Party in 1923-24 to contest election against the Congress Party were result of such consciousness. E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker founded the Self-Respect Movement in 1925. This movement touched the masses in a big way. The Justice Party and the Self-Respect Movement merged to create the Dravida Kazhagam under the leadership of Naicker. A section of the youth was alienated because of its opposition to the Congress, anti-north India feeling and the desire to celebrate the independence as a day of mourning. These alienated people broke away from Dravida Kazhagam and formed the DMK under the leadership of C.N. Annadurai in 1949. Since its beginning the focus of the DMK has been the interests of the lower castes and classes. It has also donned the mantle of the vanguard of the Tamil identity. The DMK blamed the Aryans, the north Indians for the backwardness of the Tamils. It has been against imposition of Hindi. The DMK entered the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1956. It won the assembly election making Hindi imposition as an election issue. In 1972, the DMK split over the issue of the expulsion from the party, of MGR, a Tamil film hero and the party treasurer. This paved the way for the formation of AIADMK in the memory of Annadurai. It followed the principle of electoral alliance with national party and won the 1977 assembly election. It won twelve seats in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. This did not mean political oblivion for the DMK. Power kept alternating between the two Tamil parties. The DMK is now being led by M. Karunanidhi.

Under the MGR's leadership the AIADMK followed the policies of assuaging the Tamil pride and populist measures of doling out largesse to the poor. After the death of MGR in 1988 the AIADMK also faced splits. In the 1989 assembly elections the DMK led by Karunanidhi became victorious. The unification of AIADMK splinter groups under the leadership of Jayalalithaa and an alliance with the Congress Party returned it to power in 1991 assembly election. In 1996 election the DMK won the election. Jayalalithaa faced many corruption charges but in spite of these charges, her party became victorious in 2001 election to the state assembly.

#### 20.4.2 The Shiromani Akali Dal

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) emerged in the 1920s as a movement of the Sikhs against the corrupt practices of the Mahants in the Gurudwaras. In 1925 the government passed the Sikh Gurudwara Act. This Act gave the right of management and control of Gurudwaras to Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). The Akali Dal tried to keep a firm grip over the SGPC arguing that in Sikh tradition the Church has not been separated from the state. The SAD projected itself as the sole spokesman of the Sikh interest devoted to their upliftment and fighting against injustices done to them first by the British and then by the Indians. The partition and independence in 1947 provided the Sikhs with an opportunity to organise on the territorial lines; there was also dream of a free Punjab with Sikh majority. The SAD leadership wanted a state where Sikh religion would be safer. In 1966 Master Tara Singh as a spokesman of the SAD demanded the Punjabi Suba. The central government created a Sikh majority state in November 1966 by separating Haryana from Punjab. Among the other issues raised by the SAD from time to time have been the demands for full regional autonomy to Punjab, protection and promotion of the interests of rich farmers, better deal in distribution of river waters and declaration of Amritsar as a holy city. The main focus of the Anandpur Saheb declaration of 1973 was more autonomy to Punjab. This declaration demanded that the central government should have power only over defence, foreign affairs, communication and currency; rest of the powers should be given to the states. A section of the Akali Dal even supported the idea of secession from the Indian Union. The Operation Blue Star and the anti-Sikh riots in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination wounded the Sikh psyche. The Rajiv-Longowal Pact could not assuage the hurt feelings of the Sikhs. The SAD split between Badal and Tohra factions both of them putting forward identical demands like the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and the release of the Jodhpur detenus. The disintegration of Akali Dal continued as United Akali Dal was born headed by Joginder Singh, the father of Bhindrawale. Similarly, the 1989 Lok Sabha election was fought by Akali Dal (Mann) headed by Simarjeet Singh Mann. This outfit openly espoused the cause of militancy and won ten out of thirteen seats in Punjab. In 1997, the Akali Dal in alliance with the BJP won the assembly elections. The Akali Dal led by Badal has lost 2002 assembly election and the Congress Party won the election. Captain Amrinder Singh of the Congress Party has become the new Chief Minister.

#### 20.4.3 The National Conference

The origin of the National Conference can be traced to the political ferment in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the 1920s and 1930s when a Hindu Maharaja ruled it. An organisation in the name of Anjuman-e-Islamia came up in 1921 with the objective of promoting educational and social welfare of the Muslims. In 1931 the Muslim Conference was born to articulate the interest of the majority community in the state – the Muslims. Under the influence of the nationalist leaders, Sheikh Abdullah opened the doors of Muslim Conference for non-Muslims also in 1939 and the name of the party also changed to All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. Later it was again renamed as the National Conference. Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah emerged as the most powerful leader of this party who resisted Pakistani tribal invasion and played a key role in Jammu Kashmir's accession to the Indian Union in 1948. The National Conference (NC) government came to power in the same year. Among the major successes of the National Conference was the abolition of big landed estates and inclusion in the constitution of India article 370 giving Jammu and Kashmir almost a quasi-autonomous position within the Indian polity. In 1965 the National Conference and the Congress Party merged. After his release from prison in 1975, as a part of the Indira-Sheikh accord, Abdullah revived the National Conference. The NC formally

denounced the two-nation theory, affirmed its faith in secularism, socialism and democracy. In the style of dynastic succession before his death in 1982, he got his son Farooq elected to the Presidentship of the National Conference. After the death of his father Farooq became Chief Minister. G. M. Shah the son-in-law of the Sheikh joined hands with the Congress Party in toppling Farooq's government. In 1984 parliamentary election and 1987 assembly election Farooq led National Conference and displayed its continued hold over the Kashmiri people. In 1990 President's rule was imposed in Kashmir and Farooq Abdullah's government was dismissed. The National Conference recaptured political power in the state in 1996 after winning the assembly elections.

#### 20.4.4 The Telugu Desam Party

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) was established in 1982 by the matinee idol N T Ramarao (NTR) in Andhra Pradesh. In 1983 assembly election it came to power in state assembly elections. The dramatic rise of the TDP was possible on account of the general disenchantment of the people with the Congress due to the imposition of unpopular Chief Ministers in the state by the central leadership, large-scale corruption and the charismatic leadership of N T Ramarao. The rise of the TDP is also seen as a political ascendance of the Kamma caste at the cost of the Reddies and Brahmins in Andhra politics. Taking a leaf from EV Ramaswamy Naicker in Tamil Nadu, NTR talked of restoration of the Telugu pride which was eroded under the Congress rule. N. T. Ramarao felt that there was the need of a regional party to understand the complexities of the problems faced by the state. He supported land reforms, favoured ceiling on urban income, low priced rice and other populist measures. The Telugu Desam has never talked of separation of Andhra from the Indian Union. In 1989 it became part of the National Front government at the centre. It lost assembly elections in the same year and it won only one of the twenty two Lok Sabha seats. In 1994 and 1999 assembly elections the party defeated the Congress party. In 1995 Chandrababu Naidu the son-in-law of NTR became the Chief Minister. The electoral alliance with the BJP benefited the TDP in winning the 1999 assembly election and improving its performance in terms of Lok Sabha seats. In the era of coalition politics the TDP has emerged as a major player even in national politics.

#### 20.4.5 The Assam Gana Parishad

The Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) is a product of a vigorous student movement led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and its political wing the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The students raised the issue of large-scale migration to Assam by Muslim Bengalis from East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh in 1971 and also by the Nepalese and Biharis. They developed the fear of being swamped in their own land by migrants. They were disenchanted with the central government and the Congress party for treating the migrants as vote banks. The AASU and the AAGSP became the symbol of the aspirations of the Assamese educated middle class. They found the possibility of upward mobility clogged due to Bengali dominance in the bureaucracy and the Marwari dominance in the business. In 1985 the central government signed an accord with AAGSP which stated that constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards as may be appropriate shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people. The Assam Gana Parishad was formed in 1985. It contested and won the assembly election in 1986 under the leadership of Prafulla Kumar Mohanta. The AGP and BJP alliance won the 1996 assembly election. In 2001 assembly elections the AGP won only 20 seats while the Congress returned to power winning 71 seats.

#### 20.4.6 The Jharkhand Party

The roots of the Jharkhand Party can be traced to the Adivasi Mahasabha founded in 1938 for the preservation of the ethnic identity and protection and promotion of the economic interest of the Adivasis. According to their understanding the reason of their social and economic backwardness was firstly the British rule. They also put the blame on the moneylenders and contractors for their exploitation. The government was also to blame for its apathy towards their genuine problems. The Adivasi Mahasabha was transformed into the Jharkhand party in 1950 with the objective of forming a separate state for the tribals. The Party emerged as the main opposition Party in Bihar legislative assembly in 1952, 1957 and 1962 elections. The merger of Jharkhand Party with the Congress Party in 1963 proved to be a big blow to the Jharkhand Movement. Several splinter groups and individuals attempted to reorganise the party to fight strongly to achieve the long cherished goal of separate state but they could not unite them. In the post -1963 phase there emerged many parties-Jharkhand Party of India, All India Jharkhand Party, Hul Jharkhand Party, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the Jharkhand Coordination Committee. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha has emerged the main party. In 1980 general election it won most of the seats it had contested. The JMM regrouped with the Jharkhand Party to renew the struggle for a separate state. In the year 2000 the state of Jharkhand including the tribal areas of Bihar, was created.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note:i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What are the main demands which the Shiromani Akali Dal has raised from time to time?

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- 2) What were the reasons for the birth of the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh?

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- 3) Which factors led to the foundation of the AGP?

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## 20.5 LET US SUM UP

You have read about four sets of national political parties and six regional parties in this unit. These national parties are the Congress (I), the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Communist Parties and the Bahujan Samaj Party. The regional parties discussed in this unit are DMK and the AIADMK, the SAD, the NC, the TDP, the AGP and the Jharkhand Party. Committed to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy, the Congress (I) has a social base largely consisting of the high castes, minorities and the Scheduled Castes. There has been a shift in its social base recently. A successor of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, ideologically, the BJP is committed to five principles – nationalism and national integration, democracy, positive secularism, Gandhian Socialism and value based politics. The communist parties believe in the establishment of a socialist society based on the revolutionary principles of Marxism and Leninism. This is possible if the working class captures political power. The social bases of the communist parties mainly consist of the working class, middle classes and the poor peasants and the agricultural labourers. The BSP believes in empowering the majority section of the society or the Bahujan Samaj consisting of the dalits, OBCs and the minorities.

The regional, cultural and developmental factors play more determining roles in the programmes and mobilisation strategies of the regional parties.

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## 20.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) The social base of the Congress (I) largely consisted of the rural and urban poor, the Scheduled Castes, the upper castes and the Muslims.
- 2) Atal Behari Vajpayee, the president of the BJP had linked the rise of the BJP with the Jay Prakash Narayan's vision of a glorious past of India at its first convention held in Bombay.
- 3) Two political lines within the CPI – one, which viewed Independence as real, and advocated by P C Joshi wished to support the Congress, another, which held the Independence was not real, advocated by B T Randive and Gautam Adhikari wanted to oppose the Congress; their different understandings of the Soviet Union and China provided background to the split in the CPI in 1964.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) These are full regional autonomy to Punjab, protection and promotion of the interests of rich farmers, better deal in distribution of river waters and declaration

of Amritsar as a holy city. Some of the main demands — especially more autonomy to Punjab was included in the Anandpur Saheb declaration of 1973. This declaration demanded that the central government should have power only over defence, foreign affairs, communication and currency; the rest of the powers should be given to the states.

- 3) The general resentment of the people with the Congress due to imposition of the unpopular chief ministers by the central leadership, large scale corruption and the charismatic leadership of N T Ramarao.
- 4) The large scale migration of Muslims — Bengalis, from east-Pakistan, Nepalis and Biharis, deconomic domination of the Marwaris, fear of being swamped by the outsiders, their disenchantment with the central government and the Congress.