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## UNIT 21 REGIONAL IMBALANCES

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### 21.1 INTRODUCTION

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Regional identity, sometimes running parallel but often in competition with, if not in opposition to the national identity has been a perennial feature of the Indian democratic politics. The nature of this regional identity needs to be analysed in terms of the social and cultural forces that have been at work. Though the term region is a contextual one, regionalism has acquired through successive phases, as would be discussed below, a distinct connotation in an academic analysis of the Indian politics. The term is now used to indicate an agglomeration of all those forces that are generally considered to be centrifugal, polarised to centralism and nationalism.,

The origin of regionalism in India can be historically traced to many of the factors like cultural heritage, geographical isolation, ethnic loyalties etc. For a political theorist, however, it is more to be viewed as the complex of political, economic and ethnic phenomena. It is an expression of heightened political consciousness, expanding participation and increasing competition for scarce resources. Economic grievances that may be real or perceived have often been articulated in the form of resistance to the economic policies of the centre promoting deprivation of one region at the cost of favouring another region. The grievances related to this process of 'internal colonialism' are often fused with the feeling of cultural anxiety, over language status and ethnic balance. It is this fusion that constitutes the core of an individual's identity and when politicised, takes a potentially virulent form providing regionalism its potency.

It follows that the general factors behind the growth of regionalism are the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of India. It is in the recognition of these diversities that federalism as an institutional mechanism has been treated as the cornerstone of India's democratic system that has enabled the regional social groups-ethnic, linguistic, tribal and cultural- to obtain a share of resources and satisfy their demands for recognition. Indeed the frequency with which identity based politics has asserted itself at the regional level has invested Indian federalism with a substance not found in many putatively federal political systems, and has provided an important decentralising tendency that has run like a thread through politics since independence.

However there have been, as we shall describe later, features of Indian federal system that have engendered regional conflict. A significant aspect of the issue of regionalism has been the dialectic of centralisation and decentralisation between the centre and the states, the appropriate pattern of devolution of power. Then the unevenness of economic development has negated the promise of balanced regional growth inherent in the agenda of nation-building and national integration. The introduction of the new economic policies in 1991 has further widened the gulf between the rich and the poor regions as the latter have failed to attract the private investment- both domestic and foreign. Besides these, other factors like the increasing electoral strength of the regional proprietary classes and also the federalisation of political party system in the coalition politics that has emerged in the aftermath of the Congress as the dominant party can be counted as the factors leading to the growth of regionalisation of Indian democratic politics.

## **21.2 CONCEPTUALISING REGION AND REGIONALISM: THE INDIAN CONTEXT**

How do we understand the concept of regionalism? Regionalism is a complex socio-political phenomenon and as such scholars, while analysing various dimensions of the phenomenon, have developed different conceptual frameworks in order to understand it.

Before engaging the discussion on regionalism as a concept at the theoretical level, it is pertinent to understand the term region. The concept of region, in essence, lies at the very core of any conceptualisation of regionalism in the sense that this concept provides the existential basis for the emergence of the phenomenon of regional loyalty that eventually gets articulated in the political form of regionalism. Though territoriality provides the basis for partial understanding of regionalism, the social scientists have been more concerned with the non-geographical factors, as, for them, region has always been more an analytical category than a geographical entity.

As for the social-cultural aspects of region it is considered as a nucleus of social aggregation, for differing purposes. In this view, a particular territory is set apart acquiring distinctiveness, over a period of time, when different variables operate in different degrees. These variables include the factors of geography, topography, religion, language, customs, social, economic and political stages of development, common historical tradition and experiences etc. Broadly speaking, the social scientists have identified four types of regions in India: historic region based on common sacred symbols and myths related to past; linguistic region-based on common language; cultural region-based on cultural homogeneity and lastly the structural region-distinguished on the basis of certain structural principles like caste ranking and community status.

It follows that even if a region is a territorial concept, its attributes are not exclusively territorial and that regionalism emerges primarily because of the differing perceptions of the regions by respective political leadership and the popular masses.

Now let us concretise the concept of regionalism in the case of India. In a general theoretical sense, regionalism has been analysed by broadly classifying it into the following manner: as a manifestation of centre-state relations; as an outcome of internal colonialism; as a

subsidiary process of political integration; in terms of the conflicts involving the political elite; as a product of the imperatives of the electoral politics; in contrast with the sub-regionalism; and finally in the context of increasing competitiveness among the regions in a liberalising economy.

The above brings us to some of the representative views on regionalism by the noted theorists of Indian variants of regionalism.

Rasheeduddin Khan argues that regionalism is most fundamental to the concept of the Indian federalism. While terming India as a multi-regional federation, Khan argues that the concepts of nationality and ethnicity are not adequate to explain its socio-cultural diversities. The regions in India have distinct social, cultural, historical, linguistic, economic and political connotations and the term regional identity is to be considered as a comprehensive expression of the plurality of Indian society.

However, as A K Baruah argues, the factors like ethnicity and nationality cannot be discounted. The regional movements in Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Gorkha Land have seen a distinct role of ethnicity. Then most of the ethnic groups in the North-Eastern states of India and in Kashmir [the Kashmir Muslims] would like to perceive themselves as distinct nationalities that invariably brings them in a sort of confrontation with the Indian state as the assertion of their identity is perceived as inimical to the idea of the Indian nation.

D.C. Burman views regionalism in India both as a doctrine that implies decentralisation of administration on a regional basis within a nation, a social-cultural counter movement against the imposition of a monolithic national unity, a political counter-movement aiming to achieve greater autonomy of sub-cultural region. In this context it would be pertinent to note that regionalism is a complex phenomenon and to reduce it to either as a movement for autonomy vis-a-vis centre or as a reaction against federal administrative imbalances is tantamount to oversimplification.

Paul R Brass argues that territoriality provides us only a partial understanding of the phenomenon of regionalism and hence it is imperative to explore other dimensions of the phenomenon. While taking a legal approach for the analysis of regionalism he seeks to demarcate the issues falling under the regional and national jurisdiction. In this context one can argue that there cannot be a total segregation of the issues. That the assumption of mutually exclusive national and regional domain can be best illustrated by the fact that a regional problem like the sharing of river waters of Kaveri [between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu] and Sutlej-Yamuna link canal [between Punjab and Haryana] receives national concern. Moreover such an approach does not enable us to analyse the nature of the forces responsible for the regional conflicts. Brass states that the societal forces that valorise India towards pluralism, regionalism and decentralisation are inherently stronger than those favouring homogeneity, nationalisation and centralisation. It follows that the process of consolidating power in India is inherently tenuous and that power begins to disintegrate immediately at the maximal point of concentration. At that point, Brass contends, regional political forces and decentralising tendencies inevitably reassert themselves unless the national leadership chooses to bring about a more definitive consolidation by taking recourse to the unitary provisions in the Indian Constitution. It is obvious that Brass seems to indicate

a kind of vicious circle in the sense that only a strong central authority can keep the centrifugal forces under control, but at the same time he argues that regional forces become active as a reaction against excessive centralisation.

It follows from the above that an attempt to view regionalism merely in terms of federalism or as a legal concept is theoretically inadequate to comprehend the phenomenon in its entirety. Another perspective on the nature of regionalism emerges from the writings of Duncan B Forrester who has drawn a distinction between regionalism and sub regionalism primarily in terms of the territorial and demographic size of the two. Such an argument is hardly to be accepted, as the size of a region need not be the criterion for regionalism and regional movements. Moreover the demands and grievances of regional and sub-regional entities are not always distinguishable, even if it is assumed that the former covers a broader area than the latter. Conceptualising sub-regionalism in the concrete context of **Telangana**, Forrester argues that historical and economic factors produce sub-regional identities and encourage the growth of compelling political sub-cultures that not only do not correspond, but also are in conflict with the larger unities of language, culture and caste represented by the linguistic state.

A study of regionalism in India would do well to take into account the formulations of Iqbal Narain. He has given the broadest possible definition of regionalism that covers geographical, historical-cultural, economic, political-administrative and psychic factors. However, his definition is too broad to capture the essence of regionalism. It may mean almost anything to anybody. As a matter of fact, the multiplicity of factors that Iqbal Narain seeks to associate with the phenomenon of regionalism may even apply to nationalism or any other societal phenomenon.

It would be pertinent here to refer to the nativist movement that signifies the conflict between the migrants and the sons of the soil. Myron Wiener holds nativism as a form of ethnic identity that seeks to exclude those who are not members of the local or indigenous ethnic group from residing and working in a territory because they are not natives. Wiener points towards the development of either a regional or national identity as a precondition to the development of nativism. He has identified five factors causing the nativist movements in India. These are: presence of migrants from outside the cultural region; cultural differences between the migrants and the local community; immobility of the local population in comparison to other groups in the population; a high level of unemployment among the indigenous middle class and a substantial portion of middle class jobs held by culturally alien migrants and a rapid growth of educational opportunities for the lower middle classes.

How can we compare the nativist and regional movements? The similarity between nativist and regional movements lies in the fact that both have a territorial basis. The dissimilarity lies in the following manner: first, unlike the nativist movement, the regional movement does not necessarily presuppose the presence of migrants from outside the region in question or exploitation of natives by the migrants. Hence the nativist movement is not always characterised by the ethnic selectivity.

As for the view of Lewis P Fickett that the political parties play the role of catalysts of regional consciousness, one may point out that political parties are not always indispensable to the politics of regionalism. The movements of various kinds are often found to be capable

of articulating the regional aspirations on behalf of the people of any region while pursuing the non-political party movements i.e. All Assam Students Union [AASU], Telangana movement, Uttarakhand movement, Chhattisgarh movement etc. In a related perspective it has been argued that all regional demands originate in the form of political elite conflicts.

Michael Hechter has contributed to the study of regionalism by articulating the internal colonial model to analyse the nature of regionalism in India. He states that regionalism is the outcome of real or perceived sense of exploitation by the core communities of the peripheral communities.

To sum up it may be argued that the regionalism in India has been an organised effort on the part of the regional leadership not necessarily related to a political party in articulating the regional grievances and aspirations within the formal and informal democratic forums and using its hegemony for the popular mobilisation. It is on the basis of the assertion of the regional identity by the community that the regional elite negotiates with the centre for better deal.

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### **21.3 REGIONALISM IN COLONIAL INDIA: HISTORICAL GENESIS**

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Regionalism in India can be historically linked to the growth of Indian nationalism and the nationalist movement. Pertinently both nationalism and regionalism have had their origin in the national movement politics. Thus the pan-Indian national identity did not substitute the sub-national regional identities but grew along with them. Regional identities in most cases post-dated the emergence of the national identity and, as we would discuss, have been crucially linked to the problems emanating from the nation-state's attempt to promote national integration and homogeneity. The nationalist leadership expressed its discontent against the British colonial domination and highlighted the unity of Indian people in their struggle against it. This is how the two major concepts of Indian nationalism- Swaraj and Swadeshi-evolved in the course of Congress led anti-colonial movement.

With the advent of modernity and nationalism, a process of bourgeois class formation took place transcending the barriers of caste, religion and tribe. Through the alchemy of this intermingling process, however limited under the colonial constraints, there appeared simultaneously two streams of national consciousness- one, pan- Indian and the other, regional. The former was professedly based on observed pan-Indian homogeneity of culture such as a common all- Indian tradition and history, economic life and psychological makeup and the accepted unifying role of Sanskrit, Persian, English and Hindustani by turn. The regional consciousness was built upon and promoted by the national movement professedly based on the relevant region's distinctive homogeneity and demands for substantial or exclusive control over its resources and market facilities. It was helped by the fact that the British colonialism drew state boundaries on the basis of administrative convenience and they did not coincide with the distribution of the major linguistic groups. Congress' regional policy regarding the linguistic divisions of the states wherever possible was originally articulated in the early 1931 in the form of its declaration of rights and subsequently reiterated in its 1945-46 manifesto.

It follows that the Indian nationalism comprised of both pan- Indian as well as the regional feeling. Today it is widely recognised that India is a multi-national state. During the anti-colonial struggle Indian nationalism was predominant and sub-national regionalism was subdued. However, even then, leadership had been making limited use of nationalism to mobilise the masses i.e. the revival of Ganpati festival and the cult of Shivaji by Tilak in Maharashtra. Overall, however, during the colonial period regional forces were largely dormant as they were not well organised and moreover at that time the overarching goal of the Congress led anti-colonial movement was to attain freedom from the British domination. The exceptions were the Dravida and the Akali movements.

## 21.4 THE BASIS OF REGIONALISM: THE 1950s - 1960s

In the immediate aftermath of decolonisation regional problems emerged primarily in the form of the regional pressures and the movements whose area of operation coincided with the federal territorial division of the union into different states. In this regard we can also refer to the centre-state and inter-state conflicts, that is, those regional tensions or movements that were led or directed by the state governments.

Federalism, as a formal institution, was enshrined in the Indian Constitution by the Constituent Assembly as recognition of the regional heterogeneity of India. As for its adherence to the concept of 'co-operative federalism' regarding the allocation of Constitutional power between the central governments and the states making them interdependent, it was due to an urgent need felt among the members of the Constituent Assembly to assuage communal sectarianism, to deal effectively with acute food crisis, to integrate the princely states in India, and to undertake the task of initiating and implementing the policies for industrial and agricultural development. It would, however, be pertinent to note that there were some members though in minority who did advocate greater decentralisation in the Indian federal system. Of those belonging to congress among them were clearly inspired by Gandhian notion of panchayat or village based-federation as envisaged in his 1946 memorandum to the Constitution Committee of the Congress.

However, the powerful all India presence of Congress as the dominant party and the absence of strong regional or provincially-based political parties especially after the departure of Muslim League can be termed as the most plausible explanation as to why the Constituent Assembly finally adopted a Constitution which in the famous words of Ambedkar could be 'both unitary as well as federal according to the requirements of time and circumstances'.

Needless to add, the balance of power in India's federal system leaned towards the centre in three important aspects: limited fiscal autonomy of the states, the ultimate Constitutional paramountcy of the centre, and the balance of administrative capacities. The presence of Congress as the dominant party both at the centre and the state and the overarching agenda of nation-building also promoted the centralised tendencies in the union putting a question mark over the capacity of the federal polity to provide fair deal to all the regions. Though we must concede that unlike the recent decades, the Congress party had a much decentralised and democratic federal organisation in the 1950's and 1960's.

The first significant political expression of regionalism was in the form of the demands for the reorganisation of the states in the early 1950's on linguistic basis so that the major

linguistic groups could be consolidated into states of their own. Political parties/ groups representing these groups called for the redrawing of the state boundaries. The then federal government resisted these movements as the Congress party leaders at the national level argued that these 'fissiparous' movements might lead to the Balkanisation of the union. The attempt on the part of the nationalist leadership to impose Hindi as the national language also evoked anti-Hindi Dravida movement in the South India.

This linguistic regionalism primarily emerged as a result of the alleged unequal distribution of scarce resources among the different social-cultural sub-regions. In such movements economic factor played a crucial role as in a resource scarce state like India, the demand for distributive justice gained ground in face of the ever-rising expectation with the widening of the democratic base. However due to an overemphasis on homogeneity and unity and integrity in the model of cooperative federalism, as discussed above, the demands based on regionalism and autonomy of the states were not considered as legitimate. In the aftermath of partition all centrifugal forces were often dubbed as secessionist in nature. Congress had favoured the linguistic reorganisation of the states in the pre-independence period, as was evidenced in the form of the Nagpur session in 1920, was now not supportive of the idea in the post-partition India due to its fear of the Balkanisation of India. It was no surprise then that the dominant opinion in the Constituent Assembly was in favour of the strong centre but there were Gandhians who supported the idea of the greater decentralisation of power drawing inspiration from the Gandhi's notion of Hind Swaraj. In this context one can mention the names of Naziruddin Ahmed, HN Kunzru, H V Kamath, Shibban Lal Saksena, R K Choudhari, VS Sarwate, Kulandhar Chaliha and B Das- many of them non-Gandhians whose position can be described as regionalist in nature.

This explains as to why both the linguistic provinces commissions headed by SK Dar and subsequently the JVP committee [comprising of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and P Sitaramayya], constituted in June and December 1948 respectively to look into the demand for the reorganisation of the states rejected the demand for linguistic reorganisation of the states on the basis that it would pose a danger for the national unity. They thought that the bigger states would counterbalance the fissiparous tendencies of linguistic, ethnic and cultural regionalism that these leaders apprehended could degenerate into regional chauvinism, detrimental to national integration. Moreover it was thought that under the planned economy it would be easier to formulate and implement the development policies. That explains as to why the Congress leaders like JL Nehru and GB Pant criticised KM Panikkar for suggesting a division of Uttar Pradesh.

However, in the case of the linguistic regional movements it must be conceded that the Congress leadership at the centre soon realised that the creation of linguistic states was less dangerous than the outright rejection of the demand. Thus, on the basis of the recommendation of the states reorganisation commission comprising of Fazal Ali, HN Kunzru and KM Panikkar, the linguistic division took place vide states reorganisation Act, 1956.

Significantly other considerations besides linguistic homogeneity also played role in the reorganisation of the states. For instance, in the case of Punjab and Maharashtra the newly emergent middle caste rich farmers supported the demand whereas in the case of the Northeast i.e. Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh ethnic and

economic factors played a major role. Then religion was a major factor in the case of creation of Punjab and Haryana. Division within the Hindi speaking north Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan took place along the issues of history, politics and problems of integrating the former princely states. Some other cultural-linguistic regions got separate statehood as a result of the elevation from centrally administered units to full-fledged states i.e. Goa and Himachal Pradesh.

Brass has argued that in the above form of states' reorganisation the centre observed certain unwritten rules. First, the demand was not to be secessionist or communal in nature. Second, such a demand was to be popular at the grassroots level without inviting the hostility of a sizable section of the population from that region itself.

As it has turned out besides the linguistic reorganisation of the states and the three-language formula- adopted vide official language Act, 1963 on the basis of the recommendation of the official language commission headed by BG Kher submitted in 1957- has also proven to be a stabilising factor. Under the formula the states have in their educational institutions English, the regional mother tongue and a third language not of that region. It has proven to be a non-coercive way of promoting I-Iindi in a union in which according to the 1961 census of the Central Institute of Indian languages 197 languages [not dialects] were spoken. As per 1971 census there were 22 languages spoken by more than 1.5 million people. Over the years the regional languages have grown in their respective states, without undermining the influence of English that remains the real link language of politics and trade and commerce in the union.

On the ethnic and cultural basis, James Manor identifies four distinct types of regional identities having a territorial basis: (a) the regional identities based on commonality of religion i.e. the Muslims in the Kashmir valley in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the Sikhs in the case of Punjab (b) the identities primarily based on language like in the case of the Telugus of Andhra Pradesh, the Tamils of Tamil Nadu (c) the identities based on the tribal origin like in the case of the Adivasis who have undergone the process of acculturation in the states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh (d) the tribal identities among the groups residing in the Himalayan and the North-Eastern states who are racially distinct from the peoples of the plains i.e. Nagas, Bodos and the Meities.

All these above forms of ethnicity have given rise to the regional or sub-regional movements either demanding autonomy in the form of separate statehood or secession in different parts of India at different periods in the last fifty-six years of independence.

It follows that an all-encompassing secular national identity claiming precedence over a narrower, ascriptive and region specific linguistic and cultural-ethnic identities have been replaced by the increasing assertion of the latter in the form of either separate statehood or autonomy. Significantly despite sharing a number of common features such as history, language, culture, and territorial ancestry all these region specific ethnic, cultural and linguistic identities are not necessarily potential national identities. Moreover they also differ in terms of the nature of demands they make on the political process in the sense that larger ones might be inclined to seek statehood, whereas smaller ones might seek autonomy and adequate representation within an existing state. Making a further distinction between latent and conscious identities, Amit Prakash in his significant study of Jharkhand movement

argues that any ethnic, cultural and linguistic regional group that is not self-conscious of its identity remains primarily a sociological descriptive category and cannot be termed as a politically relevant identity group.

Thus regionalism is a natural phenomenon in a federal polity like India where diversities are territorially grouped, largely on political, ethnic, cultural and linguistic basis. The federal system of polity has indeed made regionalism feasible and vice-versa. In the words of Rasheedudin Khan: 'the cultural distinctness of regions in India tends to counteract the tendency of centralization and thus constitutes a centrifugal force in the federal political system. Expressing the diversities of the various units in a grouped fashion, it prevents concentration of power in the central government. Regionalism, therefore, has been considered to be basic to the very concept of federalism.'

## **21.5 RECENT GROWTH OF REGIONALISM: FACTOR OF ECONOMIC IMBALANCE**

As has been evident from the above discussion it was the language, ethnicity, culture and religion that became the basis of the formation of regional identity in the first years of independence. These earlier forms of regionalism found expression in the demands for Samyukta Maharashtra, Vishal Andhra or Maha Gujarat in the fifties. As discussed above, the reorganisation of the states vide the 1956 States Reorganisation Act was meant to concede such demands.

From a class perspective, the regionalisation of Indian polity in the sixties and seventies can be attributed to the rise of the rich landed peasantry in league with the regional parties in the aftermath of the green revolution. The widening of the electoral democracy in terms of increased participation of the mostly rural peripheral social groups led by the numerically strong middle caste dominant peasantry further consolidated the power basis of this class. Both the agrarian bourgeoisie as well as the urban petty bourgeoisie were obviously to benefit from the federal devolution of powers in the financial and administrative matters.

Besides accentuating the centre-state conflicts, the emergence of this new class force also led to the growth in the inter-regional tensions, as the peripheral sub-regions felt neglected both economically as well as politically. This explains partially the construction of regional identity increasingly either on the basis of the perception of economic discrimination or the urge for speedier economic development like in the case of Kutch, Saurashtra, Marathwada, Vidarbha, Telangana and Jharkhand. The mobilisation of the different sub-national identity groups drawing on their linguistic, cultural and tribal commonality was correlated with the grievance against lack of underdevelopment. Moreover, the significance of the nationalist developmental agenda in the first years of Indian independence which had a statist slant also explains as to why these regional groups modified their original ethnocentric basis of articulation of demands to include the need for special development measures i.e. Jharkhand.

Thus development boards had to be constituted for Kutch, Saurashtra, Marathwada and Vidarbha to address the grievances of these regions that saw their regions being treated as

internal colonies in their own states in order to benefit the politically more dominant regions in the fifties and sixties itself.

However, the dominant linguistic elite that was able then to ~~ - ~~the~~ smaller, less developed sub-regions into larger linguistic regions was very soon not able to do the same in the name of linguistic or cultural cohesion as a result of the lopsided economic development of the sub-regions. The feeling of being treated as peripheries with the dominant sub-regions forming the core ones was accentuated by the fact that most of these sub-regions were rich in terms of minerals and natural resources i.e. Jharkhand. Moreover the fact that some of these big states came to be known for non-performance in the economic field like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh led the distinct sub-regions of these states to think in terms of smaller states being capable of speedier economic growth on lines of Kerala, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana. The regional movements in the recent times for the separate statehood for Gorkhaland, Uttarakhand, and Chhattisgarh can be referred in this context. Then we can also refer to the assertion of the different dialect communities in the bigger states of the Hindi heartland of India i.e. Bundelkhand, Purvanchal and Harit Pradesh in Uttar Pradesh and Mithilanchal in Bihar.

It follows that the very process of the above formation of the political identity in these regions with their unique ethnic-cultural connotations can be correlated with the process of the implementation of the public policies that were supposedly aimed at bringing about regional balance. The failure of the 'rationalist-integrationist bureaucratic' model of administration, adopted in Nehruvian India, in responding adequately to the political demands from the newly articulated political identities premised on cultural factors and the perpetration of uneven and unequal development accorded legitimacy to the 'development-deficit' definition of the ethnic autonomist movements like in Jharkhand. Consequently, the historically marginal regional groups have been mobilised to articulate themselves as self-conscious ethnic identities in order to augment their political resources and influence the policy process in their own favour. The recent granting of the district council or the autonomous region status to some of these sub-regions like in Gorkhaland, Bodoland, Ladakh has hardly satisfied the developmental aspirations of the local people.

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## **21.6 POLITICAL ECONOMY OF REGIONALISM: INDIA IN TRANSITION**

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Among the political factors responsible for the upsurge in the growth of regionalism in the recent decades has been the factor of the decline of the Indian National Congress as the dominant party with its proven electoral ability to create a social coalition of different communities and regions. The steady organisational and ideological decline of the Congress as well as its increasing dependence on the politics of populism and radical rhetoric devoid of the programmatic efforts in the sixties and the seventies saw the loss of its capacity in accommodating all sorts of interests. The over centralisation of the political power at the centre and attempt to undermine the regional non-Congress parties of significance led to the strengthening of the forces of regionalism in the states like Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab.

Moreover the Green Revolution in the late sixties saw the emergence of the regional rural-elite led regional parties whose influence on the state level politics became much visible after the 1977 elections. The coalitions have since become the endemic feature of the Indian electoral politics both at the federal as well as at the state level leading to the federalisation of Indian party politics. This can be attributed to the gradual decline of Congress as the natural party of governance and inability of any other national party to occupy the vacant space. The bifurcation of the assembly and the parliamentary elections since early seventies has also enabled the regional elite to emerge politically powerful.

For the first four decades of Indian independence, the state governments relied overwhelmingly upon the centre to set the overall strategy for development and to determine the flow of resources by sector and by location. The centre justified the concentration of political and economic power on the ground that it would promote equity among regions and ensure that the least developed regions would not be left behind. Moreover it was also argued that the central allocation of resources would maintain a balance of power among the regions besides providing legitimacy to the federal government.

However from a situation in which year- to- year increases in the central financial grants exceeded inflation, the states in the aftermath of the introduction of new economic policy have had to cope with the central funding level that have not even kept pace with the rate of inflation. Since most of the allocation of the funds are tied to specific programmes over which the receiving states have virtually no control and which in any case have led to the rise of demands that far outstrip the funds made available, the notion of grants has become more illusory than real.

Most importantly for our purpose since richer states are more equipped than the poorer ones to regain a part of lost revenue by adapting to other aspects of the federal government's liberalisation policies, this divides the regional political elite from different states. The resultant competitiveness and the jealousies between the political elite of different states partly explain those cases where political resistance to the economic reform measures has been attenuated, or overcome completely by the centre.

While effecting a series of incremental fiscal reforms the emphasis since 1991 has been on increasing Foreign Direct Investment [FDI] as well as Portfolio Equity Investment [PEI] by resorting to the neo-liberal policies of privatisation, deregulation and decontrol. In the process as the different states vie against each other for FDI and PEI the original model of co-operative federalism based on the idea of the inter- governmental cooperation has increasingly given way to inter-jurisdictional competition. While the states or more correctly some sub-regions within these states with developed infrastructures and better governance have become magnets for all forms of investment the underdeveloped regions have lost out as not only they do not attract any investment but also suffer due to dwindling central grants. In this changed fiscal environment the existing inter-governmental institutions like Planning Commission, National Development Council have not been able to adapt to the emerging inter-jurisdictional competition among the states. What is needed is to constitute inter-jurisdictional institutions to attract foreign investment into a number of regions including the poorer ones by promoting certain sectors like telecommunications, oil production and consumer non-durable. Moreover the states should be given more financial power to collect the corporate, land usage and sales taxes to enable them to grow on their own to achieve 'the optimal level' of centralisation and decentralisation.

## **21.7 SUMMARY**

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In the aftermath of independence regionalism, which is the form of sub-nationalism initially, manifested itself in the movements for the reorganisation of the states on the linguistic basis. Later it manifested itself in the form of anti-Hindi movement. Besides as uneven development occurred in the country, that was hardly surprising given the distorted nature of the capitalist development, breaks began to appear within the coalition of the dominant proprietary classes. The clash between the national and regional proprietary classes in the aftermath of the Green Revolution began to take concrete shape in the form of the latter demanding for more economic and political autonomy. The assertion of cultural, political and economic aspirations of the different nationalities emerged as a reaction to the over-centralisation of the polity. The assertion of cultural, political, economic aspirations of the different nationalities received an impetus at the political level with the growing regionalisation and ruralisation of the ever-widening Indian democracy.

The new economic reforms have seen the federal government withdrawing from its role of regulation of the political economy of development. Under the structural adjustment programme at the behest of the WTO regime, the centre has been unable to give liberal grants to the different regions especially the poorer ones. Thus the regions have been competing against each other for domestic and foreign direct investment. The regions with the developed infrastructure have been able to attract far greater investment than the regions with poor infrastructure. This has further widened the gap between the rich and the poor regions raising the prospect of the regional tensions.

To conclude, regionalism is not secessionist but may become so if it is not handled properly. Thus regional imbalance has to be addressed properly and cannot be left to the market forces that are exclusionary in nature and therefore detrimental to the interest of the peripheral regions.

On a positive note the existence of so many different forms of identities in India has been a positive factor in the sense that it has prevented regional conflicts from being concentrated along one particular fault line, as has been the case with the federal democracies of Canada and Australia.

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## **21.8 EXERCISES**

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- 1) What do you understand by the concepts of region and regionalism?
- 2) Analyse the differing theoretical perspectives on the nature of regionalism in India?
- 3) Why was the ruling Congress apprehensive about the regional demands for the reorganisation of states on the cultural and linguistic basis?
- 4) Identify the basis of the formation of the regional identities in the first years of Indian independence.
- 5) Analyse regionalisation of Indian politics and its implication for new economic policies.

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## **UNIT 22 MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Structure**

- 22.1 Introduction
  - 22.2 Causes of Internal Migration
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### **22.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Article 19 of the Constitution of India guarantees all its citizens, the right to reside and settle anywhere in India. This freedom of movement is considered ideal for the development of any free and liberal economy. A change in the place of residence at least once is quite common in a wide range of countries. Census data show that in five years from 1976 to 1981, 7 per cent of India's population moved within the country.

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### **22.2 CAUSES OF INTERNAL MIGRATION**

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Migration is a complex phenomenon with a multiplicity of causes, which can be segregated into 'push' and 'pull' factors.

#### **22.2.1 Earnings and Employment Opportunities**

It is well established that the greater the gap in earnings between origin and destination, the more likely are working age adults to move. Many migrants to urban areas initially enter the informal sector. For some this is a transitory phase prior to finding more formal employment. However, statistical studies of these patterns are plagued by the lack of precision in defining the informal sector and the evidence does not make it clear whether the formal or informal sector offers higher pay to observationally equivalent workers.

Migrants to town initially earn less than observationally equivalent natives, but the evidence indicates that this gap disappears within a few years and may even reverse. Findings on whether differences in unemployment rates between locations promote migration are mixed. Limited evidence suggests that migrants often identify their urban job before migrating, but other migrants do appear to search for work after moving, either while in temporary employment or while openly unemployed. However, at least one study maintains that off-farm migration in developing countries will cease only when the earnings gap is entirely closed. It has also been argued that unemployed workers may have at least as high a chance of re-employment in their home setting where information and contacts are more readily available.

The location of newly created employment opportunities depends in part upon the development strategy adopted. The hypothesis that import substitution leads to employment concentration in large cities, lacks systematic testing though a case study of India suggests that liberalisation has been a factor in promoting the emergence of new towns.

It has been hypothesised that large towns offer a greater diversity of employment and hence a better chance of reemployment in the event of a lay off. This might render large towns more attractive to migrating workers.

### **22.2.2 Family and Network**

Possessing a network of family and friends in town may encourage migration into town. Conversely, a well-developed network at home may discourage departure. Migration at the time of marriage, to join or accompany a spouse, does seem common. A few studies also suggest that parents may have the welfare of their offspring in mind when making their own migration decision. Urban migrants often initially settle in ethnically similar neighbourhoods, which suggest that networks lower the effective cost of moving in some manner.

### **22.2.3 Distance**

Migration over short distances is much more common than migration to remote locations. Whether this reflects the greater cost of moving further, lack of information about more remote alternatives, or less alienation in a nearby setting remains undetermined.

### **22.2.4 Wealth and Capital Markets**

Incomplete or imperfect local capital markets may encourage out-migration either directly through restrictions on the ability of families to borrow or indirectly through effects on employment creation.

The opportunity cost of financing costly migrations is probably lower for wealthier families. This has two important implications: first, other things being equal, migration may be more common from richer families and this in turn may exacerbate the inequality in incomes; second, as a region becomes wealthier out-migration may actually increase as the financial constraint is reduced.

Empirical evidence on these two implications is mixed and controversial. Only a few cross-family studies examine the wealth effect and the results are too mixed to reach any conclusion. Some historical studies do show rising emigration as GDP increases but this is

probably largely a reflection of the demographic transition and altered patterns of employment rather than an alleviation of a financing constraint.

#### **22.2.5 Family Strategies to Contain Risks**

One way that families may insure themselves is by having members migrate to locations where times of economic adversity do not normally coincide with those at home. Remittances between the home base and migrant then enable consumption smoothing.

There is some evidence consistent with the remittance portion of this scenario. However no direct test of whether migration is greater from communities with higher economic risk seems to exist.

#### **22.2.6 Availability and Quality of Amenities**

Improved amenities in a location may attract industry or permit agricultural expansion; To the extent that this results in employment expansion or higher wages out-migration may be discouraged and in-migration encouraged. Improved local amenities may also have a direct effect upon migrant's decisions, simply by making life in this setting more attractive. Unfortunately no evidence appears to exist on the effects of amenities on migration outcomes in the developing countries.

#### **22.2.7 Incidence of Violence, Diseases or Disasters**

It is obvious that episodes of violence and natural disasters result in mass migrations either of internally displaced persons or of international refugees. However, the extent to which on-going violence, political repression and recurrent risk from disasters increase the flow of migrants is far less well documented.

#### **22.2.8 Migration Control and Incentives**

A few countries have attempted to restrict internal migrations. Unless the state is prepared to take draconian measures, such controls are usually ineffective. In a number of contexts it has been found that expelled migrants soon return. In some of the socialist states access to jobs, housing, food rations and other state benefits have been tied to a specific location, effectively preventing migration by removing the incentive to work. However, at least in China, the emergence of a more market-oriented system has eliminated the efficacy of these controls and migration has duly expanded.

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### **22.3 ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION**

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A mobile labour force can be an important ingredient in enabling more efficient production in an economy. Migration for wage gains enhances the efficiency of production. There are, however, few studies of the total contribution of internal migration to productive efficiency to make a generalisation.

Migration may also impact the rate of savings and accumulation in an economy and perhaps growth. In particular, it is commonly held that temporary migrants save a large

fraction of their earnings because risk-averse migrants save for their return to a lower and less certain income and because the marginal utility derived from consumption while away from the family is low. However, supporting evidence in the context of temporary internal migrants is lacking. Moreover, temporary migration may only raise the propensity to save temporarily.

Migration may not only change the efficiency of production but also profoundly alter the distribution of income through a number of channels.

Migrants presumably gain from migration unless they make errors in judgement, or a gamble with respect to migration fails to pay off or migration is not of the migrant's own free will.

Nonetheless the extent of social mobility associated with migration may vary. Evidence from India suggests that a tiny group of urban migrant households fare extremely poorly, but the average migrant household enjoys a higher living standard than non-migrants particularly after sometime in town.

Migration also affects the incomes of people, both at origin and destination. One way that this happens is by altering the pattern of earnings among non-migrants as the migrant labour shifts. It is not obvious whether wages at origin increase and those at destination decline. In the longer run, the departure of skilled migrants can raise the returns to education and training of those left behind, resulting in greater investments in human capital and higher income. Countering this are at least two forces.

First, there is some evidence of agglomeration of economies driven by a pool of well-educated workers. This can imply that departure of skilled personnel actually lowers the return to education.

Second, the education of children left behind by migrating parents faces two apposing forces; migration may provide resources to finance better education, but lack of parental presence may lower commitment to schooling.

The other major route through which migration may impact incomes of non-migrants is through remittances. The extent to which poor and rich rural families benefit from this is a matter of some dispute. Early village studies in India suggest that rural-urban migration is rare among the very poorest of rural households, more common among agricultural labouring families, declines again among somewhat better off village households, but the educated children of the rural elite commonly move to town. Combined with village study observations that net remittances from town to village are small and that the children of the wealthy are more likely to retain their rural ties and remit, this implies that remittances may largely benefit relatively affluent rural families.

## **22.4 INTERNAL MIGRATION IN INDIA**

Demographers view migration under four broad streams:

- a) Within rural areas
- b) Within urban areas

- c) From rural to urban areas and
- d) From urban to rural areas.

These categories, of course, encompass inter-state, intra-state and international migration. The 1991 census analysed the reasons of migration under the categories of employment, education, business, marriage, family relocation, natural calamities and others.

The total migrant population as per the census of 1991 was 821,07,175 roughly 9 per cent of the country's population. Nearly two-thirds of these were women and only half that number (27,255,302) were men. Of the total migrants, 85.1 per cent had spent between 0-9 years in the place of residence of the last enumeration. Of the total migration across the country, 13.5 per cent took place between states.

The break up for different states presents interesting variations. Maharashtra received the largest number of migrants (16,65,328) followed by Delhi (15,87,661), West Bengal (10,96,152), Madhya Pradesh (9,78,478) and Uttar Pradesh (8,07,459). The largest migration out of any state is from Uttar Pradesh (24,57,996), followed by Bihar with nearly half that number. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Punjab represent more or less equal figures for migration into and outside the state. Kerala took in 2,64,140 migrants while 4,39,285 left it. Gujarat and Bihar provide an interesting comparison in terms of migration into and outside the state. While Bihar's incoming population was 3,61,337 the outgoing was 12,26,839. By contrast, the incoming for Gujarat was double that of Bihar at 7,16,190 and the outgoing population of 3,05,738 stood roughly at a quarter of the population leaving Bihar.

Indeed migration into and out of different states could be attributed to their performance on various development indicators such as industrialisation, education and availability of employment.

While Bihar and Gujarat provide critical variations, one would also have to factor in the area and population of a state in assessing migration patterns. For example, large migrations into Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh may have to be viewed against the large population in these states. International migrants form only 1.3 per cent of the total migrant population.

India is constantly termed a nation with an immobile population. The volume of internal migration has been increasing steadily throughout the century, yet the percentage increase in migration has been viewed as small in comparison to the mobility transitions that have occurred in parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Migration in India has traditionally been dominated by short term rural to rural movements, which account for more than sixty per cent of all migrations and are comprised mainly of women moving between their natal and affinal homes upon marriage. Long distance urban-ward migrations form only a minority of all movements within India, leading to the literature to term India's population as stubbornly immobile, and remaining in the early stages of the mobility transition.

The primacy of the agricultural sector in the Indian economy has resulted in tying the population to the land. It is suggested that long distance urban ward migration would only occur once the Indian economy develops a more industrial base. In addition to this, the dominance of agriculture has succeeded in creating a culture of settlement and cultivation,

which it is suggested, acts to discourage migration. The process of early marriage and the tradition of marriages between people from nearby villages and territorial endogamy has resulted in both early adult responsibilities and reduced the need to migrate long distances. Finally, it is suggested that such is the economic and cultural diversity of India, with some states larger in size than some European countries, that the sheer distances involved and the potential socio-economic adaptations required are in themselves sufficient to discourage long distance migrations.

## 22.5 RURAL AND URBAN MIGRATION FLOWS

During the 1960s migration was still dominated by local rural-rural migrations that had characterised Indian migration for most of the century. However, this period witnessed an increase in the number of short distance rural to urban migrations to local and regional urban centres. Long distance migration, although still a minor aspect of India's migration system, was dominated by movements to urban areas, which involve moves up the urban hierarchy. This decade also represents a period of substantial growth in urban economies and the associated stagnation of small towns. Thus this period saw the beginning of the urbanisation process in India, although it started primarily in the form of long distance moves. The increase in urbanisation has continued as the importance of rural to urban migration increases in the Indian migration system. During the 1960s the outflow from rural to urban areas was 14.6 per cent of all migration. By 1970 this had increased to 15.3 per cent and further to 17.7 per cent in 1991.

Despite the increase in rural-urban migration in India since the 1960s rural-rural migration continues to dominate the migration system (Table 1). In 1991, 64.5 per cent of all migration had been between rural areas. A majority of those participating in rural-rural migration are female, due to the prevalence of patriarchal marriages. Although such a process has been in operation throughout the country, it has been suggested by some that the Indian marriage market has become much wider, with longer distances apparent in the marriage system. A product of this has been an increase in the distances involved in rural-rural migration with an increase in the number of inter-state rural bound migrations. The development of increased technological agricultural methods and the resultant increase in demand for agricultural labour in the north west of India acted to precipitate an increase in the number of long distance rural-rural movements by increasing the opportunities for agricultural work.

The remaining combinations of rural and urban migrations (urban-rural and urban-urban) continue to form only minor aspects of the migration system in India. Urban-urban migration accounts for approximately 12 per cent of the total migration since the increase in urbanisation during the 1960s. A majority of urban-urban migration is in the form of an upward movement through the urban hierarchy. It has been argued that such migration is dominated by public servants and those employed in the service sectors who wish to improve employment by moving to larger urban areas with potentially higher wages. Thus, most movements occur from urban areas with low per capita incomes to those with higher per capita incomes.

Urban to rural migration has consistently constituted the lowest percentage of total migration (about 6 per cent in 1991). In general it is thought that an increase in rural to urban migration precipitates a parallel move of people out from urban areas into urban suburbs. However there exists no empirical evidence to suggest that this theory of migratory behaviour is applicable in the Indian context. It has been pointed out that the lack of employment in urban areas is the major factor behind urban-rural migration. In addition it is argued that the return of temporary workers may form a substantial section of this migratory stream. It is also reported that return migrants may be those who have finished their economically productive lives in the urban areas, and are returning to their rural origins. Those who own agricultural land are the most likely to take part in this form of migration.

## 22.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANTS

The study of the characteristics of mobile population is an area much neglected in Indian demography, despite the availability of census data on migration by age, sex and marital status. A majority of literature on this subject refers to small-scale empirical studies, from which the general characteristics of all migrants are hypothesised. The principle characteristic of Indian migration is age selectivity. It has been shown that the age group 20-35 are by far the most migratory group. However, female migrants tend to be younger than their male counterparts due to the practice of patrilocal marriages. This age selectivity is apparent in all migration streams at both the intra-state and inter-state level, and this is the only characteristic that is universal to all migration streams in India.

Each of the migration streams in operation in India is strongly sex selective. At the intra-state level females dominate the rural to rural stream, accounting for more than two-thirds of all migrants. This domination is attributable to the process of marriage migration by females between rural areas. The rural-urban and urban-urban streams are both predominantly male oriented, and at the inter-state level all migration streams are male dominated. The ratio of migrating females to the total migrants varies inversely with the distance of migration, emphasising the male domination of the long distance rural-urban and urban-urban movements. The main reason behind such sex selectivity lies in the causes of migration. It is hypothesised that males migrate predominantly for economic reasons, whilst females migrate for marriage. Therefore, those streams with urban destinations and perceived greater economic gains will attract more male than female migrants. When males migrate to urban areas, females remain behind to provide a sense of familiar security in the rural areas.

A study of the effects of male selective migration from Kerala discovered that at the household level, the major impact was an improvement in income due to the flow of remittances. However, this male domination of rural to urban migration is not uniform throughout India. Such migration is more selective of males in the north of India and in the south there is a trend towards increasing female participation in rural-urban migration. The greater male selectiveness of migration in the north has been attributed to both the caste system and the religion. The prevalence of scheduled castes in the south has led to female participation in migration. As such castes are usually landless and thus the need for spousal separation to ensure land security in the rural areas is reduced. The stronger influence of Islam in the north has restrained female migration, resulting in masculine sex ratios in many northern cities.

However, the participation of females in all migration streams has been increasing during, the last two decades. This trend is particularly apparent in the rural-urban stream, which has been attributed to increases in the rates of female participation in education and the labour force. It has been reported that females in the untouchable class and in south India have shown major increases in their rates of labour force participation and that this has precipitated the migrating of women for economic reasons. The increasing numbers of female urban migrants has lead to an increase in the number of Female employed in unskilled work in urban areas of south India. The increase in female educational participation has increased female labour force participation, thus creating economic incentives for females to migrate.

Migration theory suggests that rural to urban migration is economically selective with most migrants originating from the low-income groups and as a result remaining in the low-income strata once in the urban areas. Such a process does not adequately explain the economic selectivity of rural-urban migration in India. In India it is both the poor and the rich who migrate, rather than, in general, the poorest, the middle or the richest.

It is suggested that for the poor; migration to urban areas is a survival strategy against decreasing productivity in rural areas, whereas for the rich such migration is a strategy of economic accumulation. The economic position of a migrant may not only provide the stimulus for migration, but also provide the means of migration.

The poor do not have the means to make the move; thus they remain instituted in the rural areas, while becoming further pauperised through the introduction of labourers from other rural areas. It has been shown that the propensity to migrate to an urban area is highest among educated people in rural areas. As a result the depletion of rural areas in India is occurring with the out-migration of the capital holding education sectors. The availability of western style employment in the major urban areas, particularly the mega cities, provides the main attraction for such migrants. The rural areas may hold greater economic security for unskilled and uneducated for which employment is scarce in the cities. Also, it has been reported that the upper castes are more migratory than the lower castes suggesting that castes that are no longer functionally integrated into the village economy are more mobile than others.

Migration in India has a history of short distance female dominated rural-rural movements. The past four decades have seen slight increases in the numbers involved in migration, with the gradual emergence of migration streams with urban destinations involving longer distance movements. Recent changes in the economic activities of females are acting to slowly change the sex selectivity of some migration streams. The growth of urban areas and the resultant creation of industrial based employment have created economic incentives for migration, based predominantly on urban areas.

## **22.7 MIGRATION AND OVER-URBANISATION**

A major consequence of rural-urban migration is over-urbanisation. Over-urbanisation involves both the sheer growth of the proportion of a national population living in cities as well as

the concentration of the population in particular cities. To the extent that rural-urban migration leads to a misallocation of labour between the rural and urban sectors and increases the cost of providing for a country's growing population, over-urbanisation remains a problem. It used to be assumed in overpopulated countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Egypt and in much of Latin America that the marginal productivity of the rural labour is zero. But in rural areas where uncultivated land is still available and where institutional restraints on the intensification of farming can be overcome, rural-urban migration does entail a loss of potential agricultural output.

It should also be remembered that a large proportion of the rural population is engaged in full-time or part-time non-farm activities. Labour utilisation by farm families is high. The inefficiency of current rural-urban migration patterns is the result of the loss of potential rural output and the inability of cities to fully employ their existing labour force to productive ends.

There is a tension between individual and national interests in the problem of over-urbanisation. Despite the inefficiencies at the aggregate or national level, at the individual level, most migrants report that they are motivated to move for economic reasons and that they have improved their condition. For individual rural dwellers, migration may be a rational response to economic realities and it is not so easy to dismiss the advantages to be gained from the move. But what about the increasing pull on urban resources and amenities by the migrants from the point of view of the state? And what are developing states themselves contributing to the problem?

National policies do indeed contribute to over-urbanisation. When severe imbalances in income-earning opportunities exist between city and countryside, people are forced to leave in search of urban jobs.

National policies bringing this about include institutionally rigid minimum urban wage policies, over valued foreign exchange rates that lower the price of capital below its real value, per capita disproportionate provision of urban services, skewed public investment and tax programmes that provide incentives for both domestic and foreign investors to locate in major urban areas, and transportation networks that centre on the metropolis and its immediate surrounding areas to the neglect of the hinterland.

Government policies need to create a more viable balance between rural and urban economic opportunities by stressing a realistic combination of rural development and dispersed urbanisation strategies. Specific short, medium, and long-term policy tools are available to accomplish this goal.

Short-term policies might include the generating of rural employment and related income-earning opportunities, as well as modifying and rationalising the pattern of internal migration. This could be done with the help of rural public works programmes for the landless, unskilled, and semi-skilled; farm price supports, including crop insurance schemes, guarantees, and less over-valued exchange rates to promote agricultural exports, supervised credit programmes for small farmers, including the introduction of locally adapted agricultural inputs and extension services; a freeze on urban real wage rates, particularly in public sector, either through a modification of civil service salary scales or by letting

urban prices and taxes accelerate disproportionately to rural prices and taxes; explorations of feasibility of utilising labour exchanges and employment information systems in rural areas in an attempt to match urban employment opportunities with both urban and rural job seekers.

Over the medium-term, more fundamental institutional and structural changes have to be initiated. These would include a major reordering of development priorities in which comprehensive rural development assumes greater importance, alongwith the articulation of a dispersed urbanisation strategy that emphasises the development of market towns, rural service centres, and small regional cities.

The objective is to create a hierarchy of small towns and service centres that give rural populations access to a wider range of producer and consumer goods, expanded markets to counter the current control of local monopoly powers, and wider range of investment and employment opportunities to strengthen agricultural development.

Long-term policies to address over-urbanisation would begin with land reform supported by appropriate national policies. Why do landless labourers or urban migrants come into being? It is because the potential advantages of new high-yielding cereal varieties are turned to the exclusive use of the already prosperous. New agricultural technologies are neutral – i.e., they are equally effective on small and large plots- but are typically not institutionally neutral- i.e., larger, more wealthy farmers have greater institutional and political access to credit, extension services, and other inputs necessary to realise the potential of the new technologies.

Land reforms, properly initiated, should be a vehicle for redistribution of rural assets and income-earning opportunities, and also a means for increasing productivity. Land reforms, to work, must be buttressed to supportive policies that extend the availability of credit, improve input supply, expand research and extension services, and build new storage and marketing facilities,

The process of dispersed urbanisation through new town development and the strengthening of existing rural service centres has to be backed up by providing incentives for investors to locate their activities in dispersed urban locales and by redirecting public expenditure programmes to create new non-agricultural job opportunities.

Public policy has promoted more capital-intensive production technologies than might have been used if relative factor prices are a more accurate reflection of relative factor scarcities. Rural and urban production processes have become more capital-intensive, despite the obvious resource costs and foreign exchange burdens of this process. This disparity must be addressed.

The World Bank notes that policies to halt over-urbanisation have largely failed, and economists indeed predicted this some decades ago. Efforts to force populations to move are unlikely to work, and governments have shown little real will to change urban bias policies to get at the root of the problem.

The role of public policy is certainly constrained by a number of factors. The impact of direct public policies on over-urbanisation is important but is overshadowed by the consequences of larger policy shifts taking place across the world.

Some economists are sceptical of the ability of public policy to influence over-urbanisation and say that it might end up reducing welfare, especially of the poor and middle classes. Their conviction, however, that most policy-makers remain profoundly unaware of the impact of specific economic policies on population shifts remains a continuing challenge.

Sceptical economists hold that in contrast to the direct intervention favoured by governments before the 1970s, the new orthodoxy of liberalisation – including balanced budgets, removal of subsidies and tariffs, privatisation of government enterprises, and the development of legal institutions and property rights which enable free and competitive markets to function more efficiently – has greater impact on rural-urban migration than the smaller scale policy shifts aimed to directly affect this problem.

Sceptics are doubtful of intervention on other scores. Governments may not be motivated enough to curb urban growth: when urban jobs are growing rapidly; when foreign investment is high so that public investment in infrastructure does not mean an end to industrial capital accumulation; when economic growth is sufficiently rapid to provide government with the resources it needs to make key infrastructure investments; and when agricultural development results in the rapid growth of smaller cities and towns, which serve as marketing depots and commercial centres for an increasingly prosperous countryside.

Where rural education is advanced, so that urban migration does not result in a flood of unskilled labourers, the whole issue is of minor importance to the governments. Ironically, successful agricultural growth may itself be a contributor to rural-urban migration.

The idea of establishing secondary cities is sound, but it faces the challenge of infrastructure expenses under conditions of severely strained national budgets.

There is also the paradox that repressed agricultural prices might not necessarily lead to sustained urban growth, since low agricultural prices diminish foreign-exchange earnings, which are essential for city growth. The structural adjustment programme of the IMF is likely to reduce rural-urban migration because of devaluation, reductions in government budget deficits, reduction in money supply growth, wages and employment declines in urban areas, the tightening of state enterprises budgets, and in general reduction of other forms of rent sharing and rent-seeking behaviour.

Nevertheless, government has a distinct role to play in curbing the rural-urban disequilibrium from further intensifying. There are obvious psychological factors in the attraction of cities, but to compound that there should not be the push factor that results from low levels of investment in agriculture

Urban infrastructure has tended to receive disproportionate emphasis. When it comes to education the countryside has been relatively ignored. The disparity between wage levels in rural and urban areas is a problem that has to be addressed by targeted policies. Leaving the problem of over-urbanisation mostly to market forces is not likely to result in a return to equilibrium.

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## 22.8 SUMMARY

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Migration is a complex phenomenon. This unit attempts to explain the relationship between migration and development. To begin with, causes for internal migration are listed out.

The reasons for internal migration may be many—a gap in income between regions; location of a family network in town; availability of improved amenities; marriage; education; or natural disasters. Higher wages implies higher productivity and efficiency and a mobile labour force is an important ingredient in enabling a more efficient production in an economy. Migration also affects the rate of savings and accumulation of an economy and hence its growth.

Internal migration in India has been dominated by short term rural to rural movements dominated by women. While rural-urban migration has increased since the 1960s in India, rural-rural migration continues to dominate the migration system. The primacy of the agricultural sector in India has tied the population to land. A long term urban ward movement would occur only when the Indian economy develops an industrial base. Females dominate the rural-rural stream (migrating for marriage) but the rural-urban and urban-urban streams are male dominated (migrating for economic gains) though these figures too are slowly changing over the years.

A major result of the rural-urban movement is over-urbanisation. While migration from rural to urban areas may improve the economic conditions, there is an increasing pull on the urban resources and amenities by migrants. Government policies thus need to create a more viable balance between rural and urban opportunities. Policy makers should be aware of the impact of the specific economic policies on population shifts. Leaving the problem of urbanisation to market forces is not a likely solution.

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## 22.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) List the causes of internal migration.
- 2) Internal migration contributes towards a productive economy. Comment.
- 3) Why are the migration streams in India strongly sex selective? Has there been a change in this ratio over the years?
- 4) What are the causes of over-urbanisation and how can this problem be addressed?

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## **UNIT 23 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Structure**

- 23.1 Introduction
  - 23.2 Contextualising Development
    - 23.2.1 The Apparent
    - 23.2.2 The Real
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### **23.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The present unit discusses the evolution of the concept of sustainable development and the present methods by which it is indicated or measured. The different and opposite views adopted by the developed and the developing nations are also discussed. Initially the idea of industrial development was aggressively propagated to root out all the evils of the society, but the methods and policies adopted for it turned out to be wasteful and threatening to the very existence of mankind. With the rising awareness of this disaster, the world community came together to discuss and formulate several action plans to mitigate this problem. Today, the concept of sustainable development has become integrated in the policies of every area of development as the very human survival depends on it. Therefore it is imperative to understand and adopt the concept.

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### **23.2 CONTEXTUALISING DEVELOPMENT**

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'Development' as a concept and aspect of state policy has a feel good effect on a modern mind. The magic mantra of development is thought to be the living spirit behind every human success in the field of industry, agriculture, transport and communication, space, health, hygiene, culture and entertainment, etc. Along with all these, it also infuses a sense of triumph in controlling and undertaking near complete transformation of society and

environment in shortest possible time. Development is accepted by everybody as the secular and rational way of conducting the affairs of the state in the general good, irrespective of the differences of gender, class, colour, caste and creed. Development is thought to be the only way out from all the ills that have accumulated over centuries and it is also expected to mitigate the wrongs that have befallen to a class, section, region and individual either intentionally or otherwise. It would not be an exaggeration in saying that there are perhaps no other ideas like 'Development' that has gained unprecedented popularity, success and acceptance on a global scale with so little resistance. It is considered to be a game worth playing where there are all winners and no losers. Therefore, it is a venture worth pursuing.

The annals of human history are full of anecdotes and incidents that speak in volumes the way the idea of development emerged as the hegemonic concept on a global scale after it facilitated in the domination of a particular set of values over other value systems and ways of livelihood. It can be called unprecedented, as it continues to enjoy such an enviable position for such a long time, on such a large scale and with so little resistance against it. It is perhaps the only concept so far that has brought the totality of both environment and society within the folds of one single assemblage. It succeeded in building a global ensemble that even religions failed to do.

### **23.2.1 The Apparent**

Development has a mesmerising effect upon the modern mind. It is vaunted as the panacea for all our social evils and is celebrated as the reason for justifying each and every action of every individual and institution. Moreover, it is also considered the sole legitimiser of all our deeds.

The magic of development has become so pervasive that most thinkers attribute lack of it as the root cause of all the socio-cultural, politico-economic, psychological and environmental problems that most of the regions and communities are facing world over. Though, such a mind-set had dawned on human beings along with the graduation of capitalist development as the First World System for over the past three centuries, yet its formal acceptance as the fundamental Principle of State Policy and Ideology of a particular system came into force in the aftermath of the speech delivered by 33<sup>rd</sup> U.S President, Harry S. Truman, at the end of World War II in 1945. Truman gave new meanings to development and hereafter, it was formally accepted as the goal of state policy and incorporated the same as the basis of the philosophy and ideology of the state. This also coincided with the formal inauguration of the so-called 'Development Decades', formation of 'Development Communities', launching of 'Development Projects' world over. From then onwards, development was used as a potent weapon in carrying war against poverty, exploitation, criminality and all other social evils and above all in the ultimate triumph of human over nature and its mighty forces and also in the consolidation of the "New Global Hegemonies". This also brought an end to the old ideology and logic of *pax Britanica* that had prevailed since the days of Spanish Armada, 1588. It was replaced by *pax Americana*. The ethos and ethics of new hegemony were so complete and total that development was considered not only the last or end-point in the evolution of human beings in the field of economics, politics and culture but also of their dreams and imaginations. The concept has emerged so ensembling that one could hardly imagine a world and stage in the evolution

of human history that is not woven around development. To put the spirit of the age in one sentence, 'Development is being'. Thus, it is accepted uncritically and any reservation against it is considered non-compliance and disagreement with the ruling social ethos and global hegemony. Consequently lack of development is interpreted as serious handicap and disability. Communities and nations that are unable to break open the deadlock of stagnation are considered a threat to both peace and human dignity. Moreover, lack of development is synonymous to less choice, curtailment of freedom and serious violation of human rights too.

### 23.2.2 The Real

Unfortunately everything was not nice and fair with development. Lack of appreciation and intolerance towards other ways of life, value systems and material existence combined with the backing of state power transformed development from being a simple doctrine of economic prosperity into a tyrant, a violator of human freedom, dignity and ecological balance. Irawati Karve, the noted ecologist, had said "The injustice done by idealists, patriots, saints and crusaders are far greater than those done by the worst tyrants". It is also true in case of development. The nobel laureate Amartya Sen, in his book, "Development as Freedom" has opined that development is often considered a precondition for freedom, empowerment and democracy. These were also the sentiments re-echoed at the Rio Earth Summit on Environment in 1992. The conference sent a warning to humanity in these words:

"World scientists and politicians have remained pre-occupied and kept the humanity also pre-occupied with the dangers of nuclear wars and 'Auschwitz' and kept silence to other dangers. The new dangers that have threatened the humanity are the ones that have come from the very process of on going development. "Human beings and the natural world are on a collision".

Thus, once the halcyon days were over, the dark side of development became more conspicuous.

#### 23.2.2.1 The General

Today, development means *pax economica* at the cost of *pax populi*. There is enough evidence to prove that the twin most significant 'accomplishments' and omnipresent curses of various ongoing development projects at the global level are; i) pollution leading to ecological disaster and ii) universalised alienation and annihilations of mankind. The saga of ongoing development and its various accompanying projects are responsible for making exterminism as the last stage in human civilisation. Exterminism is occurring not only through the use of nuclear bombs and discharge of radio active materials but also through various acts of development that are responsible for global warming, depletion of ozone, various types of environmental pollution leading to poisoning of water, soil, air and other food items. If these processes are not arrested then exterminism due to ecological crises including increase in the level of ultraviolet radiation will bring in disaster to both the environment and humanity and it will be the last stage in human civilisation. There is enough evidence to prove that due to increase in the level of green house gases, ultraviolet

radiations along with increasing use of medicines to cure diseases, excessive consumption of fertilisers and pesticides to increase agriculture production etc. have brought in genetic deformities in a large segment of the organic world and extinction of many species. Moreover, the global hegemonic powers are using their policies of development to get access to other economies, cultures, resources, environment and ultimately sovereignty of the weak individual, community and nations. Today, development has emerged as a powerful concept that is continuously creating and reinforcing a permanent wedge between the haves and have-nots. It is a policy of the powerful countries to construct and reconstruct the new colonies to suit its own interests.

### **23.2.2.2 The Specific**

There is one particular aspect that has remained less conspicuous about development so far. It is related to the ways it excelled in enforcing universal and generalised alienation of human beings, colonisation of life and body space of each and every living being. Under the ruling ethos of development, human beings, the creators of commodities are lost into oblivion created by commodities. Today human beings are bereft of both life and identity while the commodities produced by them have both. In the midst of universal and generalised commoditisation of human beings, there are still differences among individuals and social groups. Development has created a permanent wedge not only between the human beings in the developed and developing world but also between male and females, white and black, natives and immigrants, urban and rural, agriculture and industrial workers, etc. Though development succeeded in uniting the world into one global system yet it has been possible only by creating permanent divisions between citizens of one country and another and among the people within one country. Human beings remained divided and differentiated on the bases of race, colour, caste, creed, religion, language, gender and economic achievements in the past. The modern humans are divided and differentiated on the basis of the levels of their development and differences in their ability to control the knowledge and instruments that are essential for development. Development has become a civilisational and cultural divide between the developed and the backward countries, and developed and backward communities. True to the logic of development, prosperity and affluence of a few is possible at the cost of the well-being of an overwhelming majority of population, regions and countries. Once again, it is imperative to the logic of development that good quality of life to a minuscule minority is possible at the cost of low quality of life and falling standard of living of a vast majority. The economic gains of a few are at the cost of bringing in colossal global environmental degradation. Moreover, it is also noticed that economic prosperity has taken place at the cost of human culture, values and peace of mind. Economic development, the core of the development project, seems to have lost any sense and purpose. The pattern of on-going development shows that the basic goals of human welfare and freedom have lost its way. The aims of qualitative growth, the uppermost priority of every economic venture of the decades of 1980's too turned out to be mere delusion to millions of people world over. The worst victims of it are the inhabitants in the post-colonial countries. We are in the age of economics with ethics and affluence without peace. In brief, development has run out of its progressive potentials. It has become unsustainable both for the human beings and the environment. Therefore, there is an urgent need to find an alternative,

## **23.3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUALISATION**

### **23.3.1 Concept of Sustainable Development**

The continuing antagonistic relationships between *pax economica* and *pax populi* and development and environment had been the main concern of thinkers for a long time. In other words: How to give a human face to economic development? How to be green in our thinking? How to maximise our happiness, peace, freedom and well-being without destroying our environment, etc.? These have been important issues before thinkers for a long time. The sustainable development, in fact, is mainly concerned with the question. Or to put it in one sentence how to sustain the present level of well-being and make it available to all.

The origin of the concept *Sustainable Development* is credited to Brundtland Commission Report prepared under the auspices of the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development. Sustainable Development, according to the report means:

*"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, improved living standard for all, better protected and managed ecosystem and a safer, more prosperous future".*

The conclusions of the conference were based on the realisation that:

*"Economic activities cannot precede any longer under the banner of business as usual. Specifically it is no longer tenable to make economic growth us conventionally perceived and measured, the unquestioned objects of economic development policy. The old concept of growth which we designate 'throughput growth' with its reliance on an ever increasing throughput of energy and other natural materials, cannot be sustained and must yield to an imaginative pursuit of economic ends that are less resource intensive. The way we undervalue nature and natural capital services and fail to account for natural assets degradation often means that we are improving ourselves while imagining that our economies are growing. The new approach requires a concerted effort at remoulding consumers' preference and steering wants in the direction of environmentally benign activities, while simultaneously reducing throughput per unit of final product including services"*

The gravity of situation was well appreciated by the world community and it was realised that no individual, community and nation, however rich or powerful that may be, can mitigate the harms brought in by the ongoing process of development. It was also felt that "together we can come together in a global partnership for sustainable development".

### **23.3.2 The Convergent View**

There is unanimity of opinions among scholars about the material achievements human beings have made in the last three centuries. Among these the achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are spectacular. But, this has been possible at huge social and environmental costs.

Scholars have always expressed their apprehensions about the short-term material prosperity and warned people at large about the impending dangers and future crises. There are differences of opinions among scholars and philosophers on the approaches to be adopted for attaining sustainable development. People have taken positions ranging from spiritual and moral to crass materialist. Gandhi, for example, was in favour of taking a moralist position when he said, "the earth has enough to satisfy the human needs but next to nothing to satisfy the greed of even one individual". His approach was based on the broader principles of non-violence and truth. According to him, the western approach to development has placed mind over hands, man over nature and technology over experience. It is the root cause of our moral decline and also unsustainable development. Gandhi was for the moral justification of every human action and according to him the western model of technology-induced development, which is primarily based on the principle of satisfying human greed, is immoral as well as violence against mankind and nature.

At the other extreme were those that advocated the philosophy of "being is having". According to the advocates of this philosophy the technological revolutions particularly in the last three centuries have endowed the modern human with all the possible comforts and possibilities. Today, we are more satisfied, confident and also enjoy greater freedom than our ancestors did three hundred years ago. Modern human has succeeded in mastering both time and space with every incremental doses of new technology. Technology has transformed our being. The new being is based on more choices and thus, more freedom.

There were many other views in between these two extremes. However, among the pioneers that made sincere and serious attempts in this direction were a group of scholars in Rome, in 1972. This was popularly known as the "Club of Rome". Their views were later on published in a book by Meadows entitled "Limits to Growth". These scholars have warned about the limits of an ongoing pattern of development and if the pattern of present limitless growth continues, then there are likely to be problems of its sustainability. They studied the fundamental limits to growth in global population, agriculture, resource use and industry and showed as how these factors interact with each other and how they exert pressure on the limited resource base of our planet. The report concluded that even under the most optimistic assumptions about the blessing of advanced technology, the world is incapable of supporting and sustaining present rates of economic and population growth on the one hand and resource depletion and ecological crises on the other. They further warned that if the present trend of consumption continues, the resources on our planet would not last beyond a few decades from now. Therefore, they also suggested some way out of the impending impasse, which according to them lies in tackling all the problems together instead of adopting a piecemeal approach. Subsequently, United Nations' Conference on the theme of Environment and Development held at Stockholm in the same year also expressed serious concerns about the patterns of the ongoing development. The conference made a specific mention of the patterns of the way the ongoing development has placed tremendous stress on our environment on the one hand and the widened the gap between the developed and the developing countries on the other.

### 23.3.3 Principles of Sustainable Development

The outcome of the realisation of this grave situation was the *Agenda 21: Green Paths to the Future or Rio Declaration*, 1992. Though there are many highlights of the declaration,

the quintessence of it is presented in the underlying twenty seven principles:

- Human beings are at the centre of concern of Sustainable Development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.
- State has the sovereign rights to use their resources for development in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international laws. It is also the responsibility of the state to control any damage to the environment.
- Right to development must be fulfilled by maintaining inter-generational equity.
- Environmental protection should constitute an integral part of development process in order to achieve Sustainable Development.
- Eradication of poverty is an indispensable requirement for Sustainable Development. Cooperation between the states and individual can be more effective in improving the standard of living of the people.
- Least developed countries are also environmentally most vulnerable. International communities must pay special attention and give priority in order to address the needs of these countries.
- States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve and restore the health and integrity of earth's ecosystem. Developed countries should shoulder greater responsibilities because their activities exert greater pressure on the global environment.
- To attain Sustainable Development, it is the responsibility of the states to reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption without compromising an 'ever-increasing higher quality of life to all people.
- States should cooperate to strengthen endogenous capacity-building measures for sustainable development through building proper scientific temper for enhancing, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technology including innovations in technology.
- Environment should be the concern of everyone and issues related to it should be handled through the participation of concerned citizens at relevant levels. However, it is the responsibility of the state to provide relevant information and encourage awareness among the public including the dangers of hazardous materials and possible remedies for the same.
- Every state shall enact effective environmental legislations. It should also judge the relevance of the existing discriminatory legislation adopted by certain countries particularly against the poorer countries.
- Economic growth should be linked with Sustainable Development. States should ensure that the global economic system, particularly the world market relations and trade policies that are discriminatory against the poor countries, should be changed in order to achieve Sustainable Development.

States shall formulate laws to punish those who are responsible for environmental pollutions and environmental damage and make provisions to adequately compensate the victims of environmental degradation.

- States shall actively discourage the transfer of substances that are found to be harmful to human beings and cause environmental degradation.
- Every state will have to take precautionary measures to protect their environment depending upon their capabilities. However, lack of scientific know-how and technical lag shall not be taken as an excuse to carry on activities that are a threat to the environment and result in irreversible damages.
- The national authorities should work for internationalisation of environment costs as part of the total production costs.
- Environmental impact assessment shall become an integral part of the national economic policy.
- In case of natural disasters, it is the responsibility of the state to share the information with other states that are likely to be affected by such disasters. The international communities should come forward to help the states so affected.
- Sharing of information regarding environmental issues among the states shall be the basis of building goodwill and faith among the states.
- Environmental management, sustainable development and gender empowerment are interdependent. Women should become the focus of all the three.
- Youth all over the world has greater responsibilities to implement sustainable development because it is mainly their generation, which is going to be the immediate victim and sufferer from ecological disasters.
- Right to protect one's identity should be the basis of sustainable development. It is particularly applicable to the indigenous communities. Every state should take appropriate measures to recognise indigenous knowledge and practices and involve these communities in the success of sustainable development.
- Freedom of people should include end of domination, occupation and oppression of people and their environment by the oppressors. Restoration of complete rights over the environment and natural resources should be part of the concept of freedom.
- War and sustainable development are antithetical to each other. Every state should ensure that minimum damages take place to the environment in case of wars.
- Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.
- States shall resolve all their environmental disputes through peaceful means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

- Finally it appeals to every individual and state to cooperate and develop partnerships based on good faith in order to achieve sustainable development.

This was one of the most serious and concerted efforts on the part of the world community to demarcate the development agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was a significant and bold decision in certain respects as it succeeded in forging unanimity among the highly heterogeneous community of nations.

## **23.4 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE DIVERGENT VIEW**

There were more than 160 countries that had participated in the proceedings of the conference and there were definitely at least more than 480 agenda items in circulation at the venue of the conference. There were 160 proposals, tabled by the official representatives of the respective states. Then there was another set of 160 proposals that were overtly or covertly expressed through the voice of dissent in respective states. There was yet another set of 160 proposals that were articulated by the Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) of every country. So, it was decidedly one of the most difficult tasks before the UN to arrive at a consensus on such a contentious issue.

However, the most significant line of discord emerged between the perspectives of developed and developing countries on sustainable development.

### **23.4.1 The Perspective of the Developed World**

The developed countries continue to hold their privileged position and were not willing to compromise on anything because they were of the opinion that this will prove detrimental to maintain high standard of living in these countries. In fact they blamed the increasing populations among poorer countries as a serious threat to the global environment. They approach sustainable development from the point of view of restoring pollution free environment for a healthy living.

### **23.4.2 The Perspective of the Developing World**

As opposed to this, the perspective of developing countries showed a diametrically opposite picture. According to this view, the hegemonic control of the developed world over the trade, environment, resources, economy, technology, knowledge and politics, etc., is the single most important threat to the global environment, peace and development. They need a safe and protected environment because it is the basis of their individual and social survival. It was felt that with increasing destruction of environment due to ongoing developed projects mostly launched by the developed world, there have been phenomenal increase in the incidents of poverty, starvation and hunger in the post colonial countries. There is an apprehension among the developing countries that in the name of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation, the world capitalism is out to reconstruct the colonies. But this time the new colonies are not only restricted to the geographical spaces but also cover the processes of colonisation of organism and life itself. The environment and the indigenous communities inhabiting the postcolonial countries are also under the threat in the new

patent regime for want of adequate technology available with them. Thus, the question of environment and sustainable development in case of the developing countries is intricately related to retaining their freedom, identity and existence.

## **23.5 WORKING LIST OF INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Apart from the above issues, the other contentious issue was: How to measure sustainable development? Or in other words, what are the indicators of sustainable development? Once again, it was difficult to arrive at a consensus on the nature as well as number of indicators to be selected for measuring sustainable development. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific under the auspices of the United Nations prepared a working list of Indicators of Sustainable Development. It was done under the Programme of work on Indicators of Sustainable Development of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

**Table 1 : CSD Theme Indicator Framework**

SOCIAL		
Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator
Equity	Poverty	Percent of Population Living below Poverty Line
		Gini Index of Income Inequality
		Unemployment Rate
	Gender Equality	Ratio of Average Female Wage to Male Wage
Health	Nutritional Status	Nutritional Status of Children
	Mortality	Mortality Rate Under 5 Years Old
		Life Expectancy at Birth
	Sanitation	Percent of Population with Adequate Sewage Disposal Facilities
	Drinking Water	Population with Access to Safe Drinking Water
	Healthcare Delivery	Percent of Population with Access to Primary Health Care Facilities
		Immunisation Against Infectious Childhood Diseases
		Contraceptive Prevalence Rate

Education	Education Level	Children Reaching Grade 5 of Primary Education
		Adult Secondary Education Achievement Level
	Literacy	Adult Literacy Rate
Housing	Living Conditions	Floor Area per Person
Security	Crime	Number of Recorded Crimes per 100,000 Population
Population	Population Change	Population Growth Rate
		Population of Urban Formal and Informal Settlements

### ENVIRONMENTAL

Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator
Atmosphere	Climate Change	Emissions of Greenhouse Gases
	Ozone Layer Depletion	Consumption of Ozone Depleting Substances
	Air Quality	Ambient Concentration of Air Pollutants in Urban Areas
Land	Agriculture	Arable and Permanent Crop Land Area
		Use of Fertilizers
		Use of Agricultural Pesticides
	Forests	Forest Area as a Percent of Land Area
		Wood Harvesting Intensity
Desertification	Desertification	Land Affected by Desertification
	Urbanization	Area of Urban Formal and Informal Settlements
Oceans, Seas and Coasts	Coastal Zone	Algae Concentration in Coastal Waters
		Percent of Total Population Living in Coastal Areas
Fresh Water	Fisheries	Annual Catch by Major Species
	Water Quantity	Annual Withdrawal of Ground and Surface Water as a Percent of Total Available Water
		BOD in Water Bodies
Biodiversity	Ecosystem	Concentration of Faecal Coliform in Freshwater
		Area of Selected Key Ecosystems
	Species	Protected Area as a % of Total Area
		Abundance of Selected Key Species

ECONOMIC		
Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator
Economic Structure	Economic Performance	GDP per Capita
		Investment Share in GDP
	Trade	Balance of Trade in Goods and Services
	Financial Status	Debt to GNP Ratio
		Total ODA Given or Received as a Percent of GNP
Consumption & Production Patterns	Material Consumption	Intensity of Material Use
	Energy Use	Annual Energy Consumption per Capita
		Share of Consumption of Renewable Energy Resources
		Intensity of Energy Use
	Waste Generation and Management	Generation of Industrial and Municipal Solid Waste
		Generation of Hazardous Waste
		Management of Radioactive Waste
	Transportation	Distance Travelled per Capita by Mode of Transport

#### INSTITUTIONAL

Theme	Sub-theme	Indicator
Institutional Framework	Strategic Implementation of SD	National Sustainable Development Strategy
	International Co-operation	Implementation of Ratified Global Agreements
Institutional Capacity	Information Access	Number of Internet Subscribers per 1000 Inhabitants
	Communication Infrastructure	Main Telephone Lines per 1000 Inhabitants
	Science and Technology	Expenditure on Research and Development as a Percent of GDP
	Disaster Preparedness and Response	Economic and Human Loss Due to Natural Disasters

Source: [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natinfo/indicators/isdms2001/table\\_4.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natinfo/indicators/isdms2001/table_4.htm)

It is evident from the list of indicators suggested above that sustainable development is possible only through a holistic multi-pronged approach. Any single approach that was suggested by many scholars falls short of what is minimum for the maintenance of quality of life and prosperity of environment. Take for example the Economic Approach to Sustainable Development propounded by Hicks-Lindahl emphasises on generating maximum flow of income while maintaining the stock of assets. The underlying assumption of this approach is to improve the economic efficiency of the resources that are scarcely available. It takes other associated factors as given. As opposed to this the Ecological Approach emphasises on the stability of biological and physical systems and above all on the sustainability of a global ecosystem, protection of bio-diversity etc. This approach too gives peripheral importance to other intervening factors. There is yet another approach popularly known as the Socio-Cultural Approach which emphasises on the maintenance of socio-cultural systems including reduction of destructive conflicts. According to the protagonists of this approach preservation of cultural diversity across the globe is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Once again this approach too failed to comprehend the issue in its totality.

A critical look at all these approaches therefore, suggests "instead of one approach we should talk of a set of approaches because technology does undergo change over generation". Thus, considering all these points, the list of indicators suggested by United Nations' Economic and Social Commission appear to be more acceptable than any other approach.

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## **23.6 SUMMARY**

"Sustainable Development" has become a catchword because it is directly linked to the survival of human beings, their civilisation and the very environment of which they are an inseparable part. In the name of the so-called development there are large-scale deforestations, atmospheric changes such as thinning down of life saving Ozone layer, loss of bio-diversity, growing volumes of wastes that are becoming unmanageable day by day. Moreover, human actions have caused poisoning of the life supporting systems of our environment namely: soil, air, water and organism. What is more surprising than all these, is that the economic gains made at such a huge social and environmental costs are restricted to a minuscule minority of the world population. Large section of world's population continues to live in perpetual poverty, hunger and starvation. Millions of people world over are dying every year for want of basic necessities of their life. Coexistence of opulence and squalor at one and the same time is also breeding new form of social tensions and violence. Terrorism, one of the extreme forms of violence, is essentially an unlawful activity of the victims of unilateral global hegemony. Therefore, sustainable development, if attended properly, holds the key to development with social justice and environmental conservation. This is also the key to safe future for the mankind.

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## **23.7 EXERCISES**

- 1) What do you understand by sustainable development?
- 2) How did the concept of sustainable development originate?
- 3) How do the perspectives of the developed and developing world differ regarding the concept of sustainable development?
- 4) What are the indicators of sustainable development?

## **UNIT 24 ECONOMIC REFORMS AND GLOBALISATION**

### **Structure**

- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 Theoretical Debates about Use of Market or Planning and Government Controls
- 24.3 Development Planning in India
- 24.4 Trade Policy in India Before 1991
- 24.5 1991 Crisis, Liberalisation and its Economic Consequences
- 24.6 Liberalisation and Democracy
- 24.7 Summary
- 24.8 Exercises

### **24.1 INTRODUCTION**

The art of policy making lies in reconciling theory with ground realities. Policy has to be adjusted if either theory advances or ground realities change. In this unit, we analyse the changing face of development strategy and policies in India under these twin changes—changes in theory and in political reality. Many of the changes in Indian policy occurred because of balance of payments crises—in 1957, 1965-66, 1973-74, 1980-81, and in 1990-91. Also, over the years there was considerable research both theoretical and empirical-looking at the experience of different countries, and this research influenced the Indian policy makers,

In Section 24.2, we discuss theoretically the issue of whether policy makers should depend on the market or there should be planning and government intervention. Initially the opinion seemed to be that a planned economy could perform better than a market economy. But developments in economic theory and the experience of the socialist economies resulted in a radical change in this view and policy makers came to rely more on the market. In Section 24.3, we discuss Indian planning—its rationale and achievements, and in Section 24.4, we discuss trade policy in India—its role within the Indian planning process and how it was conducted. In Section 24.5, we discuss the 1991 crisis, and the liberalisation and its consequences for economic performance. In Section 24.6, we touch upon the issue of the implications of this liberalisation for Indian democracy. We argue that till the mid-sixties there was consonance between the objectives of Indian planning, economic theory and the realities of India's economic and political situation. But since the mid-sixties this consonance started to break down; the liberalisation has brought to the fore in a much sharper form the dissonance between these aspects of policy making.

### **24.2 THEORETICAL DEBATES ABOUT THE USE OF THE MARKET OR PLANNING AND GOVERNMENT CONTROLS**

A major preoccupation of economists in the twentieth century, particularly after the establishment of the Soviet Union, has been the question of the relative role of the

government and the market in the management of an economy. This question received increased prominence with the depression of the 1930s bedeviling the capitalist economies and the attempts by newly freed colonies to accelerate growth and improve the living standards of their people. In recent years this debate between the roles of the government and of the market has taken the shape of globalisation and liberalisation. By and large those who favour the market also favour liberalisation, and those who favour a closed economy favour more government intervention, though the lines of battle are not so clearly drawn.

There are broadly speaking three sets of beliefs about managing an economy. A group believes that markets lead to a desirable outcome, what in technical language is called a Pareto Optimal (PO) outcome, so there is no need for government intervention. A second group holds that while there are shortcomings in the operation of a market economy, government should not intervene, as it cannot improve the functioning of the economy. The more pessimistic in this group believe that government intervention would actually worsen the operation of the economy. A third group believes that government intervention can improve the operation of the economy, though members of this group may differ among themselves about the extent and nature of the intervention.

We define the basic concept of a PO outcome and its significance in economic analysis before examining these issues in detail.

A situation is said to be PO if nobody can be made better off without somebody being made worse off. If there are two individuals, Vinod and Kamal, & en Vinod cannot be made better off without Kamal being made worse off. We would get a PO better position if both Kamal and Vinod could be made better off. So if a situation is PO we cannot improve upon it by a re-allocation of factors of production or by re-allocating goods between the individuals. But a Pareto improvement does not say anything about how the gains are distributed. For instance if the total production in the economy is 100 then if Kamal gets all the 100 and Vinod gets nothing that is a PO situation as we cannot give anything to Vinod, i.e. improve his situation without reducing the amount available to Kamal. i.e. making him worse off. One of the weaknesses of the concept of PO is that it ignores distributional questions.

What is its strength? Its strength rises from what are called the two fundamental theorems of welfare economics. The first says that the outcome of every perfectly competitive system is PO. So if we have perfectly competitive markets and if consumers try to maximise the satisfaction they get from consumption and producers try to maximise their profits then the outcome will be PO. But the PO outcome that results may be very unpalatable or unwelcome. As we saw above if Kamal gets everything and Vinod gets nothing that is a PO outcome. But few would think that such an outcome is desirable. This weakness is rectified by the Second Theorem, which says that any PO can be reached by a perfectly competitive economy given an appropriate initial income distribution. So society can let the market operate and reach any desirable outcome it wishes for so long as it can adjust the initial income distribution. So selfish behaviour leads to a socially desirable behaviour. The implication of the second theorem is that the government should interfere only to bring about a desirable initial income distribution and then let the market work.

These two theorems provide the basis for much of the belief in the efficacy of the market system that underlies recent liberalisation in many countries. But the problem is that careless analysis ignores the qualification that the market system would reach the desired PO only if the income distribution is appropriate. A second weakness of the market system is that there is no way of guaranteeing an appropriate rate of savings and investment in the economy. Private individuals may save and invest less than is socially desirable leading to slow growth in income and employment so that poverty would persist; furthermore, if savings and investment were not equal, depressions or inflationary episodes would occur. A developing economy needs an appropriate level of savings and investment to raise its rate of growth and improve the living standards of its people.

Would a market economy perform better or worse than a planned economy? This question was first raised in the context of the debates about planning in the Soviet Union. Lange and Taylor, by using the economists' stylised conceptualisation of how a market economy reaches equilibrium, showed that a planned economy could reach equilibrium just as a market economy. An autonomous auctioneer is assumed, and he quotes a price. The people inform him of their demands and supplies at that price. If the demand were greater than the supply he would then raise the price for the next round and if supply were greater than the demand he would reduce the price. People would give their demands and supplies at the new price and again if demand were greater than supply the auctioneer would raise the price and if supply were greater than demand he would reduce the price. The process would continue till a price was reached at which demand and supply were equal, namely equilibrium was reached. Actual transactions would occur only after equilibrium was reached. Lange and Taylor argued that the real life Planning Board in a planned economy could play the role of the hypothetical auctioneer in the market case and so ensure that equilibrium was reached. Furthermore, the state in a planned economy could rectify the two shortcomings in the market economy. It would bring about a desirable income distribution. Also the state by its own investments could ensure the socially desirable growth rate. Thus a planned economy would reach a PO situation, and in fact was more likely to reach a good PO position. So the first round seemed to have been won by those who argued in favour of a planned economy.

Later analysis has emphasised the problem with information flows. The Planning Board can take appropriate decisions only if it has the right information. But it has no way of generating this information on its own. It has to depend on workers and managers in the public enterprise to provide it with the information. They may have no incentive to provide this information. For instance, the planning board may need to set a production target for the enterprise. The workers and managers know much better than the planner what can be produced. But they may underestimate what can be produced either in order to produce more than the norm in order to earn a bonus or because if they give the higher figure this year they will be expected to produce even more next year and they do not want this higher target for next year. Furthermore, each individual has special knowledge, which cannot be transferred to a central body, and in a centralised system this private knowledge is lost. Only with this was the significance of Hayek's objections against a planned economy better realised (Stiglitz).

The expectation was that in a "socialist economy", the individual would behave differently. But for many reasons, the planned economies were not able to eliminate the alienation that

plagued workers under capitalism and build the new "socialist man". And so these economies were not able to overcome the information problem and the system finally collapsed.

To a certain extent these economies created their own problems. As we have seen above, a planned economy can overcome the problems of inappropriate levels of investment and an unsatisfactory income distribution that plague a market economy. But unfortunately, for reasons not entirely clear, no socialist economy used the market. Instead they relied on quantitative instructions from the Planning Board to various agents. For instance, the state can supply food to all through government shops or can give everyone an income and let them buy what foods they want. In the latter case, the government uses the market to provide everyone with adequate nutrition while in the former case the government would have to find out what foods each one liked or risk that the food supplied may not be eaten. So the market should be looked as one of the many instruments that the government can use to achieve its objectives.

### **24.3 DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN INDIA**

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When India embarked on its planning adventure, the economy was predominantly agricultural with a very small industrial sector limited to mainly the cotton and jute industries, and a low rate of savings of about 10 percent. (For further discussion see Bhagwati and Chakravarty, 1969 and Chakravarty, 1978). In addition, the entrepreneurial class had limited experience with operating industrial enterprises; Indian entrepreneurs were mainly involved in trading activities, and had experience of operating only in the textile industry. A higher rate of growth was needed to reduce the extent of poverty in the country and improve the living standards of the people. But accelerating growth would require higher investments and larger imports of capital goods, as such goods were not produced domestically. These imports could not be paid for by higher exports of agricultural goods, because larger agricultural exports would lead to a worsening of the terms of trade so that export earnings would not increase by much. Furthermore, because of the adverse land-man ratio in India, development had to be based on industrialisation (Chaltravarty). This industrialisation could not be oriented towards the external market, because of fears of a slow going world economy, protectionism in the developed countries (Nurkse) and lack of competitiveness because workers in India were not industrially disciplined and not well trained. Therefore, industrialisation was to be achieved by developing industries by preventing imports. So India's adoption of a policy of import substituting industrialisation (ISI) was supported by theory, the Indian economic situation and corresponded to the development policies adopted by most developing countries.

In India the state was the agent for bringing about this industrialisation. (Later in the unit we will discuss the role of government in a more liberalised economy.) This was because India went in for import substitution in basic industries. Theoretical models showed that such import substitution would lead to a higher rate of growth. (For further discussion see Bhagwati and Chakravarty, 1969 and Chakravarty, 1978). Development of basic industries would free the economy from dependence on imports and so support self-reliance, an important objective. In particular, development of a defence industry would be made

easier and so ensure India's self-reliance in defence production. Private capitalists were not keen to invest in such industries as the scale of investments in these industries was large and no output would be produced for many years. Furthermore, state investment in these basic industries would also prevent undue concentration of wealth. Most other developing countries undertook import substitution in consumer goods industries. Investments in these industries were made by transnational corporations (TNCs) who had earlier been producing these goods in the developed countries and exporting them to the developing countries (see Agaswal Rodrik, 1996 and Rodrik and Rodriguez, 2001).

For a few years developing countries grew rapidly; then they ran into difficulties—not only those who had adopted import substitution in consumer goods but also those who had adopted import substitution in capital goods. These difficulties manifested themselves as the countries running large balance of payments (BOP) deficits as their export earnings were much smaller than their import payments and so could not continue to pay for their imports. So developing countries had to adjust.

Most countries made adjustments in their trade policies to lay greater stress on exports. Countries like Brazil and Colombia allowed their exchange rate to periodically devalue so that their exports remained competitive and grew. Others like India provided subsidies to exports in order to encourage exporting. Countries in East Asia, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, made more radical departures to encourage exports—and it was later said that they followed an export led development strategy.

#### **24.4 TRADE POLICY IN INDIA BEFORE 1991**

India, as noted above, had also opted for an ISI strategy. It faced difficulties in the BOP—there was a crisis in 1957-58 and then in 1965-66. Faced with BOP difficulties Indian policy makers sought new sources for funds and also undertook some adjustment measures. For instance, after the 1957-58 crisis, India approached the World Bank for assistance and the World Bank established the Aid India Consortium. Aid through this consortium financed much of the public investments in the Second and Third Year Plans—about a third. The size of the Plan was also reduced—there was a big debate about how the size of the plan should be adjusted. Subsequently, in the Third Plan (1961-65) the government provided various export incentives in order to increase export earnings.

The 1965-66 crisis resulted in more far-reaching changes. Agricultural policies were changed as one of the causes of the crisis was the increasing import of foodgrains, and the Green Revolution was ushered in. The changes in agricultural policies were successful in rising the rate of growth of agricultural output and make India self-reliant in food production. Trade policies were also changed, including a devaluation of the rupee. But there was much less political support for the changes in trade policies than for the changes in agricultural policies and these were soon reversed. The disputes with the donors resulted in a stoppage of aid by the World Bank and the US. The Indian Government adjusted to this cutback by having a Plan holiday for a few years and undertaking measures to raise the domestic rate of savings (Agarwal, Bowles).

The experience of these years had an enormous influence on Indian policy makers. The adjustment measures, an early experience of structural adjustment, resulted in a decline in

per capita income. As early as 1960 Indian policy makers were concerned that the growth was not generating enough employment and so was leading to a reduction in poverty. A committee was set up to study the situation and recommend policy adjustments. With the slowdown of growth following the 1966 crisis the implications for poverty reduction were stark and the question was how to implement Mrs. Gandhi's promise of "Garibi Hatao".

The technical note to the Fourth Plan examined the options in great detail. They assumed that it would not be politically possible to reduce the consumption of the higher consuming classes. It was assumed instead that the income of the higher consuming classes would be kept constant and all the additional consumption would be granted to the poor: Even under these assumptions they found that a high rate of growth of over 7 percent per year would be required to reduce poverty significantly in a short time. The analysis in the technical note explains why poverty reduction has been so significant in the eighties and nineties as the economy grew at almost 6 per cent a year during this 20-year period.

The BOP crisis of 1973-74 also resulted in a mixed response of seeking new sources of finance and adjustment. Borrowings were undertaken from the oil facility of the Fund and from the Fund's Trust facility. Also investments were made in oil exploration and refining leading to lesser dependence on oil imports. This lesser dependence helped in the management of the economy in the seventies and even more in the eighties when export earnings were stagnant. The BOP crisis of 1980-81 resulted in India borrowing from the Fund and later in the eighties India started tapping Non-Resident Indians and commercial Banks for funds.

But all through this period India continued with its basic policy of ISI. One problem, though, was that with government investment diverted first to agriculture and then to oil exploration and refining, there was a squeeze on investment in the infrastructure sector, which had longer-term consequences, and on investment in manufacturing so that greater reliance had to be placed on the private sector and emphasis shifted from basic industries to consumer industries. Adjustments were made to trade policy in the seventies and eighties to make imports of intermediate goods and components easier as lack of these during the strict import control regime period had prevented better utilisation of installed capacity. More intermediate imports allowed better utilisation of installed capacity and so improved efficiency.

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## **24.5 1991 CRISIS, LIBERALISATION AND ITS ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES**

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Since the mid-sixties economists started studying intensively the effect of trade policy on economic performance. Though there is no consensus about the conclusions drawn from these studies, most trade specialists conclude that economies adopting outward oriented policies perform better than countries adopting ISI policies (For a discussion of these issues, see Bhagwati (1978). For an analysis of the Indian case, see Bhagwati and Srinivasan). These studies also identify a number of factors that reduce economic efficiency in countries adopting ISI policies. For instance, in India the foreign exchange control regime had to allocate foreign exchange among companies in an industry for import of raw materials. It

is very difficult to judge efficiency of firms. So the officials tended to allocate the foreign exchange in proportion to production or, more often, capacity. This meant that no effort was made to distinguish between efficient and inefficient firms. If allocation was done on the basis of capacity it encouraged firms to have more capacity so that capacity utilisation was low and capital was being wasted in a country that was short of capital. When decisions about expansion were to be made, the licenses were divided among all the applicants without consideration being given to efficiency. Again therefore efficient and inefficient firms grew at about the same rate. Such allocation rules were a major reason for the slow growth of productivity in Indian industry which has been documented by many researchers.

The broad opinion among economists is that very high rates of tariffs lead to inefficiency and should be avoided. For instance, if a duty of 400 percent is levied on a good in India, it means that Indian producers can be 400 per cent less efficient than foreign producers and the cost is borne by poor Indian consumers. The future benefits, such as becoming more efficient later etc. are rarely large enough to justify this large cost now. But there is no unanimity of what the low level of tariff should be. Some economists would go all the way to free trade, most would opt for 10 to 25 percent, and some may go as high as 35-45 percent. All would favour a few tariff rates. This is purely for administrative reasons. If there are many rates, then considerable time can be wasted in deciding what rate is applicable for a particular good and opportunity for corruption is created. Also economists would by and large not favour use of quotas (QRs).

The result of the considerable amount of research done on the effect of trade policy on economic performance and conditionality attached to Bank and Fund loans has been that most developing countries have abandoned the ISI regime that they had adopted earlier. Most have no QRs—only 7 small countries still maintain QRs. The developed countries have tariffs that average about 4 percent. This is in contrast to the average rate of about 40 percent at the end of the Second World War. Almost 50 percent of the imports into these countries were duty free.

Of course the picture from the viewpoint of developing countries is not so rosy as the developed countries tend to impose higher tariffs on goods exported by developing countries. Developing countries have also reduced the tariffs in imports, Average import tariff in most developing and transition economies is now about 10 percent.

Indian policy makers, tackling the 1991 crisis, took the stance that trade restrictiveness was not an appropriate policy, and that the economy should become more open. Also the industry regulations that had governed entry into an industry and also governed how much a company could produce, had outlived their usefulness. Indian policy makers have drastically reduced the level of protection in the economy. The maximum tariff was reduced from almost 400 percent to about 40-50 percent, the average tariff from about 100 percent to about 20 percent. All QRs on manufacturing imports were eliminated after India lost a dispute before the dispute settlement board at the World Trade Organisation. Earlier all QRs on agricultural imports were eliminated as part of the agreement at the multilateral trade negotiations known as the Uruguay Round. Though, India has liberalised its trade regime considerably, it still has a more restrictive regime than other countries. Internal regulations on industrial investment have also been eliminated and the inflow of foreign capital liberalised.

Economic performance since the liberalisation has not been dramatically different from that of earlier period and this has generated considerable debate. The rates of growth of agriculture and manufacturing as well as total Gross Domestic Product have been about the same. There seems to be no strong evidence that the rate of growth of productivity in Indian industry has increased after the liberalisation. Poverty decreased quite rapidly in the eighties. Poverty has continued to decrease in the nineties after the liberalisation though at a somewhat slower pace (For a detailed discussion of poverty trends in India see Tendulkar, 2003.)

## 24.6 LIBERALISATION AND DEMOCRACY

The liberalisation has however generated a vigorous debate about its implications for poverty reduction, empowerment and democracy. The objective of Indian policy makers since the inception of planning was to achieve what is today called "just growth", namely growth that reduces poverty and leads to a more equal distribution of income and is accompanied by democracy. Democracy and a more egalitarian economic system were believed to be connected—political rights could not be guaranteed without economic rights. Economic rights consisted both of reducing poverty and reducing inequality. There seemed to be no contradiction between reduced poverty and reduced inequality. Ever since the 1971 "Garibi Hatao" slogan of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the public has been aware of the need to reduce poverty and income inequalities. The constitution had itself recognised this duty and had made provision for reservation to achieve a more just society. Once the notion of state action to help the disadvantaged was accepted, there was increasing number of claimants, and various people formed groups to champion their cause more effectively. The scope for reservation has been increased over the years and many programmes established to improve both the condition of the poor and to provide more power to them.

Increasingly, resources have been diverted towards many explicit and implicit subsidies. One effect of these subsidies has been the increasing budget deficit of the central and state governments. These deficits have left little scope for further employment in the public sector—increasing public sector employment was one of the ways to bring disadvantaged groups into the system.

Though nobody would claim that all disadvantages have been eliminated, considerable progress had been made in reducing poverty. Progress had also been made in empowerment if one looks at the number of representatives from the weaker sections in parliaments or share in ministries or even among chief ministers. But there is a very real question about the sustainability of this progress. Serious constraints have emerged. There is considerable over-manning in the public sector, which has reduced public investment and future growth and employment. The lack of government investment has resulted in a very poor and outdated infrastructure which is a constraint to faster growth. Education and health have been neglected and increasingly people have to depend on expensive private education and health. There is, at the moment, a very real conflict between the need to grow faster and to have a better distribution. Liberalisation, by raising the rate of growth, could provide the wherewithal for further redistribution. But, unfortunately, investments in infrastructure and in human capital are required to reap greater benefits from liberalisation.

But at the moment that does not seem to be happening. The lack of employment growth is prompting demands for reservation in the private sector also. It is difficult to see how such reservation can be combined with a policy of greater reliance on the market. Society faces serious challenges if it is to succeed in providing just growth.

Just growth could result from globalisation, if that is properly managed. Globalisation is the increasing integration of different national economies; because of liberalisation, the elimination of restrictions has resulted in greater flows of both goods and capital flows. Liberalisation can help in reducing poverty. A more liberal trade policy will help India to export labour intensive goods, namely goods in the production of which considerable labour are employed. There is evidence to suggest that this is happening since the liberalisation. Expansion of labour intensive exports implies growth in employment, and provision of jobs is the surest way to help a poor person overcome poverty. But for the best results the employment that is created should be at high wages. Wages are higher if skilled jobs are created. But for people to find skilled employment they must be educated. A strong need at this moment is for the government to provide good education. Unfortunately, the standard of public education has been declining, and the cost of private education rising. This situation needs to be rectified urgently if the society is to make the most of the opportunities provided by liberalisation and achieve just growth.

Unfortunately, there is an evidence that globalisation tends to increase income inequality. Therefore, globalisation brings to the fore a possible conflict between poverty reduction and reducing income inequality, a possible contradiction that had been ignored earlier in India.

Globalisation changes the role of the state, though it does not necessarily lead to its reduction. Instead of the state being involved directly in production, the state has to provide both physical and human capital. It also has to act to draw the poor into the economic system and to improve their situation. Furthermore, the state has to act to regulate private enterprise. Instead of increasing the production, the state sets up regulatory institutions. It is not clear that it would be any easier to protect regulatory agencies from political interference and thus leading towards inefficiency. Liberalisation raises new questions about the role of the state to achieve just growth.

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## 24.7 SUMMARY

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The beginning of the 1990s saw a major change in the Indian economic policies. The balance of payments crisis led to the policy of economic liberalisation of the Indian economy. A higher growth rate was needed, that required not only higher investments but also larger imports of capital goods. The policy of import substituting industrialisation that complements the development policies seemed to be a viable option, an option adopted by many developing countries in the earlier years. But with the amount of export earnings remaining relatively low than its import payments, the developing countries had to adjust their economic policies accordingly. The policy makers of India realised the disadvantages of trade restrictiveness. Consequently, the economy was opened up enabling the inflow of foreign capital and industrial investment.

The focus has shifted to "just growth" wherein an equal distribution of income is ensured in a democratic setup, thereby linking the political and economic rights. Though there have been claims about the advantages of the liberalisation, the lack of government investment has led to an outdated infrastructure thereby stagnating the growth. The elimination of restrictions failed to generate the corresponding benefits. The need of the hour is to make the most out of the opportunities provided by globalisation/ liberalisation. The role of the state, in this context, is crucial in not only improving the existing situation but also thwart moves towards inefficiency. Thus the state can ensure a positive outcome of the liberalisation policies and achieve just growth.

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## 24.8 EXERCISES

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- 1) What is a market economy? Explain its advantages and disadvantages.
- 2) What do you understand by a planned economy?
- 3) Write a short note on India's economic scenario prior to 1991.
- 4) What are the economic consequences of liberalisation in India?
- 5) How does liberalisation help in ensuring "just growth"?

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## UNIT 25 RELIGIOUS POLITICS

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### Structure

- 25.1 Introduction
  - 25.2 Meaning and Significance of Religious Politics
    - 25.2.1 Religious Politics: Divergent Views
  - 25.3 Evolution of Religious Politics
  - 25.4 Hindu Revivalism
    - 25.4.1 Rise in Political Unrest
  - 25.5 Islamic Perspective
  - 25.6 Religious Politics: An Overview
  - 25.7 Summary
  - 25.8 Exercises
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### 25.1 INTRODUCTION

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The concept of *religious politics* has assumed a heightened significance in the contemporary India. Though religion and politics are considered as two distinct concepts, they have had a synthetic existence in the traditional society and continue to influence each other in the modern society as well. Together they have an immense potential to make a profound impact on each other. Religion plays an important role in influencing the social process of the humankind and vice-versa. It has been a significant factor in mass mobilisations not only during the national movements but also in the transitory phases towards modernity. In a democratic state like India, religion constitutes the core of the traditional society and continues to enjoy its influence on the mass psyche. This close affinity has also resulted in social disharmony and discord, often leading to clashes between different communities. The religious organisations interact with the political groups and try to maximise their support bases, claiming authority over a section of the population. The support of these religious groups often determines the strength of the political regimes. This unit provides an insight into the concept of the religious politics, and various dimensions associated with it like Hindu revivalism and Islamic perspective,

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### 25.2 MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS POLITICS

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**Religious politics** can mean one of the **two** things. It is, first, a situation where religion itself becomes the basis of political articulation and of defining the purpose of politics. Here religion itself becomes a kind of politics, for example, reinterpretation of religious tradition for defining nationalism or for drawing a political programme of action. These can have many variations, as we shall see later in this unit. Secondly, **religious politics** is also, a condition where religion is used as the foundation for the political mobilisation of

the people. The institutions or festivals and such other things connected with religion become the basis of making political appeals to people. For example, the use of the temples and mosques or a religious festival like *Ganesh Puja* for the political mobilisation of the people is another form of religious politics. Both these types of religious politics have been quite common in our society. In fact, their history dates back to more than a hundred years but in the recent period, these have acquired the status of mainstream politics.

The concept **Religion and Politics** has a different reference. It refers to the problem of what ought to be the relation between the two, that is, between religion on the one hand and politics on the other. This, therefore, also involves the question of secularism and how one is oriented to it. If one accepts secularism, as the national movement did, then the question is how to and in what ways to keep politics autonomous or free from religion; it is also a question of developing a version of secularism appropriate to any given society, say the one like ours: Two concrete situations are never alike. In a situation like that of America with its proliferation of Protestant churches, secularism has to handle a different set of problems than in India where we have a multi-religious society. So the question as to how the religion and politics present themselves varies from society to society and from time to time.

In the first 30 years after Independence, the relation between politics and religion was of a different kind than it is now. Religion was of marginal importance for politics and politics was automatically free from religion. From the mid-1980's, it has drastically changed in a way that *Hindutva* as an ideology has become a dominant force in the society and politics and since 1998 in the government too. So the question of how to look at the relation between religion and politics in terms of the constitutional ideals has changed. Issues centred on secularism, civil rights, citizenship, democracy, etc. do not evoke the same response from the Hindutva as these came to mean in the course of the Freedom Struggle. Having made this distinction for the sake of clarity, we will only look at religious politics as defined above. As the distinction between politics and religion has collapsed in one form of nationalism and political appeals through religious symbols, we now have the preponderance of religious politics in the country.

### 25.2.1 Religious Politics: Divergent Views

Religious politics, as we have seen, provides the substance and agenda of politics, that is, the content of politics itself is determined by one or another religion or the religious community. It can, therefore, appeal only to those belonging to that religious community. Religious politics cannot simultaneously be the politics of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. It can only belong to and may have appeal for the followers of one or the other religion. The politics that tries to defend what is taken to be Muslim identity or the politics that works towards creating a new and different identity for the Hindus, as is happening now, cannot obviously appeal to another community. This remains so even when it tries to present itself as nationalism, as Hindutva calls itself, "cultural nationalism". In essence it remains majoritarian religious politics. Religious politics, therefore, also remains communal politics or communalism, as it has been referred to in our country. This is so not just with India; it would be the same with the *Muttahida Quami Mahaz* in Pakistan or any other country for that matter.

Before we proceed further, one clarification is necessary here. A mere appeal to religion does not necessarily lead to religious politics. For example, one may be a Hindu but the version or the interpretation of Hinduism one subscribes to will determine the substance of politics. Let us take an example from our recent history. Gandhi and Savarkar both believed that religion should inform politics. But their versions of what it means to be a Hindu were so different that it gave rise to two very different conceptions of politics. Gandhi's view was that spiritual values should influence politics or otherwise politics will become impoverished. He took a very inclusive view of both religion and politics. He drew, of course, a great deal of his values from Hinduism but that did not exhaust his spiritual sources. Christianity and Islam and various deviant *bhakti* were an equally valid source for him. Politics was, for him, a coalition of emancipatory faiths. He, therefore, never used any religious festival or dogma for political mobilisation even though he drew a good bit of his vocabulary from Indian religious sources. In contrast to this, Savarkar thought that instead of spiritual values, it should be the race and ancestry, history and tradition, and the sacredness of the land of Hindus (*punia bhoomi*) which should be the basis of the Hindu view of politics. He also thought that only those whose religion has its origin in India can subscribe to this view of politics. Others like Muslims or Christians cannot ever commit their allegiance to India; in other words, these other people cannot treat India as their *Punia Bhoomi*. He gave the name of *Hindutva* to this *Hinduised* politics; all the main points of Savarkar's writings are available in the book of the same title. This is the prime example, its extreme, of religious politics. It is, obviously, an exclusionist politics, as defined earlier.

### **25.3 EVOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS POLITICS**

Religious politics in India has a long history and, in spite of being exclusionist, a rich pedigree. Some of the great religious thinkers with very wide horizons also contributed to the making of the religious politics even though they are not reducible to be the votaries of such a politics. The history of religious revivalism, which is the via media to the making of religious politics, is more than a hundred years old. Towards the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, politics based on revivalist sentiments was becoming ascendant all over the country, especially in Bengal and Maharashtra, which were, till then, the main centres of the social reform movements. This new mood of politics based on revivalism was fast replacing the social movements which sought to question certain practices within Hinduism like child marriages, enforced widowhood, denial of education to women, etc. It is interesting to note that most of the suggested reforms were related to the fate of the women, making life more livable for them. An instance of the ascendancy of revivalism and the decline of the reform movement was the treatment meted out to the National Social Conference started by Ranade, as an umbrella organisation of various social reform movements from different parts of India. Its aim was to discuss and co-ordinate and encourage the reform movement all over India. At an all-India level, it used to meet annually, parallel to the sessions of the Indian National Congress. In a drastic move, in the 1885 session of the Congress at Poona, Bal Gangadhar Tilak banned its meetings and tried to make it defunct. This change in Tilak's stance was caused because he had changed by now following the general tendency and took a clear position against social reforms. Soon after Tilak instituted the *sarvajanik* Ganesh Puja as a major mode of mass mobilisation against colonialism.

The second instance of changing mood among the literati in our society in defence of religion was the hugely vociferous, even though short lived, campaign against the 'Age of Consent Bill'. This bill proposed a simple measure that was to raise the age of marriage for girls from the then ten years to twelve years. Today we will be aghast if someone were to oppose this for whatever the reason. But the storm it raised then is surprising as we look back today. Notable figures and nationalists like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Bal Gangadhar Tilak and many others like them joined the chorus of protest. The argument was that the foreign rulers, the British, have no right to interfere in the religious customs of the Hindus. The argument sounds false because it was never made clear whether infant marriage of the girl was an internal feature of the Hindu custom or a mere social practice prevailing in the then Indian society. Contrast this with Gandhi's position when the British proposed a bill for the abolition of *Untouchability*. He consistently supported the British move between 1933 and 1935. On 27 January 1935, addressing some members of the Central Legislature, Gandhi said, "...even if the whole body of Hindu opinion were to be against the removal of *untouchability*, still he would advise a secular legislature like the Assembly not to tolerate that attitude." His view was that only undue interference in matters of religion ought to be avoided. But these same people who opposed the British on interfering in matters concerning religion, demanded the ban on cow slaughter. There was no consistency or uniformity of criteria in terms of which legislative measures proposed by the colonial government were to be opposed or demanded. The Hindu orthodox groups, which were becoming influential now, talked only in terms of Hindu religious sentiments.

Rising Hindu revivalism got support from unexpected quarters. Vivekananda, who had become enormously popular after his performance at the World Religious Parliament, was one of them. He gave an interesting argument based on reform vs. growth and service. He declared, "I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth. I do not dare to put myself in the position of God and dictate unto our society: 'This way you shall move and not that way.' ....This wonderful national machine has worked through ages; this wonderful national river is flowing before us. Who knows and dare say whether it is good and how it shall move?" (In, "Traditions and Social Reform" reproduced as an Appendix in K.P.Karunakaran, *Religion and Political Awakening in India*, 1969 Revised Edition.) His considered view was that these social reform movements were elitist and alien to Indian tradition. Similar views were expressed in many other parts of India. In Bengal, among others, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, famous for his *Vande Mataram*, was a prominent voice against such reforms. In Maharashtra, it was Tilak who raised the banner of revolt against social reform. In other parts of India the theosophical movement took similar positions. What needs to be remembered is that these figures were very prominent nationalist voices and their effort was also to give a new and different shape to Indian nationalism.

The idea of going into all this is to show that though the rise of religious politics had its roots varying from region to region, it took a uniform position against another kind of politics which was predominant in the earlier phases starting with Rammohan Roy. The earlier politics was marked by the conviction that Indian society can revitalise itself by getting rid of evil practices which have got entrenched in the Hindu society, and that these cannot be removed without legislation and the sanction of the laws. *Religious politics establishes its claims in fighting the legacy of Rammohan Roy* It replaces that appeal by different ideas of the importance of Indian tradition and Hindu custom.

## 25.4 HINDU REVIVALISM

There is no common content to Hindu revivalism. It varied a great deal from both person to person and also region to region. We will look at the three regions in India where Hindu revivalism was pronounced in some form or other; Bengal, Maharashtra and Northern India, three regions where revivalism had a long run.

In Bengal, it was the most widespread as well as intense, but it took a singularly unusual form. It emerged in the form of a very, to borrow a term from Sumit Sarkar, "intellectualised revivalism". What it means is that it becomes a debate among the intellectuals of a highbrow, cerebral kind. It was a talk among the literati. Even when magazines and newspaper got into it, the tone and drift was such that it may have had little appeal to the common people. It had three major drives, among its prominent members like Bankim Chandra among many others, for example. First, highlighting and glorifying some immemorial traditions of India and arguing to establish their spiritual superiority to the west, even if we have to concede that we are materially weak. Second, in terms of these to ask, who (really) is an Indian? Everybody who lives in Bengal is not necessarily a Bengali. So too is the case with India. This way of treating who lives in India is territorial nationalism. One must also inhabit certain attributes and express certain sentiments, which may then qualify one to be an Indian. The word was not coined but it was the first step towards, what later came to be known as, cultural nationalism; that is, one is an Indian only when one displays certain cultural characteristics. Finally, immense intellectual labour went into showing the superiority of Lord Krishna to that of Jesus Christ; also momentously an ideal for a patriotic Indian. But curiously, very little of what took place in Bengal survived in Bengal, (even if it is vibrant for other parts of India) except, perhaps, *Vande Mataram*, and only as a song without so much as a test of patriotism as in the north.

In Maharashtra, religious revivalism had a more varied basis. There surely was 'the intellectual component. And it took the form, subtly though, of a brahminical reassertion. This can best be seen in the efforts to counter the awakening and assertions among the lower castes as these crystallised in the person of Jyotiba Phule. There was also something different, secondly, from Bengal. Religious symbols and festivals were activated in the public arena, made *Sarvajanic*, to effect the mobilisation of the masses in the cause of nationalism. The most well known of these is the conversion of Ganesh puja, hitherto a domestic event, into a public celebration known as *Ganesh Utsav*. Today it has spread into many other parts of India, and become a source of communal tensions in the way it is utilised by the *Sangh Parivar*. Ganesh is the Lord of success and the activists of the *Parivar* think that by privileging Ganesh they will achieve political success all over India. This became and remains the route to mass mobilisation. The third form it took was the building of the cult of Shivaji Maharaj, unlike Krishna—a religious icon, a concrete historical figure and a great warrior. He was built up as the ideal Hindu personality, "always" fighting the Muslim rule. Shivaji was surely a figure of great importance in the regional awakenings taking place in India then and later but to build him as a Hindu cult figure was to communalise mass consciousness, which was getting mobilised then. In Maharashtra, religious revivalism took a turn towards mass mobilisation, and in this it was distinct from what had happened in Bengal.

Northern India represents a more intriguing picture. Much of the intellectual debates here spread into the society and became issues of popular contentions. And much of what became issues of contention were close to popular practices and beliefs. Two different variants emerged in north India. One in the Indo-Gangetic plains and the other in the northwestern India, what are now Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. In the Indo-Gangetic plain, the issues through which Hindu revivalism asserted itself were the ones related to cow-slaughter and Hindi in the Devnagri script. Gyan Pandey has shown in "Mobilizing the Hindu Community" and "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan" (both as Chapters 5&6 in his *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India, 1990.*) Cow and its slaughter by the Muslims in daily life and especially on the occasion of the *Bakr-Id* became issues of heightening the sensibilities of Hindus and trying to mobilise them to agitate so as to stop the Muslims from slaughtering the cows. In the same vein the issue of Hindi and Devnagri as against Urdu in the Persian script became matters of Hindu- Muslim disputes within the public consciousness. In the northwestern India, similar issues were raised together with others through a different path. It was the rise and dissemination of the *Arya Samaj* movement of Swami Dayanand. At one level it was a "protestant movement" but at another it was also a vituperative attack against anything that was not properly aligned to *Vedas*. It successfully combined a sharp attack on many a Hindu practices like polytheism, idolatry, and caste based on birth and advocated inter-caste and widow remarriage and such other things. Dayanand in his famous book *Satyarth Prakash* also launched a vituperative attack on non-Vedic religions like Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, etc., devoting a chapter to each of these and the attack on Islam and its prophet was the most abusive. His followers then entered into unnecessary polemics with the Sikhs and the Muslims, the two other prominent religions of this region. Kenneth Jones in his book *Arya Dharma* shows how the movement rapidly spread in Punjab especially among the trading castes like the *Khatri*s. Prominent converts were Lala Lajpat Rai (the well-known nationalist leader), Lala Hans Raj, Lala Munshi Ram (later Swami Shraddhanand) and many others. Since then, it concentrated on two activities in particular, opening of Anglo-Vedic schools and a campaign of *Shuddhi*—reconversion to Hindu dharm of those who had converted to other religions. This latter programme coupled with that among the Muslims called the *Tanzeem* and *Tableeg* was very instrumental in vitiating the communal atmosphere.

#### 25.4.1 Rise in Political Unrest

The emerging political temper based on religious revivalism and cultural nationalism got a powerful intellectual reinforcement and moral legitimisation, on all all-India plane, from the writings of highly respected and sophisticated thinkers such as Vivekananda and Aurobindo. Their canvasses were vast, horizons very wide, and concern large. For both India has a mission for the world, to give to the materially oriented west the great spiritual resources of India and thus to enrich their impoverished civilisation. Within this mission they invoked the glories of ancient India, the immemorialness of Indian religion and philosophy, the superiority of *Vedanta*, the incomparable nature of Indian tolerance, and so on. All this can still go well. But there is a tendency to compare, especially pronounced in Vivekananda, the Hindu—Vedantic tradition with other religions. He was quite given to comparing the Hindu tolerance with Muslim "intolerance" and to equate Muhammadanism with slaughter all over the world, and to consider the prophet of Islam as having done more harm to the world than good. (Collected Works, Vol.1) Aurobindo

often equated Indian nationalism with Sanatan Dharma. In lesser hands, these and such other observations became very damaging for inter-community relations and in vitiating the worsening communal tensions. All this had disastrous consequences for India when seen in conjunction with what was happening with the Muslims.

The interpretative changes within the Hindu tradition discussed above had its parallel, though of a different kind, among the Muslims as well. The traditions within the Muslim religious community were also subjected to interventions and re-workings by both the neo-orthodoxy and the "modernist", both of them trying to draw the community away from the national developments for altogether different reasons. Whatever, these interventions succeeded in drawing the Muslim community apart.

## 25.5 ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

The interventions among the Muslims, starting roughly from the first half of the 19th Century also did not have a uniform character to them. From the viewpoint of the Muslims in India, some of these represented a retreat into traditional or fundamentalist Islam of rather primitive varieties. Shah Waliullah or Sayyed Ahmad of Bareilly and their lesser known followers like Haji Shariatullah of Faraizis in Bengal or Maulvi of Faizabad or Maulvi Karamat Ali of Jaunpur, all in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were influenced by the Waliabi movement and concentrated their attention on the "Un-Islamic" practices prevalent among the Muslims like the folk practices of joining each others festivals, modes of salutations and greetings, common customs and etiquettes influenced by the surrounding Hindu ethos, and, above all, worship of saints as Shirk (associating other powers with Allah) and so on. They wanted to wean away the Muslims, especially the new converts, from residual Hindu practices and replace instead a purified form of Islam unadulterated by "foreign influences". Another form of intervention came later in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sir Ahmad Khan best represents this view. Instead of a retreat into the past and interpretations oriented to the times of Prophet Muhammad and his close associates, Sir Syed's vision was one of a Muslim community, staying away from the emerging struggle against the British colonialism, achieving rapid modernisation with a conception of Islam in consonance with reason and science and the demands of the modern era.

Whatever the differences may be, which can be discerned with respect to historical times, internal thrust and intentions or motivations, there are certain common features and consequences of these interventions from above. The more salient features are, first, a well thought-out and planned move towards addressing the people directly instead of relying on or looking to the court or the aristocracy to defend Islam, as, for example, the orthodoxy did in the conflict between Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh. Some set out to build bridges between the Muslim gentry and the lower ranks of Muslims to provide enduring channels of communication within the community. Secondly, these interventions sought to bring a shift from the site of theological arguments addressed to the learned for political appeals to some form of mobilisation of the people on broad themes. Thirdly, there was a consistent effort to reconstruct a "healthier" version of Islam as the ground on which the newly sought identity of Muslims could stand. It may not be wrong to see that these two trends came about due to these interventions as "Traditionalist" and "Modernist". Interestingly they took diametrically opposite stands towards the nationalist movement even while

looking at Muslims as a distinct cultural community. The traditionalists supported the national movement while the modernists pleaded with the Muslims to stay aloof from the independence movement.

The contradictory consequences involved in all this are worth noting. While these developments were slowly drawing the Muslim community away from the rest of the society, these were also slowly bringing them as a people into the public arena as active participants, insistent on being heard. The people were becoming active in the public arena, by distancing themselves from the Hindus. This was an important development. Though, this in itself was not a cause of partition, where political healing was still possible, but it did become a contributory factor.

## 25.6 RELIGIOUS POLITICS: AN OVERVIEW

Let us come back to course of religious politics among the Hindu communities delineated above. After the disaster of the partition, we are now in India where Hindus constitute 83 percent of the population. The next biggest religious group is that of the Muslims who make up about 11 per cent of the population. Developments among the Hindus therefore matter a lot more for the fate of India than among other religious communities. Of the many developments and interpretative changes discussed above, an insight into three or four consequences is needed to understand our present politics.

The first of these was to give monolithic unity to the Hindu community, a body of doctrines held together in a theological whole, quite in the way other religions are. Hinduism as a religion with fluid boundaries was seen as a liability in face of an adversity. There was also a concerted effort, secondly, to give muscle to Hinduism. All the religious thinkers in the wake of revivalism, with the sole exception of Gandhi, felt that Hinduism was weak and effeminate and therefore it was first conquered by Muslims and then colonised by the British. It must, therefore, be masculinised. Otherwise India will remain threatened by outside powers and internal enemy. This view united such diverse thinkers as Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati and many others. The unity and integrity of India was conceived in the unity and masculinity of the Hindus. Hindu history was, over the last thousand years since the coming of Muslims, viewed as a story of defeats and misfortune. Before that time was the period of great achievement, which was one of glory. It is the duty of every one, here is the third feature, which united every one of these thinkers, to recover that golden age. They differed only in their means of achieving it. Strategically they were one but tactically differed quite considerably.

The last important characteristic underlying the revivalist thought was a deep suspicion of those features of Hinduism, which to many other conscientious Hindus, like Gandhi or Tagore for example, were the beauty and strength of Hinduism. This had to do with its diversity and ability to generate innovative variety. No other religion had such a capacity. The above thinkers and the movements, we have considered earlier, had deep mistrust about this trait of Hinduism. They were therefore distrustful of local differences, regional variations, mystic cults or the *Bhakti* movements. These were looked at as enfeebling and therefore to be shunned and fought out. This reached its culmination in Savarkar's *Hindutva* (the most important book *Sangh Parivar*, written in 1923) where doctrine itself is suspect

and is replaced by race, blood and the shared history of this sacred land—*Punia Bhoomi*. The perception was that those outside of sharing this blood and tradition, like Muslim and Christian with religions from alien soil, can never be able to ever give full allegiance to India; they can never treat India as their *Punia Bhoomi*. Muslims thus are a suspect presence in India. It, therefore, follows that to be a good Hindu, one should combat the Muslims and also the Christian. The question then to ponder over is: is cultural nationalism not communal?

What Hindutva does is to counter the *direct identity of the Hindus* with the *negative similarity of the minorities*. We now have the Hindu *Self* standing in the perpetual conflicting presence of the *Other*. It is only in getting the better of the *Other* that the *Self* can realise its potential. That is what religious politics culminates in. This is what Hindutva is all about.

All this is still in the realm of imagination, the world of thought. How does one make it actual, the politics of the day? What stands between the imagined and the real is the organisation, so thought Hedgewar—the founder of the *Rashtriya SwayamSevak Sangh* (RSS). Hedgewar, in Nagpur, founded the RSS in 1925, two years after the publication of *Hindutva* by V.D. Savarkar. Many attempts to build organisations were made from the beginning of this century. The earliest were prntinidhi *sabhas* of the Arya Samaj which itself was founded in 1875. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Hindu Sabha was founded. Later on in the 1915 the Hindu Maha Sabha was formed. The efforts were always there but nothing succeeded in a big way.

The RSS was a modest beginning, in a provincial town of Maharashtra, where it still has its headquarters. It was unique and innovative in a simple way. Its *organisational* principle was based on three things. There was to be a uniform (a knicker and shirt), a salute (to the RSS, but not national, flag) and a drill (with lathis) to give a martial outlook. This was to be followed by chat with a swayam sevak, on matters considered by him to be "patriotic". But the important idea underlying this was that it must become a part of the routine of one's life. The ordinary cadre, the Sevak, is a soldier in the cause of the nation. Like in military, he is bound by discipline, in strictly hierarchical set up. Though it seemed to be farcical in the beginning, it achieved considerable success under its second dictator, Golwalkar. It has number of affiliates like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal, Durga Bahini, Hindu and Mannini. The RSS started a political party of its own, having earlier collaborated with Hindu Mahasabha for many years, the Jana Sangh. It was reincarnated as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980, which is now in a coalition called National Democratic Front, the ruling party in the country.

## 25.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have studied the meaning and importance of religious politics, and its divergent views. It has gradually evolved since the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the national movement as its background. The beginning was made with social reforms and subsequently found support from scholars and nationalists alike, though their methods differed significantly. Hindu revivalism secured its bases in Bengal, Maharashtra and the Northern Indian region. The nationalist leaders drew their inspiration from religious icons and cults and Vedas; they tried to heighten the sensibilities of their groups by advocating the reforms and rituals related to their respective faiths. The Islamic perspective drew its sources from the historic past and

attempted to unite the community by constructing a healthier version of Islam. Gradually the differences led to conflicting perspectives; nevertheless, the religious groups have started assuming a prominent role, thus making the issue of religious politics a continuous phenomenon.

## 25.8 EXERCISES

- 1) How is religious politics different from the issue of religion and politics?
- 2) Explicate the essence of religious politics.
- 3) Discuss the evolution of religious politics.
- 4) What do you understand by Hindu Revivalism?
- 6) Write a note on the Islamic perspective of religious politics.

## **UNIT 26 ETHNICITY AND NATION-STATE**

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### **Structure**

- 26.1 Introduction
  - 26.2 Ethnicity and Nation-state : Conceptualisation
  - 26.3 Perspectives to study Ethnicity
  - 26.4 Manifestation of Ethnicity
  - 26.5 Response of the State
  - 26.6 The Main Cases of Ethnicity in India
    - 26.6.1 North-East India
    - 26.6.2 Tamil Nadu
    - 26.6.3 Punjab
    - 26.6.4 Jammu and Kashmir
  - 26.7 Summary
  - 26.8 Exercises
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### **26.1 INTRODUCTION**

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India, like any other third world country after achieving Independence from the colonial rule, was engaged with the project of nation-building. The leadership of the country at that time believed that the only way to achieve the overall development of society was to have democratic political system in the country based on the principles of secularism, liberty, equity, socialism, which were guaranteed in the Constitution of the country. To achieve these principles the state introduced the Nehruvian or Mahalanobis model of development. But the project of nation-building with main purpose to achieve democracy and development had to be carried out amidst the ethnic diversities in the country. Apart from the caste, religious and tribal groups, the diversities in India ranged in terms of culture, languages and regional development. With different levels of development and histories, different regions and cultural groups in the country could pose a real challenge to the nation-building. Moreover, the strategic location on the international borders of the North-East, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir made the task of nation-building more challenging. With the fresh memories of communal holocaust following the partition of the country, the goal of nation-building was the top priority of the country's leadership after achieving Independence. It was believed at that time that with the establishment of the democratic political system and overall development, the ethnicity or the diversities in India will not pose any problem in nation-building. In the process of nation-building, the ethnicity will be relegated to the background.

While in the first two decades following Independence, attempt in the quest for building India as a nation-state was basically based on the modernisation or the developmental westernisation model, from the 1980s onwards the Hindu rightist forces in the country represented by the BJP and its fraternal organisations are attempting to project India as a nation-state, or a Hindu state, based on the principles of cultural nationalism. Critical of

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the Nehruvian or the developmental model, advocates of such understanding strive to remove what they consider the distinctions in the policies of the state. Their attempts to introduce legislation regarding the food habits, religious preferences are indication to give priority to the Hindu religion/culture/faith. In such perspective the nation is considered as the Hindu nation-state where other religions/faths get the secondary position. This poses challenge to the nation-state in two ways – one, it does not recognise the existence of the other faiths which disagree with it, and legitimises the social hierarchy based on the Hindu varna system; second, in reaction to this there has been mobilisation of the ethnic groups based on the religious and caste considerations. It has resulted in the communal conflicts, terrorism, protest of the low castes in the form of religious conversion, caste riots, and search for an alternative ideology which professes social change. Even the rise of dravidian movement was a reaction to the Hindu nationalism as perceived by the dravidian parties of South India.

## 26.2 ETHNICITY AND NATION-STATE: CONCEPTUALISATION

Generally ethnicity is considered as the mobilisation of a group of people who share common attributes in terms of culture, language, religion, history, etc., and who are different from another group which also shares certain common attributes. This mobilisation can be on a single attribute or more. For example mobilisation on the basis of language, religion (known as communalism in the Indian context), language, caste or tribe is considered as ethnic mobilisation. Paul R. Brass is one of the examples who uses the ethnic mobilisation and the communal mobilisation interchangeably. Dipankar Gupta differentiates between the ethnicity and communalism. He argues that ethnicity necessarily denotes mobilisation of a group in relation to another with reference to the nation-state – the territory and the sovereignty. An ethnic group either proclaims itself to be the real adherent of the faith in the territory of a nation or wants to set up a sovereign state or questions the loyalty of another group. The reference to the attributes of the nation-state can be direct or indirect. In his opinion a group mobilisation which is not referred to the attributes of the nation-state – territory or sovereignty is not ethnic mobilisation. It is simply communal mobilisation; the loyalty of a group to the nation-state is not doubted or proclaimed. In communalism it is the government, which is the reference point; the government is accused of either discriminating against or favouring the communal groups. In the changing context of time and space, communalism can turn into ethnicity and vice-versa.

A nation-state is a sovereign geographical entity whose foundation is the shared sentiments of a community based on the history, culture, language, religion or civilisation. But some scholars do not consider India as a nation-state. They argue that the basis of the foundation of a nation-state is single nation or nationality; in such a society people share a single common language, culture or even religion. Since there are a large number of nationalities in India who speak different languages, share different cultural attributes, histories, religions, she is a multinational state, not a nation-state. However, generally, in the Indian context the terms, nation-state, nation or multinational state are used interchangeably.

### **26.3 PERSPECTIVES TO STUDY ETHNICITY**

How do the people sharing common attributes of culture, language, religions within a particular territorial limits or even cutting across different regions form a group – ethnic group as distinct from such other groups? There are basically three perspectives to explain this question, the primordial, the instrumentalist, and the perspective, which combines the traits of both the primordial and the instrumentalist. According to the primordial approach the ethnic differences among the people are "given", they are inherited by them. These differences are bound to take the form of ethnic conflict between the groups. The advocates of the instrumentalist approach believe that the ethnic differences are not "given"; they are created by the elite, who could be politicians, teachers, religious leaders, etc. The latter manipulate the social cleavages or differences for the attainment of their goal. The social cleavages which might be existing together in harmony despite their differences are translated by the elite into the ethnic differences. In particular contexts the ethnic differences culminate in the form of ethnic conflicts, riots, autonomy movements or even insurgency. The basis of social cleavages, which are turned into the ethnic groups are not always real. Some of these are even "invented" or "constructed" by the elite. The third perspective believes that both these perspectives – primordial and instrumentalists, are unable to explain the issue of ethnicity. They divide the issue into "bi-polarity". It advocates the combination of both these approaches. Its advocates argue that the primordial approach does not explain as to how people, sharing commonness, get activated into the ethnic groups. Similarly, the instrumentalist approach does not explain why people sharing common attributes respond to the call of the elite who manipulate them into the ethnic groups.

### **26.4 MANIFESTATION OF ETHNICITY**

The understanding that the ethnicity will take a back seat in the face of the development which would follow as a result of the Mahalanobis model – boosting the process of nation-state building, was contested soon. Much before the results of the model became visible, the premise on which it was based was questioned. It was argued that such a model of nation-building ignored the smaller nationalities in the country. It was an imposition on them. Their identities, cultures, histories and aspirations were neglected. This model of nation-state building was antithetical to their interests. The advocates of this perspective protested against the nationalist perspective. Started with the revolt of the Nagas in the North-East, it spread to Tamil Nadu in the South, and Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir in the North. Ethnic challenge to the nation-building continued in almost all parts of the country since then, on the lines of caste, religion, region, language, tribes, etc. While a single attribute could be the most visible marker in the formation of the ethnic identity, it has been the combination of more than one which actually had provided the basis for it. Similarly, Hindu rightist forces were challenged. Its critics argued that India is not a nation-state. It is a multi-national state. Paul R. Brass in fact argued that though in practice the national level Indian policymakers followed the Mahalanobis model, they had accepted in principle the pluralist characteristics – different linguistic, religious and other minorities of the country in terms of its policies. This sort of pluralism was accepted in the national

level policies only, But the state governments often followed discriminatory and assimilative policies towards the minorities. To project that India is nation-state is virtually a denial of the existence of the pluralism and the diversities in the country.

The ethnic challenge to the nation-building/nation-state building took the following shapes in India:

- 1) Autonomy movements
- 2) Demand for secession
- 3) Insurgency
- 4) Conflicts and riots on the basis of identity markers –tribe, caste, language, religion, etc.

First three forms of ethnic manifestation are also called self-determination movements. It needs to be noted that these forms of manifestation do not follow a uniform sequence of occurrence in the country. It might start with one form and assume another form in different situations. From the 1950s onwards the conflicts based on these have been common in various regions of the country. In fact, Salig S. Harrison termed the first two decades following the Independence as the "most dangerous decades" referring to the linguistic or communal conflicts which took place in the country at that time. Very often such conflicts in the states were rooted in the local situations.

The linguistic reorganisation of the states created the states on the basis of some common linguistic traits. But there continued the conflicts on the basis of religion, native-immigrant dichotomy, dialect/linguistic controversy in many parts of the country. Demand for the autonomy within states and for the secession from the country cropped up. These often resulted in violence. While in the case of the autonomy movements, insurgency, and secessionist movements the main targets of the protagonists is the state agencies, especially identified with the central government quite often this also involves the ethnic conflict or riots between different communities in a region. But if it is a conflict/riot on the basis of language, religion, castes, tribal identity, it is mainly between different groups. In such cases the state agencies can be perceived as being partisan to a particular community or be really so as against the other. The scholars have, however, noticed that the secessionist tendencies in India have existed alongwith the nationalist sentiments.

## **26.5 RESPONSE OF THE STATE**

The response of the state depends on the context of political situation. The general pattern of the state response to the ethnic manifestations in India has included coercion, accommodation, causing the division within the ethnic movement, appeasement of and patronage to a particular section of the leadership of the movement, etc. Paul R Brass has argued that in the 1950s and 1960s the central government had pursued unwritten rules towards the ethnic conflicts, etc., – not considering the demand for the political recognition of the religious communities; no concession to the demand of the linguistic, regional or other culturally defined groups; and no concession to the cultural groups in conflict unless both sides support it substantially. For example, it was not until the

demand for a Punjabi Suba got the support of the leadership in Haryana for a separate Hindi speaking area that the Punjabi Suba – the state of Punjab, was created.

## 26.6 THE MAIN CASES OF ETHNICITY IN INDIA

There are several examples of ethnic manifestation in different regions of India. This section discusses the most prominent of them.

### 26.6.1 North-East India

With their distinct histories, geographical location and diverse ethnic composition, almost all the states of North-East India have been beset with the problems of ethnicity. They all have witnessed insurgency, ethnic conflicts and riots and autonomy movements in varying degrees at different point of times in the post-Independence period. They have generally taken violent forms. Even as the elements of the insurgency are present in almost all the states, it took the most strident form in Nagaland and Mizoram. There are forces in most of the states of North-East India which believe that they are not Indians; their territories have been merged with India forcibly without their consent. They would prefer to have their own sovereign nation-states. The insurgent groups in Nagaland for example did not accept the Indian Constitution, its VI schedule meant for the North-East, boycotted the first general election held in 1952 in the country, and declared to have set up their own sovereign state in exile – the Federal Republic of Nagaland. In the past two decades new insurgent groups have emerged in almost all states of the region. Supported by the foreign countries, especially the bordering neighbours, these have set up an umbrella organisation under the readership of the NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland). They question the sovereignty of the Indian state and the concept of the nation-state. The areas of Assam which are inhabited by the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos had witnessed the movement for an autonomous state in the 1960s. It resulted in the formation of a separate state of Meghalaya in 1972. In Assam, there are agitations for the creation of the autonomous states like Bodoland and Karbi Anglong, etc. The target in the insurgency is the sovereignty of the state – police, army and other institutions; the autonomy movements do not question the sovereignty of the state, but their attack also is diverted against the state agencies. The insurgency and the autonomy movements often result in the ethnic riots, especially between the tribals and non-tribals or between one or the other tribe. All these developments ultimately get linked to the state policies regarding the North-East region.

There are mainly two perspectives which analyse the issue of ethnicity and nation-building in the context of the North-East India. The first is the modernisation/development/ "nation-state building" perspective. The second is the "federation-building" perspective. The former views the problems as the outcome of the following: the process of "nation-building" in the face of the conflict between the modern and tradition; the process of modernisation and transition (democratisation); conflict between the modern and traditional leadership; and the inability of the system to fulfil the aspirations of the new generation. The scholars who have used this perspective are S K Chaube, V B Singh, B G Verghese, Myron Wiener and Hiren Guhain. The second perspective is basically a critique of the first one. This perspective is available largely in the writings of the scholars who hail from the North-Eastern region. The prominent representatives of this perspective are Sanjib Baruah, Sajal

Nag, Udayan Sharma, Hiren Guhain, Sanjay Hazarika and M P Bezbarua. In fact, Urmila Phadnis is of the opinion that the main leadership in the entire South Asia followed the notion of nationhood as per the considerations of the dominant groups and ignored the minority constituents of the society. The scholars who adhere to this perspective argue that the problems in the North-East were the result of the "nation-state building" perspective of the mainstream national level leadership. They further argue that in their quest of the "nation-state building" the dominant groups of the country represented by the central government and the mainstream leadership ignored the "periphery", the smaller nationalities of the North-East; have acted as a "step mother" to them; shown arrogant attitude; paid less attention to the human rights violation in the North-East than other parts of the country. These factors have resulted in the insurgency problem in the North-East. This perspective is well articulated in the suggestion of Sanjib Baruah that the mainstream leadership of the country should replace their "nation-state building" approach in favour of "genuine federation-building" in order to retrieve the situation.

### 26.6.2 Tamil Nadu

The most strident opposition to the notion of India as a nation-state had come in South India much before the country was freed from the colonial rule. The Dravidian movement of Tamil Nadu became the representative of this in the region. Originating in the Self-Respect Movement and later getting articulated in the form of the Justice Party, DK and DMK, the Dravidian nationalism questioned the dominant notion of the nationalism and nation-state in the country on three grounds – religion, language and caste. The pioneer of the Dravidian nationalism, E V Ramaswami Naicker, popularly known as Periyar, argued that the dominant nationalism in India was articulated by the Congress which was based on the Hindu religion or Brahminism, Hindi language and high castes, especially Brahminism. It was antithetical to the Dravidian nationalism based on non-Aryan Dravidian religion, Tamil language and the low castes. It was necessary to protect the Dravidian identity and nationalism from the domination of the North Indian high caste nationalism. These two forms of nationalism could not exist together. The demand for secession, anti-Hindi agitation and later demand for more autonomy were the examples of the implications of the challenge of ethnicity to state in South India.

The legacy of Periyar was carried forward by C M Annadurai and M Karunanidhi. Annadurai, however, disagreed with the Periyar. While Periyar held only the Brahminism responsible for the plight of the low castes, Annadurai said it was also because of the colonial policies that the domination of the North Indian high castes and Congress was established over the Dravidians. According to Annadurai, the way to liberate the Dravidas from two oppressors – colonialism and the North Indian Brahmins and Baniahs was to secede from India and set up independent Dravida Nadu. He argued that an independent, democratic republic of India would be favourable to their demand for secession. Narendra Subramanian observes that the Dravidian parties were the first political parties to challenge the hegemony of the Congress in an Indian state. Comparing the Dravidian ethnic assertion with other secessionist movements in the country, he observes that it was less violent in nature. It was basically an ideological movement. The DMK emerged as an alternative to the Congress in the 1960s, which assumed power in 1967. Since then the power in Tamil Nadu has been shared by the DMK and AI DMK with the help of allies.

The demand for secession, however, did not generate the mass support like those of Nagaland or Jammu and Kashmir. Nor did it generate that level of violence. The demand of secessionism was dropped by the Dravidian parties in the course of time. But the sense of their separate Tamil identity continued even after that. The secessionist tendencies gave way to the demand for the autonomy of the states in the 1960s. The Dravidian parties of Tamil Nadu became important allies of the forces which demanded autonomy in the country.

The thrust on the Dravidian culture deterred the growth of ethnicity on the lines of Hindu communalism in Tamil Nadu. Unlike other states of South India, the basis of challenge to the Hindu communalism in Tamil Nadu had been ideological.

### 26.6.3 Punjab

The ethnicity in Punjab got manifested mainly in the form of autonomy movement and insurgency, which had the regional, religious and economic basis. Sometimes it had taken the form of the communal conflict between the Hindus and Sikhs. Punjab had witnessed the autonomy movement during the 1950s and 1960s, which was spearheaded by the Akali Dal. The Akali leadership argued that the areas of Punjab which were inhabited by the people whose mother tongue was Punjabi, and who followed Sikh religion should be given an autonomous province of their own. According to Baldev Raj Nayar, the Akali leadership followed three-pronged strategy to mobilise the support – constitutional, infiltration and agitational. The first involved the constitutional means like memoranda, rallies, marches, etc.; the second allowed a large number of the Akali Dal members to penetrate the Congress organisation and influence its decisions from within in favour of a Punjabi Suba; and the third consisted of marches to shrines, use of force, intimidation. The agitational strategy often led to violence. In fact, there were two groups within the Akali Dal, one represented by Sant Fateh Singh giving the socio-economic explanation; another was represented by Master Tara Singh who justified the demand for Punjabi Suba on the religious ground – for an autonomous province of the Sikhs.

The period from the 1980s onwards was marked by the next phase of the autonomy movement in Punjab. Unlike the earlier one, this had developed into the insurgency movement challenging the sovereignty of the Indian state and for setting up of Khalistan (the Sikh homeland) founded on the tenets of Sikh religion. It also bred the communal divide between the Sikhs and the Hindus in Punjab. Marked by the large scale violence, which resulted in innumerable deaths and colossal loss of property, the movement in Punjab challenged the edifice of the Indian nation-state. The context of the Akali agitation in this phase was different from the 1950s and 1960s. Following the decline of the Congress and rise of the Akali Dal as a significant force in Punjab changed the trends in the state politics from the late 1960s. In an attempt to retain her control on the politics of the country, and the Congress organisation, Indira Gandhi personalised the Congress and intervened in the politics of the states directly, especially in the selection of the Chief Ministers of the Congress-ruled states. This coincided with the rising demands for the change in the centre-state relations to be more favourable to the states. The challenge posed by the Akali Dal to the dominance of the Congress in Punjab in the 1970s prompted Indira Gandhi to use Sikh religious symbols to mobilise the Sikh votes. In the 1980 election to the Punjab Legislative Assembly, she took the help of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a Sikh religious leader to seek the support of Sikhs. This had two consequences. On the one hand it encouraged the religious leaders, especially Bhindranwale

to act independent of the political leadership and become belligerent. With the support of the foreign forces, he was able to rally a large number of the youth and demand a separate Sikh homeland – Khalistan. During the Khalistani movement large scale violence took place, which resulted in the assassination of Indira Gandhi, which was part of the chain of the processes following the Operation Blue Star. The Khalistan agitation had challenged the legitimacy and the sovereignty of the Indian Nation-State. On the other hand, the use of Sikh religion and the imposition of the Sikh code of conduct on the Hindus created the communal divide between the Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab. This, sometimes, culminated into communal riots and conflicts.

There are two types of explanation of the Punjab crisis as the developments there came to be addressed during the 1970s and 1980s – the socio-economic and political. The first is provided by the economists and the Marxist scholars. The main representatives of this framework are – Sucha Singh Gill, K C Singhal, Harish Kumar Puri, Joyce Pettigrew, M S Dhami, Javeed Alam and Gurharpal Singh. They argue that the roots of the Punjab crisis lie in the social and economic problems of the people, especially in the wake of the green revolution; unable to meet the cost in agriculture along with the rising unemployment, the crisis of Sikh identity caused by the impact of consumerism and modern values provided a fertile ground for the rise of militancy in Punjab. The scholars who give political explanation, for example Paul R Brass, criticise the socio-economic explanation as inadequate and reductionist. They argue, on the other hand, that the Punjab crisis has been the outcome of the political manipulation of the religion and the problems of the people by the politicians. According to Brass, it had actually been the manipulation of the services of Bhindranwale by Indira Gandhi in the context of changing centre-state relations which gave birth to the militancy in Punjab.

#### **26.6.4 Jammu and Kashmir**

The autonomy movement and insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir is linked to the geographical, historical and religious factors. Before its accession, the political leadership in the state had been divided on the issue of its relationship to the nation-state. While the king Hari Singh, who wanted to retain it as an independent state, opposed the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India, the most popular leader of the state Sheikh Abdullah wanted it to be merged with India. But once the state got acceded to India and Sheikh Abdullah became the Prime Minister of the state, the post which existed only in this state and later on it was converted to the post of chief minister. He started wavering on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India. He formed the Plebiscite Front, which provoked the central government to depose and imprison him from 1953 till 1964.

There have been demands for autonomy within the state of Jammu and Kashmir from two regions – Jammu and the Ladakh, where the non-Kashmiris form substantial part of the population. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has also joined other states for the regional autonomy in terms of the change in the centre-state relations. The state has witnessed the insurgency since 1980s which resulted in the large scale violence and communal divide in the state. The involvement of Pakistan in the insurgency has posed the challenge to the Indian Nation-state. According to Balraj Puri, the reasons for the insurgency in the Jammu and Kashmir are: attitude of the central government, the lack of opposition in the slate, derailment of democracy by the state and central leadership, rising unemployment and problems of the people, and the Cold War and Pakistan. In his opinion though the causes of insurgency in the

state have been existing from 1947 itself, its recent phase which started from 1986 does not have links with the earlier period. The central government curtailed the autonomy granted to the state in 1947; through the Constitutional Amendment, it made Articles 356 and 357 applicable to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The central government as well as Sheikh Abdullah did not let the opposition grow in the state; the democracy was derailed in the name of nationalism; the interference of the central government in the affairs of the state and the unprincipled stance of the state government. These factors bred the feelings of helplessness among the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It coincided with the rising unemployment and deterioration in the material conditions of the people. At the same time refusal to grant autonomy within the state to the regions of Jammu and Ladakh engendered regional divide within the state. The void created by the absence of democratic opposition, political parties was filled up by the communal and fundamentalist forces. Encouraged and abated by Pakistan, these forces became the sources of insurgency in the state. The government's failure to find the solution which could integrate the people of Jammu and Kashmir emotionally to the nation-state, and instead relying on the armed forces has aggravated the problem.

## **26.7 SUMMARY**

To sum up, ethnicity is one of the challenges which the Indian nation-state faces. It is manifested in the form of the self-determination movements – the autonomy movements, secessionist movements, insurgency and ethnic conflicts and riots. In an attempt to build the nation-state, the national leadership in the country in the first two decades following independence believed that the overall development/modernisation of the country would result in subordinating the ethnic challenge. It introduced the Nehruvian/Mahalanobis model for building the nation-state. But within a few years of independence, the country was engulfed in the linguistic agitations and communal violence. The model of nation-state building was contested by the smaller nationalities in various parts of the country – Nagas and Mizos in the North-East, Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. The number of ethnic conflicts continue to grow in the country.

There are mainly three sets of explanation for the rise of ethnic challenge to the nation-state – the primordial, the instrumental and a combination of the primordial and the instrumental. The instrumental explanation is the most predominant. It has been argued by some scholars that the nation-state building model is an attempt of the dominant leadership in the country to subordinate the smaller nationalities. To retrieve the situation, there has to be a reversal in the policies from the "nation-state building" to "genuine federation-building",

## **26.8 EXERCISES**

- 4) What is ethnicity? Discuss the perspectives to study it.
- 5) Identify the forms of manifestation of ethnicity. Compare the challenge of ethnicity to the nation-state in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.
- 6) Examine the ethnicity in the context of North-East India.
- 7) Write a note on the ethnic challenge to the nation-state with the example of Tamil Nadu.

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## **UNIT 27 DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT: AN ASSESSMENT**

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### **Structure**

- 27.1 Introduction
  - 27.2 Democracy
    - 27.2.1 Procedural democracy
    - 27.2.2 Substantive democracy
  - 27.3 Development
  - 27.4 Democracy and Development
  - 27.5 Summary
  - 27.6 Exercises
- 

### **27.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Discourse on both the democracy and development in India denotes two contradictory points about their assessment, i.e., one, the democracy and development have succeeded; and, two, these have failed. This applies to democracy and development when these are dealt with as interdependent or independent of each other i.e., whether they are compatible or not. This unit presents an overview of the assessment of democracy and development in India as two distinct phenomena and also in relation to each other. Having discussed briefly the evolution of democracy and the models and strategies of development in India, this unit discusses the democracy in India as both - procedural and substantive.

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### **27.2 DEMOCRACY**

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Following Independence India adopted a democratic system of governance. Institutions of democracy in India in fact began to grow during the colonial rule. They evolved through various Acts of the British India Government and as a result of the demand within India and a section in England. The provisions of democracy found their place in the Government of India Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935. Following the deliberations within the Constituent Assembly, democracy was introduced in the post-independence India in 1950 with coming into effect India's Republican Constitution.

India opted for the parliamentary form of government in order to make the nation-state (modernity) based on the principles of universal adult franchise and periodic election in contrast to the village-level government in the light of Gandhian principles.

The assessment of democracy depends on the indices used to indicate or measure it. There are mainly two models of indices regarding democracy - one related to the institutional minimal, procedural democracy; two related to the substantive or effective democracy. The former views democracy in terms of the presence of the institutions of democracy, politica

parties and other associations or organisations, periodic elections, universal adult franchise, leadership, etc. The latter does not consider the institutional/procedural/electoral democracy as comprehensive indicator of the democracy. The electoral democracy, in fact, is minimalist, which is also marked by a large number of factors which are inimical substantive to democracy. It is rarely concerned with what happens beyond elections, in the social space. Alternatively, the substantive democracy views the phenomenon of democracy in the light of its disgregation and diffusions, redistributive justice, human capabilities and entitlements (education, health, infrastructure, etc.), social capital/associated factors (trust, values, norms), civil society, human rights and dignities, governance (participation, accountability, efficacy, transparency, etc.) These are contingent on development as development in turn is contingent upon democracy. The impetus of the debate on the democracy in India has been on the transition, consolidation and deepening of democracy. The first two issues dominated the debate during the first two decades of democracy in the post-Independence period and the deepening of democracy became an issue of focus in the recent period. The assertion of various identities/new social movements - the process of democratisation, have contributed to the project of deepening democracy. But it is dependent on the participation of various communities cutting across the cleavages. Sub-sections 27.2.1 and 27.2.2 deal with the procedural and substantive democracy in India.

### **27.2.1 Procedural Democracy**

The observers of the procedural democracy largely believe that democracy in India has been successful. The criteria for this assessment are - participation and competition. These are indicated by the frequency of the elections in India and competition among political parties to contest elections. The percentage of turn out and the percentage of votes polled by parties are indicators of participation. The advocates of this approach are buoyant about the success of the electoral politics in India, which is taken as the general pattern of success of democracy. Those who see success of democracy in terms of elections - participation and competition follow survey methods to measure democracy. They infer the dominant trends in the election in terms of the turn out and the percentage of vote or use of statistical method – correlation, coefficient or the regression analysis. They see the multivariable relationship of the turn out percentage and participation with the socio-economic data in particular constituencies. On the grounds that this analysis is based on survey, and takes into account the socio-economic and political factors of a particular region, it is also called the ecological analysis. However, some of the scholars who follow survey-based analysis feel that survey analysis are full of errors, are not backed by the qualitative data and also do not provide data for the period between elections. During the first fifteen years following Independence, scholars like Rajni Kothari, M. Franda, Paul R Brass, Field and Myron Wiener used the survey method to conduct election studies. All kinds of factors crime, caste, religion, etc., become effective in elections. The survey method has been carried forward by several scholars, and during the past two decades the psephologists have also used it.

Procedural democracy was meant to contribute to the nation-building in India. The focus of studies on democracy in India in the earlier decades following independence had been to examine as to how it helped in the nation-building through the introduction of the universal adult franchise and periodic elections. It was known as the modernisation theory. The modernisation theory claimed that the developing countries underwent a process of modernisation

- whose ultimate aim would be stable democracy: it would be accompanied with the socio-economic modernisation - urbanisation, spread of mass media, education, wealth and equality. It was believed that the development in India would strengthen democracy and the divisions based on caste, religions, etc., would disappear.

However, these hopes were belied in the following period. Salig Harrison, apprehended a dangerous decade in India in the 1960s in the face of recurrent linguistic and ethnic violence. The violence which started in the 1950s itself, was further escalated in the 1960s and 1970s; the defeat of the Congress in several states in the 1967 assembly elections and the imposition of emergency in the country during 1975-1977 were examples of people's discontentment of emergency. Unable to meet the challenge democratically, the political executive responded to these by authoritarianism, personalisation of the institutions and imposition. Scholars responded to emergency as an aberration. Some scholars are critical of the modernisation thesis. The predominance of the modernisation approach cast in the behaviouralist/structural-functional analysis accorded priority to the question whether India would survive as a nation-state or not,

### 27.2.2 Substantive Democracy

The critique of procedural democracy is provided by the scholars who study the substantive democracy. In their opinion, it views democracy in a limited way. Electoral democracy is minimal democracy. Free and fair elections, universal adult franchise, political parties, pressure groups and availability of constitution etc. are not sufficient conditions for democracy, though they are necessary. Democracy has to be located in the society and taken out of the institutional mode. This alternative view of democracy can be termed as the substantive democracy. Beetham argued for a "social agenda of democratisation". Democracy has to be grounded in the reality of society, apart from the participation and competition in the elections. Fareed Zakaria, however, criticises the substantive democracy in that it views democracy in the normative terminology as "good governance", with a wide range of rights; it does not consider the descriptive democracy.

In the past two decades, in India, substantive democracy has also found a significant place in the discourse on democracy. The assessment of substantive democracy is sought to be made in relation to the role of the state (with democracy) on the issues concerning the nation-state - secularism, welfarism and development in India; and also the role of the state regarding these issues in the context of globalisation. Niraja Jayal argues that there are two types of arguments regarding the relationship between the state and democracy: one, there can be no democracy without an effective state which can exist when there is a strong civil society to counter the authoritarianism of the state. Jayal argues that both state and society are complimentary to each other in relation to the setting up of democracy. But in the absence of the universal criteria of citizenship, the particularistic interests can hijack the project of democracy. In her opinion Indian state is an interventionist state whose thrust has been developmental rather than welfare state.

Civil Society is also an essential ingredient of substantive democracy. In India there are two viewpoints on the civil society. One, it considers all associations and collective actions as civil society, irrespective of the issues they take up; two, only those associations which take up two issues of universal significance, not sectarian, and whose foundation is secular/universal are

considered civil society. Recently a new debate has got momentum in our country: the debate between the communitarians and the liberal, the relationship between the individuals and the communities; within and between them.

The rise of identity politics - dalits, OBCs, women, tribals, ethnicity, environmental issues, etc, - the new social movements – and the inability of the discourse which privileges democracy with the elections have necessitated the focus on substantive democracy. This has been viewed both as a challenge to the nation-state and as an increase in the democratic content of the country with the understanding that India is becoming more democratic, a position which Ashutosh Varshey opted. The most ardent critique of the nation-state perspective is provided in the writings of the scholars representing the peripheries of the country like North-East India. This perspective proposes the alternative in the form of the "province - state". Sanjib Baruah's book *India Against Itself* is a representative of this perspective. This all has happened with the simultaneous rise of the large number of issues - governance, civil society, social capital, human rights, etc. The existence of all these factors is taken as an indicator of the existence of democracy in the country. Even here there are opposite views which suggest both the absence and presence of these factors.

With the introduction of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments, the decentralisation has been democratised and the scope of democracy has expanded to include the women, OBCs and dalits at the grass root level. Prior to this the dominant social groups exclusively dominated the institutions of the local self-governance. This defeated the very purpose of democracy. The transfer of 29 subjects to the local bodies has added to the democratic decentralisation. However, democratic decentralisation gets impeded in the light of the fact that in several cases women members of the PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions) are proxies of the male members of their families. The increasing role of crime, money, etc., has further eroded the credibility of local level democracy. Nevertheless, wherever the public action has coexisted with institutions of local self government, the institutions of local self government have functioned democratically.

Usually the assessment of democracy in India has been done at the national, state or district level and the functioning of the democracy at these levels has been independent of each other. There has been the "top-bottom", not the "bottom-up" approach to democracy in India. Atul Kohli, however, has covered three levels - nation, state and district in his book, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Crisis of Governability*.

Scholars like O'donnell have underlined the need to see the differences within democracy (citizenship). Following this tradition, Patrick Heller has "disaggregated" democracy in order to view the "its degrees" in India. Comparing Kerala with rest of the country, he opines that there is more democracy in Kerala than the rest of the country. It is possible due to the existence of the "robust civil society" and an "effective state" there unlike in rest of the country. Here the effective/substantive democracy is indicated by the progress in the areas of education, health and distributive justice, their extension to the subaltern groups.

In Rajni Kothari's opinion the Indian state played significant role in building democracy in the first two decades following Independence. It implemented welfare schemes and development programmes. Though it was a moderate state then, Indian democracy, during this phase, was

marked by the accommodation of all interests and building consensus. But since the 1970s, especially with the promulgation of emergency in India, the executive concentrated power in its hands. This eroded the moderateness of the state. As a result, the executive resorted to populism, undermining the democratic institutions and personalising institutions. The state virtually started acting against democracy.

Atul Kohli argues that the Indian democracy is facing a crisis of governability. It is indicated by the growing disjunction between weakening institutions and multiplying demands. Erosion in the credibility of political parties, leaders, and the indisciplined political mobilisation of various social groups, and class conflicts within the society have caused the crisis of governability in India. The state elite has played a crucial role in the politics of political disorder - crisis of favourability.

L.I. and S.H. Rudolphs have attempted to comprehend the relationship of Indian state and political economy with the democracy in India. They analyse the mobilisation of people in terms of demand polity, and the role of the state in terms of command polity. But there is no necessary correlation between the type of regime - democratic or authoritarian and type of polity - command or demand. The nature of polity - whether it is demand or command, depends on the nature of economy and not the nature of the regime.

The survival of Indian democracy has baffled some observers, for whom it is a "puzzle" or "exception" of the third world political systems; it has survived diversities on the basis of caste, religion, language, etc., which often result in violence. Arend Lijphart explains this 'puzzle' by providing a consociational interpretation. The theory of consociationalism is based on the premise that in a multi-ethnic society, power is shared among different groups of the society. The consociationalism in a society is contingent upon four conditions: (1) government of coalition in which all ethnic groups are represented (2) cultural autonomy of groups of consociation (3) their proportional representation in politics and civil services and (4) minority veto on the issues concerning the minority rights and autonomy. Lijphart argues that the success of the Congress system, coalition governments, federalism, principles of protective discrimination, and constitutional provisions of the religious and cultural rights of minorities, and minority veto through political pressure are indications of the success of Indian democracy, in a consociational way. Indian democracy has survived on the principles of "power-sharing system" - as it prevails in Austria, Netherlands, Switzerland, Lebanon and some other countries. In this system all major groups shared power in a consociational way. This system prevailed during the first two decades following Independence. Lijphart, however, concedes that during the past few years with the decline of the Congress system, and attack on the minorities and the rise of the BJP, the trends have been in contravention to the consociational theory. Paul R Brass criticises the consociational model as not applicable to India at all. This is so both in the context of modern history and contemporary politics. Though different groups might come together to form a consociation or alliances, their internal squabbles always pose a threat to consociation.

### **27.3 DEVELOPMENT**

Development is a recurrent theme in the discussion on democracy and social change. The concept has been used mainly by the sociologists and political scientists on the one hand, and by the economists on the other. The sociologists and political scientists use it as a modernisation paradigm,

which became popular to discuss the political and social change in the developing countries, liberated from the colonial folk. These changes were considered as development and modernisation, which indicated towards the process of nation-building or nation-state building, formation of political institutions (political parties, interest groups etc.), introduction of universal adult franchise and periodic election, written or unwritten constitution and level of urbanisation. The modernisation or development theories, influenced by behaviourism were mainly concerned with the question as to how a system maintained itself by accommodating various segments of the system. It gave no space to the possibility of change or break-down of the system as a result of the challenge from within it.

For the economists, development meant the growth in terms of the per capita income and GNP. The modernisation theory of development, apart from the factors mentioned above, has also considered the per capita income and GNP indices of development.

Amartya Sen has provided an alternative model of development. For him the per capita income and the GNP are important but not enough indices of development. Development in the real sense of the term means developing the human capabilities among the people and entitlements in terms of education, health, infrastructure and liberty,

## **27.4 DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT**

The debate on the relationship between democracy and development has dealt with two questions: are they compatible with each other? Or are they inimical to each other? Niraja Jayal asserts that this debate in India has been "somewhat misconceived". It has basically been engaged by the economists. Deepak Nayyar argues that in India there has been tension between economic development and political democracy. There is inclusion of the people, especially the poor, in the democratic processes but they have been excluded from the market. The market has seen the exclusive predominance of the elite. The state has been mainly concerned with the management of the interests/conflicts of the elite. During the post-Independence period, the role of the state vis-a-vis management of the conflicts and towards the interests of the people, especially the poor has passed through three phases - from 1947-1966, 1967-1990, and from 1990 onwards. The first phase was marked by the prominent role of the state, which was able to reach the consensus of various interests. In the second phase, there was an erosion in the effectiveness of the state and the consensus model. The state made political efforts to accommodate the rich peasants, and resorted to populism and patronage for managing interests of various classes. This phase also saw decline in the poverty to some extent. The third phase known as the phase of liberalisation, is marked by the erosion in the credibility of the state, and rising role of market. It is happening alongwith politics of liberalisation. In Nayyar's opinion for the first time in India economics of liberalisation and politics of empowerment are moving in the opposite directions. The people have the political rights but cannot participate in the market as they lack entitlements and capabilities. There is no attempt by the state to mediate or reconcile different interests. In such a situation, where the state cannot play an effective and mediating role, he suggests that the civil society can intervene.

Pranab Bardhan argues that democracy and development are irreconcilable. There are main proprietary classes in India - industrial capitalist class, rich farmers and the professionals in the

public sector. Their interests are in conflict and the state plays a mediating role among them. At the same time there is a "turmoil from below" – the assertion of various disadvantaged groups. There is a conflict between their interests and those of the propertied classes. There is also an anti-reform streak in the mobilisation of various groups. This makes the atmosphere hostile for economic reforms. Those who argue about the incompatibility of democracy and development refer to the countries of South East Asia where real development has taken place in the undemocratic regimes.

Amartya Sen has provided an unequivocal perspective on development and democracy. They are not incompatible. Rather democracy and development are complimentary to each other. Democracy is possible if people in a society have the entitlements and possess capabilities which enable them to be part of the democratic process. Freedom, which is an essential ingredient of democracy, promotes development in terms of entitlements and the capabilities of people. Development is also contingent upon democracy.

## 27.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed that there are two contradictory view-points about the assessment of democracy and development in India – these have succeeded and these have failed. The assessment of democracy and development is related to the meanings of these phenomena. There are two types of models of democracy discussed in relation to India: procedural and substantive. The former is mainly concerned with the institutions and processes of democracy. The latter places the democratic institutions and processes in the societal context – civil society, rights, etc. The dominant opinion of the scholars studying the procedural democracy considers that democracy in India has been a success, and those who study the substantive democracy do generally consider democracy in India as a failure. Development is also viewed in two ways – one, in terms of modern political institutions; two, in terms of the availabilities of the entitlements and capabilities to the people. There are two opposite opinions even about the compatibility of development and democracy.

## 27.6 EXERCISES

- 1) Explain the evolution and growth of democracy in India.
- 2) Discuss various conceptions of democracy
- 3) Evaluate the on-going debate on democracy and development.
- 4) Explain the concept of development and its relations with democracy.

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# **UNIT 1 LEGACY OF NATIONAL MOVEMENT WITH REFERENCE TO DEVELOPMENT, RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION**

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## **Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
  - 1.2 Foundation of the Indian National Congress
  - 1.3 Gandhi's Contribution
    - 1.3.1 Gandhi's "Substance of Swaraj"
  - 1.4 The Karachi Resolution of the Congress
  - 1.5 The Idea of Socialism
    - 1.5.1 The Idea of Planning
  - 1.6 The Nature of Gandhian Economics
  - 1.7 The Gandhian Social Philosophy
  - 1.8 The Consensus
  - 1.9 Summary
  - 1.10 Exercises
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## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The developmental aspirations of the people of India unfolded themselves through the various stages of the freedom movement. The violent resistance of the Indian people to the British rule in 1857 and the subsequent tribal upsurges were defensive movements against foreign rule. They were almost totally political. But the peasant struggles that occurred since the late nineteenth century had a clear economic perspective. They were against the oppressive land revenue system that came along with foreign rule even though the peasants were not always aware of the colonial mechanism and they often turned their wrath on the intermediate landowners like the zamindars and mouzadars.

After the consolidation of the British rule in 1858, new organisations and movements of the people came to the fore choosing 'constitutionalist' strategies. Landlords formed their own organisations to demand reduction of Government revenue claims.

Simultaneously nationalist leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G Ranade and R.C. Dutt started critiquing the colonial economic exploitation. They argued that the main reason of poverty in India was the colonial exploitation. The end of colonial rule was necessary for the alleviation poverty in India.

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## **1.2 FOUNDATION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

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In 1885 the educated elite formed the Indian National Congress as an umbrella organisation of all sections of the Indian people beginning with the demand for adequate representation of the Indians in the senior Government services and the legislative bodies created by the Indian

Councils Act of 1861. Indeed, initially they did not take up the cause of the workers and peasants considering them as ‘local issues.’ But individual nationalists were engaged in ‘philanthropic works’ among the workers and the peasants.

The Indian National Congress was founded with a modest constitutionalist outlook and chose the strategy of petitions and persuasion rather than pressure and agitation. The earliest plea that it made to the Government was for the facilitation of the Indians’ access to the Indian civil service which indeed was an elitist demand. On the other hand, the organisation declined to take up the issue of the condition of plantation and industrial labour which appeared to it to be ‘local’ issues even though philanthropists and labour leaders were given platform. In 1893 the Congress demanded the uniform introduction of permanent settlement of land to save the landholders from harassment by the Government.

As early as 1895 Dr Annie Besant, founder of the Indian Home Rule League and a leader of the Indian National Congress, drafted a Constitution of India Bill envisaging a Constitution that guaranteed to every citizen freedom of expression, inviolability of one’s house, right to property, equality before the law and in regard to admission to public offices, right to present claims, petition and complaints and the right to personal property. At a special session at Bombay in 1918 on the Montague-Chelmsford Report, the Congress demanded that the new Government of India Act contain a declaration of the rights of the Indians containing, among other things, equality before the law, protection in respect of liberty, life and property, freedom of speech and press and right of association.

In 1925 a sub-committee set up by the All-Parties Conference chaired by M.K. Gandhi prepared a Commonwealth of India Bill that demanded self-government for Indians from the village upwards – the village, the taluka, the district, the province and India. It also demanded the rights to liberty, security of dwelling and property, freedom of conscience and to profess and practise religion, freedom to express opinion, to assemble peacefully and without arms and to form associations or unions, free elementary education, use of roads, public places, courts of justice and the like, equality before the law irrespective of nationality and freedom of the sexes.

The Motilal Nehru Committee Report of 1928 incorporated all these demands and added the right of all citizens to the writ of *habeas corpus*’ protection in respect of punishment under *ex post facto laws*, non-discrimination against any person on grounds of race, religion or creed in the matter of public employment, office of power or honour and in the exercise of any trade or calling, equal access of all citizens to public road, public wells and places of public resort, freedom of combination and association for the maintenance and improvement of labour and economic conditions and the right to keep arms in accordance with regulations.

It will be seen that, although the above demands had certain economic implications, the demands were essentially political and elitist. It was not until the appearance in the scene of Gandhi that the socio-economic problems of the common people came to focus. Gandhi brought the common people into national politics. He had to reflect their aspirations.

## **1.3 GANDHI'S CONTRIBUTION**

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Among the earliest Gandhian activities in the socio-economic field were his visit to Champaran in Bihar to save the peasants from the exploitation of the British indigo planters, his initiation of peasant *satyagraha* at Khaira in Gujarat against high revenue demands of the Government and his intervention in the labour dispute in the Sarabhai textile mills at Ahmedabad. The first two moves related to the agrarian economy of the country in which about 95% of the Indian people were involved in the second decade of the twentieth century and clearly had an anti-imperialist edge. The third related to industrial relation within an Indian-owned undertaking. Gandhi's mediation and moral pressure resulted in a happy ending of the dispute.

The three episodes in the early life of Gandhi suggest that, whereas Gandhi took a clear anti-imperialist position, he was in favour of solving class conflict within the Indian society through persuasion. He was not in favour of class struggle within the Indian society. In fact the Ahmedabad experience seems to have led him to pronounce his famous 'theory of trusteeship' that advised the owning class to behave as the trustees of the national wealth in the interest of the working class. In fact, it was probably due to his influence that the Ahmedabad Textile Workers' Union kept away from the All-India Trade Union Congress when it was set up in 1920. Even the Congress leaders did not join it until the party's Gaya conference in 1922.

While the Congress fought for the interest of the peasants and farmers many of whom actively participated in its *satyagrahas* it was not until about the end of the freedom movement that it raised the demand for land reform, that is, abolition of zamindari and other intermediary rights in land and grant of ownership to tillers of land. In fact, as early as 1893 the Indian National Congress had demanded permanent settlement of land (as in Bengal) in order to protect the landlords against harassing extortions of the landlords in the ryotwari areas.

### **1.3.1 Gandhi's 'Substance of Swaraj'**

On January 26, 1930 Congressmen all over the country took the pledge of complete independence as demanded in the Lahore Resolution of December 1929. On January 30, 1930 in *Young India* Gandhi laid down his perception of the 'substance of independence' as follows:

- 1) Total prohibition.
- 2) Reduction of pound-rupee exchange ratio from 1 shilling 6 pence to 1 shilling 4 pence.
- 3) Reduction of land revenue by at least 50% and making it subject to legislative control.
- 4) Abolition of salt tax
- 5) Reduction of military expenditure by at least 50% to begin with.
- 6) Reduction of salaries of the highest grade services by half or less, so as to suit the reduced revenue.
- 7) Protective tariff on foreign cloth.
- 8) Passage of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill.
- 9) Discharge of all political prisoners save those condemned for murder

or attempt to murder, or trial by ordinary judicial tribunals, and withdrawal of all political prosecutions.

- 10) Abolition of the C.I.D. or its popular control.
- 11) Issue of licenses to use fire arms for self-defence, subject to popular control.

The demands, it can be seen, watered down the concept of complete independence envisaged by the Lahore resolution of the Congress. On the other hand, all of them, except the first, had an anti-imperialist edge. Further, except for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> demand, all of them had an economic bearing.

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## **1.4 THE KARACHI RESOLUTION OF THE CONGRESS**

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The resolution of the Karachi session of the All-India Congress Committee that was passed in 1931 was the first clear statement of the socio-economic contents of the freedom movement. It laid down that the organisation of economic life must conform to the principle of justice, to the end that it must secure a decent standard of living.

The state would safeguard the interests of the workers and secure for them, by suitable legislation and in other ways, a living wage, healthy conditions of work, limited hours of labour, suitable machinery for settling industrial disputes and social insurance. Liberation of agricultural labour from conditions of serfdom and protection of interest of women workers were promised. Child labour in factories and mines was to be banned. Peasants and workers would be free to form unions.

The system of land tenure would be reformed. Peasants were promised an equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, immediate relief to the small peasantry through substantial reduction of rent and revenue, exemption in the cases of uneconomic holding and imposition of graded agricultural income tax. Death duties at a graduated rate over property above a limit were envisaged. Relief of agricultural indebtedness and control of usury – direct and indirect - were promised. Military expenditure would be reduced. The state would also provide military training to its citizens. The ceiling of the civil servants' salary would be Rs 500.

The state would protect indigenous cloth against foreign cloth. The other indigenous industries would be likewise protected against foreign competition. Intoxicating drinks and drugs would be totally prohibited. Currency and exchange would be regulated in the national interest. The state would own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport.

When the Congress party came to power in several provinces in 1937, they tried to deliver on some of the promises. But they held power for a little over two years. Besides, there were pressures from European and native vested interests. The promises were only partially fulfilled. About twenty years after Karachi session, the Indian Constitution largely enshrined the promises made in 1931.

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## **1.5 THE IDEA OF SOCIALISM**

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The Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 created an interest in socialism in India and small socialist groups emerged in the urban centres.

Completion of the first five-year plan by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1934 created an enthusiasm for planning in India. In 1934 M. Visvesvaraya, a great engineer, published a book entitled *Planned Economy in India* in April 1936. The Visvesvaraya Plan could, however, be by no means called a socialist plan. In 1934 the Congress Socialist Party was formed within the Congress and Gandhi resigned from the Congress citing it as one of the reasons and alleging Jawaharlal's open sympathy for the group. In 1935 the Communist Party of India was formed and immediately banned by the British Government. Most of the communists started working within the Congress Socialist party.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who had shown great admiration for socialism as early as 1928, delivered his presidential address to the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress announcing his conviction that 'the only solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism'. This statement created an ideological rift within the top leadership of the Congress and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel issued a statement to the effect that he had ideological differences with Nehru on matters like the nature of capitalism. Patel wanted to contest Nehru for the presidency of the Congress in the next session at Faizpur. Nehru recounted his position stating that socialism was not his ideological plank for the Presidential election and Patel withdrew from the contest. In his Presidential speech at Faizpur, Nehru called for the building up of a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country including the organised workers and peasants. In the backdrop of the general (provincial) elections in British India this ideological debate is significant.

### **1.5.1 The Idea of Planning**

It has been seen that the idea of planning had acquired popularity in 1934. Jawaharlal Nehru was succeeded as Congress President by another radical young man, Subhas Chandra Bose. He set up a National Planning Committee with Jawaharlal Nehru as chairman and Professor K.T. Shah as secretary. The ideological tension that was brewing in the Congress resulted in Bose resigning its Presidentship in the next year. Still another year later the Congress Governments in Provinces resigned on the issue of the declaration of British India's participation in World War II. The work of the National Planning Committee was interrupted but a number of subcommittees of the National Planning Committee prepared their reports.

In 1940 a group of industrialists led by G.D. Birla, prepared what is known as the Bombay Plan. The Plan envisaged the doubling of per capita income and trebling of national income in 15 years. It divided industries into basic and consumption goods industries and admitted the necessity of reducing inequalities of wealth. Among the measures suggested toward this purpose were imposition of death duties, reform of the system of land tenure and provision of the fullest scope for small and cottage industries as well as state control of the economy accompanied by state ownership of public utilities and basic industries. Economic control, however, was more important than ownership or management by the state., argued the Bombay Plan.

Towards the end of World War II, M.N. Roy, a leader of the Indian Communist movement and now a radical humanist, published a People's Plan. Unlike the Bombay Plan it primarily emphasised agriculture and advocated nationalisation of land and liquidation of rural indebtedness. Future industrialisation would have to be primarily financed and controlled by

the state. Expansion of production would have to be accompanied by changes in distribution in favour of the common people permitting an expansion of the total consumption by the community. Surplus production should be reinvested for raising employment and standard of living.

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## 1.6 THE NATURE OF GANDHIAN ECONOMICS

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It will be wrong to see the 1930 ‘substance of Independence’ statement of Gandhi as either the whole or the core of Gandhi’s economic ideas. Gandhi’s economic ideas cannot be fully discussed in the present unit. Suffice it to say that it was dynamic and evolved from his pamphlet on *Hind Swaraj* written in 1907 through a long course of his leadership of the Indian national movement.

Initially he opposed machines as instruments of imperialist exploitation and deprivation of the common masses of the people. Later he watered down his opposition to machines. All through his life, however, he insisted upon the spinning wheel which could give the poorest Indian villager, particularly women, a means of independent earning.

Initially he opposed class contradiction by means of his theory of trusteeship and change of heart of the owners to solve the problem of exploitation. Toward the end of his life he appears to have grown disillusioned about the prospect of change of heart. He even ceased to emphasise the need for revival of the idyllic self-sufficient village community. But he never ignored the common man and went on stressing the need for revival of the small-scale and cottage industry. It is interesting to note that the National Planning Committee’s sub-committee on agriculture headed by a Gandhian, J.C. Kumarappa, recommended an integrated policy of land reform beginning with abolition of zamindari and other intermediate rights and proceeding to grant of tenancy to the cultivator and imposition of ceiling on agricultural land holding.

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## 1.7 THE GANDHIAN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

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It is necessary to remember that Gandhi’s economic thinking was a part of his broader social vision of *sarvodaya* (upliftment of all), that was originally conceived as *antyodaya* (unto the last). Towards this aim he devoted a major part of his ‘constructive programme’ towards the abolition of untouchability and the upliftment of the people he called ‘the Harijans’ (now called ‘dalits’). Though he did not present a separate economic programme for them, his Puna Pact with Dr B.R. Ambedkar gave them a political status in British India’s electoral system that was retained in independent India.

It has been already mentioned that the spinning wheel gave the women an amount of economic independence through their own labour. It should also be mentioned that it was Gandhi’s *satyagraha* that brought the women into the arena of politics and liberated them from their domestic bondages.

## **1.8 THE CONSENSUS**

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The Indian national movement was, above anything else, a movement for political independence. It had to mobilise different groups and interests. It was necessary to avoid contentious issues that might divide the people and alienate sections of them. Yet no politics is without economics and, to mobilise the largest section of the people, it was necessary to reflect their socio-economic aspirations. Thus there appears to have crystallised three broad aspirations about the economy of an independent India: (1) a capitalist dream of an industrialised India under minimal state control and state support; (2) a Gandhian view of basically rural and self-sufficient economy with minimal state control and large industry; and (3) a socialist view of an industrialised India under strong state control and leadership. As a result of the ideological debates evolved a basic minimum consensus on the course of economic development of India.

- i) There could be no development without political freedom.
- ii) A certain amount of state control was necessary for the economy.
- iii) Basic natural resources should be nationalised.
- iv) There was also an overwhelming opinion that zamindari and other intermediary rights in agricultural land should be abolished.

This basic consensus was, somewhat inadequately, reflected in the Congress manifesto on the eve of the provincial assemblies elections in early 1946. We call it ‘inadequate’ because the 1946 elections were held on the basis of a franchise determined by property qualifications to only 15% of the British Indian population and did not have to reflect the aspirations of the poorer sections of the people that comprised 85% of the population. However, the Congress swept the elections in all the non-Muslim-majority provinces and even the Muslim-majority province of the North-West Frontier Province.

In that manifesto the party promised to encourage, modernise and rapidly extend industry, agriculture, social services and public utilities. ‘For this purpose,’ the manifesto said, ‘it will be necessary to plan and co-ordinate social advance in all its many fields, to prevent the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of individuals and groups, to prevent vested interests inimical to society from growing, and to have social control of the mineral resources, means of transport and the principal means of production and distribution in land, industry and in other departments of national activity.’

The state must, therefore, own or control key and basic industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport. Currency and exchange, banking and insurance must be regulated in the national interest.

Thus the foundation of state capitalism in India was laid. Somehow, this kind of economic thinking came to be considered by many as socialism.

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## **1.9 SUMMARY**

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The Indian national movement had a legacy of political and economic protest. This in turn became a legacy for the Independent India. In the latter half of the 19th century, the nationalist leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and R.C. Dutt gave a critique of the colonial exploitation. Initially the Congress was concerned with the problems of the elite like representation of Indians to the senior government services and legislative bodies. But with the appearance of M.K. Gandhi on the political scenario, it took up the cause of the ordinary people – the peasantry and workers. Some concepts and ideas which evolved during the Indian national movement became the legacy for the policy initiatives in the post-independence India. These were mainly Swaraj, political and economic rights, socialism, planning and consensus.

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## **1.10 EXERCISES**

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- a) Was there an economic perspective of the early national movement in India?
- b) What was Gandhi's contribution to the economic thinking in the Indian national movement?
- c) Discuss the evolution of socialist thinking in the Indian national movement.
- d) How did the economic thinking in the Indian national movement crystallise at the end?

## **UNIT 2 DEBATE ON MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Structure**

- 2.1 Introduction
  - 2.2 Background
  - 2.3 Confusing Overlaps
  - 2.4 The Debate on Land Policy
  - 2.5 The System of Control
  - 2.6 The Issue of Nationalisation
  - 2.7 The Issue of Planning
  - 2.8 Industrial Relations
  - 2.9 The Political Debate
  - 2.10 The Objectives Resolution of the Constituent Assembly
  - 2.11 Summary
  - 2.12 Exercises
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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In a democracy, it is an essential prerequisite to have an ideal model of development. The formulation and implementation of policies greatly depend on the model of development adopted for this purpose. Several debates took place in the Indian political and business circles, about the time of Independence and Constitution making in India, on the future course of development of India. Infact the very concern of India's survival as a single entity was foremost in the minds of its founders. The purpose of evolving an ideal pattern was not only to safeguard the democratic principles but also create necessary social and political conditions to ensure an overall development. The debates on the issues of development were complex and diverse ranging from land policies to the industrial development and planning.

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### **2.2 BACKGROUND**

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It has been seen in the previous unit that, about the time of independence, three broad streams of thinking on India's socio-economic development crystallised: capitalist industrialisation with minimal state control and support, socialist industrialisation under state guidance and the Gandhian view of *sarvodaya* philosophically based on a distrust of state power.

The ideological debate was complicated by the political and economic problems arising out of the Second World War and partition of the country. Thus, the question of control over food supply that had been imposed during the war became critical for a country that had just lost the richest food-producing provinces to Pakistan and had been inundated by a huge refugee influx. Gandhi opposed control on moral ground as it enhanced corruption and control was abolished. As a result food prices rose steeply and control had to be re-imposed.

### **2.3 CONFUSING OVERLAPS**

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The three broad streams of thinking mentioned above were not clearly demarcated from each other. No Indian political leader was more committed to the poorest of the poor than Gandhi. This placed him close to the socialist position. But no Indian had a greater distrust for the state power than Gandhi and this made him morally opposed to state control of economic activities. This made him a favourite of the Indian capitalist class. Yet the Indian capitalists rejected Gandhi's stress on the small and cottage industries which, according to them, might be temporarily accommodated but only for meeting the problem of unemployment in the country. Like the capitalists, the socialists believed in large-scale industries as the chief strategy in solving the economic problems of the newly decolonised underdeveloped countries and, naturally, rejected the efficacy of the small and the cottage industry. But, unlike the capitalists, they were firm believers in state control.

A part of this debate concerned the traditional socialist policy of nationalisation as had been implemented in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Nehru's utterances before independence and his installation as the Prime Minister of the Government of independent India raised a certain alarm among the Indian capitalists. The same reason, combined with the rise of militancy among the industrial working class in India, raised critical questions about industrial relations. The Indian capitalists naturally did not like trade unionism and state support to the cause of labour. Gandhi supported trade unionism as long as it worked in amity with the owners of industries and set aside the philosophy of class contradiction. The socialist doctrine was based on class contradiction. This made it possible for the industrial capitalists of India to use Gandhi's name in aid of their position.

It was only on the question of land reforms that the broadest amount of national consensus had been reached. This was partly because permanent settlement of land did not encompass the entire country and a big chunk of the permanent settlement area was transferred to Pakistan – East Bengal. Yet *Jagirdari* and other intermediate right owners in the rest of British India were unhappy about the new trend.

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## 2.4 THE DEBATE ON LAND POLICY

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It may be convenient to start with the question of land reform on which the broadest consensus was obtained. It has been seen in the earlier unit that even the Bombay Plan of the big industrialists of India envisaged land reforms. On 28 June, 1946 the *Eastern Economist*, house journal of the Birlas, made a strong case for land reform declaring that 'the landlord has no economic justification for his existence.' In December 1946 the sub-committee on land reform of the National Planning Committee of the Congress headed by J.C. Kumarappa, a staunch Gandhian, laid down three stages of land reform: abolition of *zamindari* and other intermediary rights, grant of tenancy right to the actual cultivator and ceiling on land holding.

The fate of *zamindari* and intermediary rights was thus sealed. The debate, therefore, focused on compensation. During discussion on the right to property in the Constituent Assembly of India this issue acquired poignancy. On 2 May 1947 Raja Jagannath Baksh Singh moved an amendment to the draft article on the right to property which allowed acquisition of private property by the state, for public purpose, against compensation inserting the word 'just' (before 'compensation'). Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel rejected the amendment proposal making it clear that the *zamindars* or some of their representatives could not thwart the programme

of land reform in that way. ‘They must recognise the times and move with the times,’ he announced. Legislations had already been undertaken in the provinces for the abolition of *zamindari* and laws to that effect would be made even before the Constitution came into force. “The process of acquisition is already there and the legislatures are already taking steps to liquidate the *zamindaris*,’ Patel declared.

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## 2.5 THE SYSTEM OF CONTROL

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The system of control and ration on food supply had been necessary during World War II for the Imperial Government for the purpose of food supply to the war fronts. At the end of the War it was continued in view of continued uncertainty of the market. Partition only aggravated the scarcity in the food front.

As early as 14 January 1944, the *Eastern Economist*, had suggested ‘a progressive strengthening of the present system of controls, in scope and character, so that not only may it strengthen the smooth transition to peace economy, but may also become the instrument of long-term economic planning in our country.’ In 1946, however, the issue became contentious.

Early that year the Commodity Prices Board, consisting of noted economists A.D. Gorwala and D.R. Gadgil was appointed. It submitted a report in the same year recommending ‘not abolition but the improvement of the system of controls.’ On the other hand, the Food-grains Policy Committee, appointed in September 1947 with mostly industrial magnates as members, adopted by a majority and submitted in December the same year an interim report recommending reduction of the Government’s commitment under the existing system of food controls. As has been noted in the earlier unit Gandhi lent his moral support to the decontrol demand and control was lifted for a period. When the prices rose high, control was again imposed.

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## 2.6 THE ISSUE OF NATIONALISATION

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Indian businessmen were alarmed at the talk of nationalisation emanating from the socialists and the left radicals. On 14 June 1946, the *Eastern Economist* declared: ‘We reject unreservedly the Soviet ideal of complete and immediate socialisation of the whole range of the economy.’ At the twentieth annual session of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Jawaharlal Nehru had to assure the businessmen. ‘It is wrong to imagine,’ he said, ‘that this Government is out to injure industry. It will be folly on our part. We want to provide facilities for industry and facilities for production – technical, scientific and power resources and all that.’ On 4 April 1947, in an address to the All-India Manufacturers’ Organisation he repeated the assurance.

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## **2. 7 THE ISSUE OF PLANNING**

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Though there was a general welcome to the idea of planning among all sections of the Indian population, the ideas about the character of the plan varied among them. Indian businessmen firmly rejected the ‘Soviet-type’ planning and welcomed a vague system of state guidance. They would even welcome a state role in the expansion of basic and heavy industries for which the private sector did not have much resource. But the state’s role, according to them, would be minimal. The socialists and the left radicals envisaged a much greater role of the state in the national economic activities.

It is believed that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was sympathetic to the first view and Jawaharlal Nehru to the second view. However, Patel is believed to have strongly resisted the establishment of a Planning Commission by the Government which he thought would reflect the Soviet Union’s economic ideology and would encroach upon the domain of the Government. It was only after the death of Patel that a Planning Commission of India could be set up under the cabinet and with the Prime Minister as the chairman.

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## **2.8 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

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It was at the trade union front that the sharpest conflict arose. When the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was set up in 1920, at the instance of the International Labour Organisation, Congressmen, by and large, distanced themselves from it. They joined it only after the Gaya session of the All-India Congress Committee in 1922. The Ahmedabad Textile workers’ Union, directly patronised by Gandhi, never joined it. As a result the AITUC was under strong influence of the communists and the socialists. When, in and after 1942, in the wake of the Quit India movement, Congressmen, including the Congress socialists, went to jail in large number the field was almost entirely left to the communists.

The differences were aggravated by two main factors. In 1942 the Communist Party had opposed the Quit India movement on which ground the communist members of the All-India Congress Committee were expelled. Secondly, after the end of the Second World War, Communist militancy in the labour front increased greatly. In view of the smooth transfer of power, that was accompanied by smooth transfer of several British industries to Indian hands, this labour militancy was disliked by the Congress leadership that had the support of the Indian big business. Congress leaders prescribed compulsory arbitration of industrial disputes and disfavoured the workers’ right to strike.

In early 1947, Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh was set up with the Ahmedabad Textile Workers’ Union as the nucleus. In view of the Sangh’s failure to gather strength, in May 1947 the top leaders of the Congress met in New Delhi at a high-level conference under the leadership of Patel and decided to have a separate labour organisation. As a result the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was set up. Within about another year, two other central labour organisations cropped up: the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (splitting from the INTUC) and the United Trade Union Congress (splitting from the AITUC).

At the time of transfer of power, when Indian capitalism was coming to its own, therefore,

the issue of class contradiction acquired sharpness and it naturally affected industrial relations. For the capitalists industrial peace was necessary for industrial development and militant trade unionism was inimical to industrial peace. Since Independence the Communists and Socialists wanted that the class relations within the economy to be immediately settled.

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## 2. 9 THE POLITICAL DEBATE

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The ideological debate had its impact on the politics around the period of independence.

The first post-war budget was inflationary. To counteract the inflationary tendency of the national economy, the finance minister of the Interim Government, Liaquat Ali Khan, presented a budget which proposed a 25% tax on all business profits above one hundred thousand rupees. The tax was intended to restrict the spending habits of the wealthy Indians and had a socialistic colour. But it created a furore among the Congressmen who alleged that the budget was aimed at harming the interests of the businessmen who were mostly Congress supporters. This budget practically sealed the fate of the Congress-League cooperation and was one of the major factors leading to the partition of the country.

On the eve of independence, in June 1947, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India concluded that though the forces of freedom movement had compelled the imperial rulers to open negotiations with the Indian leaders, the former were trying to forge a new alliance with the princes, big landlords and big business of India in order to control the Indian state and economy. Yet, the party held that the agreement embodied in the Mountbatten proposal of 3 June 1947 – for partition of British India – offered new opportunities for national advance and the two popular governments and Constituent Assemblies were strategic weapons in the hands of the national leadership. It welcomed Independence on 15 August 1947. In December 1947, however, it reversed the position and called the acceptance of the Mountbatten plan an abject surrender on the basis of an imperialist-feudal-bourgeois combine. The resolution led to the communist militancy in 1948-49.

In 1947 the Forward Bloc left the Congress. On 28 February 1947 the Congress Socialist Party decided to drop the word ‘Congress’ from its name. Rammanohar Lohia, a socialist leader, accused the Congress of compromising with the vested interests. In March the party opened membership to non-congressmen. In March 1948, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, after having been accused of neglecting the security of Mahatma Gandhi, who had been assassinated in January 1948, decided to quit the Congress. Jayaprakash Narayan declared that the Draft Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly of India was clumsy and not inspiring. The party’s Legislative Assembly members in U.P., who had been elected on Congress ticket, resigned and sought re-elections but were defeated.

The period around Independence, therefore, saw sharp ideological debate on the future course of India’s development. No wonder, the ideological debate was partly reflected in the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly of India that framed the Constitution.

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## 2.10 THE OBJECTIVES RESOLUTION OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA

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All these issues were sought to be sorted out in the Objectives Resolution that was passed in the Constituent Assembly of India in a fairly early stage of its proceedings. That resolution pledged to establish an independent Sovereign Republic of India which, along with its component parts, would derive all power and authority from the people of India. This would also guarantee to all people of India justice, social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality. Further, adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes.

These liberal and welfarist ideas, as will be seen, were reflected in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution that presents the essential philosophy of the independent Indian state. The Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy were their elaborations.

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## 2.11 SUMMARY

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In this unit, you have learnt about the debates on the models of development in the Independent India. Some debates centred on the Gandhian views and their feasibility, while others deliberated on the capital mode of industrialisation. The issues of debate included the system of control, nationalisation, industrial policies and so on. On the whole, the final outcome of these debates pledged to safeguard the interests of the people of India in all aspects- political, social and economic and uphold the liberal and welfarist ideas.

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## 2.12 EXERCISES

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- i) What were the major streams of thinking in the Indian political leadership at the time of Independence about the future economic development in India? To what extent did they conflict and to what extent did they overlap?
- ii) What was the type of land reform envisaged by the Indian political leadership at the time of Independence? What was the attitude of the Indian business class toward land reform?
- iii) What was the debate on control and planning at the time of Independence?
- iv) Why did the Congress Socialists leave the Congress in 1948?
- v) What was the analysis of the Communist Party of India regarding Independence?
- vi) Discuss the circumstances leading to split in the Indian labour movement.
- vii) What did the Objectives Resolution of the Constituent Assembly of India look forward to establishing?

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# **UNIT 3 CONSTITUTION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

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## **Structure**

- 3.1 Introduction
  - 3.2 Outlook of the Indian Constitution
  - 3.3 The Preamble
  - 3.4 The Rise of the People
  - 3.5 Rights of the People
    - 3.5.1 Nature of the Rights
  - 3.6 The Directive Principles of State Policy
    - 3.6.1 Common Good and Life of Dignity
    - 3.6.2 In the Sphere of Law
    - 3.6.3 In the Economic Sphere
    - 3.6.4 Rights of Workers
    - 3.6.5 For Children and Weaker Sections
    - 3.6.6 In the Sphere of Agriculture and Environment
  - 3.7 Summary
  - 3.8 Exercises
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## **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The Constitution of a country is the highest legal-political document for its government. It also embodies the statement of rights of the people as lawfully established. In a general sense it lays down the structure of power and obligations of the rulers towards the ruled. Such obligations imply not only the limit of the governmental power but also the expectation of the people from the government.

A significant point about a Constitution is that it is future oriented, rather than past oriented. People who administer their affairs according to traditions and customs do not need a constitution. The memories of their elders are sufficient for them. Historically, whenever a constitution has been framed, it has followed a revolution. A constitution has been intended to usher in a new social and political order.

In the eighteenth century, when the first written constitution in the world appeared – in the United States of America - only the bare structure of a federal republican government was laid down in 1789. That was a break with the monarchical colonial links with Britain. Within two years, the Constitution of the United States went through ten amendments incorporating the rights of the people in the form of limits to governmental power. The assumption was that the people had certain rights, naturally, and the Government could not take them away. Those rights were conceived in terms of the liberal laissez faire doctrine that put premium on the rights to life, liberty and personal property.

In the twentieth century, this view of rights was considerably widened by the welfare, and even socialist approach. New rights were included in the other constitutions of the world and the scope of old rights were widened by judicial interpretations. Even the form of the statement of the rights was modified. Thus, the Constitution of the now defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics incorporates the right to gainful employment as the fundamental right of every citizen. In the USA, affirmative action in favour of the weaker sections of the people was legally validated. The Constitution of Ireland incorporated certain directives to the Government on the people's welfare.

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## **3.2 THE OUTLOOK OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION**

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The proclamation of the Indian Constitution after the transfer of power from Britain heralded a new era too. First and foremost, it established a Republican Democracy in place of the monarchical empire of the British Government. Expectedly, the Indian Constitution inherited the world trend through the experiences of the people during the freedom struggle. The Indian Constitution retained the liberal democratic framework but broadened the scope of governmental intervention with a view to promoting social reform and welfare. There was prohibition on the state to violate the rights and equality of the citizens – the rights that were essentially of negative character. There was a prohibition on the society to practise untouchability. Permission was granted to the state to take special measures for the improvement of weaker sections of the people. The Constitution also adopted the Irish model of issuing positive directives to the Government for the promotion of welfare measures.

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## **3.3 THE PREAMBLE**

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Every liberal democratic constitution has a preamble articulating its spirit. The Preamble to the Indian Constitution also has stated the noble aims of the polity.

The first point that needs mention is that, according to the Preamble, it is 'We, the people of India' who, in the Constituent Assembly of India, adopted, enacted and gave to ourselves this Constitution. In short, the authority of the Constitution, as the Supreme Law of the land, is derived from the people and not from the grace of any external sovereign. Therefore, India is a Democratic, Sovereign country. India is also a Republic. It does not recognise any hereditary rule.

The democratic character of the state is ensured by the right of the people to elect the first chambers of the Union Parliament and the state Legislative Assemblies on the basis of adult franchise. Every resident, adult citizen of sound mind, and not legally barred on grounds of crime, corruption or illegal practice, is entitled to be registered as a voter (Article 326 of the Constitution).

The Constitution also promises to all its citizens Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual. By an amendment in 1976 the aims of establishing secularism and socialism and promoting the unity and integrity of the nation were proclaimed.

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## **3.4 THE RISE OF THE PEOPLE**

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The significance of the universal adult franchise can never be overstressed. The British had introduced an elective system of legislature in India. Until the coming into force of the new Constitution, however, only about 15% of the adult Indians were voters, the voting right being conditioned by property and educational qualifications. By one stroke it was made universal and became a key factor in the making and unmaking of the government.

The Constitution not only made the people the ultimate masters of their destiny, but it also made them equal. The traditional Indian social system, fragmented by religious and ethnic differences and stratified by caste, lost its legitimacy. Individual human beings became the fundamental units of polity. All political and economic rights were granted to the individuals. At the same time, some cultural rights were granted to the minority groups.

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## **3.5 RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE**

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There are two kinds of rights under the Indian Constitution: some granted to all ‘persons’ and some to ‘citizens’ only. The first kind of rights is available to non-citizens too and include equality before the law and equal protection of the law (Article 14), protection against unlawful conviction (Article 20), life and personal liberty (Article 21), protection against unlawful detention (Article 22), right against exploitation in the form of traffic in human beings and forced labour except for public purposes (Article 23), right of children against hazardous employment (Article 24), freedom of religion (Article 25), freedom of religious denominations to manage their religious affairs (Article 26), and freedom from payment of taxes the proceeds of which specifically go to the benefit of any particular religion or religious denomination (Article 27), freedom from enforced religious instruction in schools run by religious denominations (Article 28), protection of minorities (Article 29), right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice (Article 30), right to Constitutional Remedies (Articles 32 and 226) and the right not to be deprived of property save by authority of law (Article 300A). All other rights – right against discrimination by the state (Article 15), equality of opportunity in matters of public employment (Article 16), right against practice of untouchability (Article 17), right against creation of state titles other than military or academic (Article 18), right to freedom of speech and expression, to assemble peacefully and without arms, to form associations or unions, to move freely throughout the territory of India and to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India and to practise any profession or carry on any occupation, trade or business (Article 19) are granted to the citizens.

### **3.5.1 Nature of the Rights**

The following points need to be noted about the rights: (1) These rights are negative in form in as much as they restrict the authorities from violating these rights. (2) While most of these rights are against the state, some of them, like the right against untouchability (Article 17) and the right to protection of minorities (Article 29) are against the society. (3) While most of the rights are granted to the individuals, some are granted to groups (Article 27, 29 and 30) (4) Most of the rights are conditional upon considerations of public interest, law and order, decency and welfare of certain weaker sections of the people.

These points are significant in the understanding of the nature of rights in India. We have said that in the traditional liberal democracies like the United States, the rights are negatively framed so that the state does not take them away. The question of protection of those rights from the assault of other members of the society is tackled by the law and order functions of the state. For instance, race riots in the USA are dealt with exclusively under the criminal law which the State is constitutionally obliged to apply without discrimination. In India, on the other hand, practice of untouchability by members of the upper castes is directly an offence against the Constitution. Similarly, violation of the rights of minorities by members of the majority community is an offence against the Constitution. It is the direct constitutional responsibility of the state to protect the social rights of the dalits (the people of the Scheduled Castes), the adivasis (the people belonging to the Scheduled Tribes) and the religious and linguistic minorities.

The other significant difference with the older liberal constitutions is the specification of limits of the rights by the Constitution of India itself. In the United States such limits are set by the courts of law and depend upon the personal views of the judges. Such personal views are not ruled out in India but they are restricted by the Constitution itself. As has been mentioned, these constitutional restrictions spring from the Constitution's concern for not only law and order but also public interest in general, including decency, morality and welfare of the weaker sections of the society.

Finally, constitutional acknowledgement of groups as well as individuals is the result of the rather unhappy communal history of the country. This concern of the Constitution of India with the plight of the religious and linguistic minorities and the weaker castes is reminiscent of certain European constitutions set up between the two World Wars in pursuit of the minority treaties some of the states had to sign before their establishment. Such countries were Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The difference is that those European states never seriously implemented them. In India they have been implemented with all seriousness.

Thus the structure of rights in the Indian Constitution envisaged an active role of the state in bringing forth social transformation.

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## **3.6 THE DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY**

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A more direct activist role of the state in bringing forth socio-economic transformation was assigned by the Constitution of India through Directive Principles of State Policy. These principles are not directly enforceable by the law courts. But the courts, while interpreting the Constitution, including the Fundamental Rights, are to be guided by them. The Constitution enjoins the state to regard them as fundamental in governance and to apply them when making laws.

### **3.6.1 Common Good and Life of Dignity**

The most fundamental directive to the state is to strive to secure a social order in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of their national life. The state shall, in particular, strive to minimise inequalities in income and eliminate inequalities of status,

facilities and opportunities not only among the individuals but also among groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations (Article 38). In particular the state shall direct its policies toward securing adequate means of livelihood for all citizens, men and women equally, distribution of ownership and control to best serve the common good, preventing concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment, ensuring equal pay for equal work for both men and women, protection of the health and strength of the workers, men and women, prevention of the abuse of the children, and facilitation of the children to grow in a healthy manner and with freedom and dignity (Article 39).

### **3.6.2 In the Sphere of Law**

Most other Articles in this part of the Constitution (Part IV) are elaborations of these basic objectives. The state shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic and other disabilities (Article 39A, added in 1977 by the 42<sup>nd</sup> amendment to the Constitution). The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India (Article 44). The state shall take steps to separate the judiciary from the executive in the public services of the state (Article 50).

The state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government (Article 40).

### **3.6.3 In the Economic Sphere**

There is a more guarded promise in the economic sphere. The state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want (Article 41). The right to work as such cannot be granted by any liberal democratic state simply because it does not control all the means of production. The system of social insurance is also provided by only developed industrial countries though its operation is unstable. For a developing country like India the promise of universal right to work and/or social insurance is obviously too ambitious.

The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of the people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating and harmful drugs (Article 47).

### **3.6.4 Rights of Workers**

The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. The state shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, industrial, agricultural or otherwise, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities and, in particular, the state shall endeavour to promote cottage

industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas (Article 43). By the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, the State was enjoined to take steps, by suitable legislation or any other way, to secure the participation of workers in the management of undertakings, establishments of other organisations engaged in any industry (Article 43A)

### **3.6.5 For Children and the Weaker Sections**

The state is directed to provide, within a period of ten years (from the proclamation of the Constitution) to all children up to the age of fourteen years (Article 45).

The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46).

### **3.6.6 In the Sphere of Agriculture and Environment**

The state shall endeavour to develop agriculture and industry along modern scientific lines (Article 48).

It is the obligation of the state to protect every monument or place or object of historic interest declared by the Parliament to be of national importance from spoilage, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be (Article 49).

Article 48A, incorporated by the 42<sup>nd</sup> amendment in 1977 enjoins the duty to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.

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## **3.7 SUMMARY**

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This unit focused on the developmental aspirations of the national movement that were embodied in the Constitution of India, the highest legal-political charter of the Indian polity. The Indian Constitution enshrined in itself the positive aspects based on experiences of the people around the world. Infact, the Preamble remains the soul of the Constitution, with the utmost aim of safeguarding the rights of the people and ensure justice in all aspects. There is also a provision for Directive Principles of State Policy regarded as fundamental in the matters of governance. It also ensures to safeguard the rights of the workers, children, weaker sections and nurture, develop and protect agriculture, environment, forests and wildlife of the country.

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## **3.8 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Discuss the world's perception of rights that served as the background of rights embodied in the Indian Constitution. To what extent was it transformational?
- 2) What place do 'the people' have in the Indian Constitution?
- 3) What are the negative and the positive rights in the Indian Constitution?
- 4) What are the rights in India granted to the individuals? What are the rights of the groups?
- 5) How much transformational potential exists in the Directive Principles of State

## **UNIT 4 DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM**

### **Structure**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Towards an Understanding of Democracy
- 4.3 Democracy and Development
- 4.4 Democracy and Development in the Post-colonial Societies
- 4.5 Political Democracy and Economic Development in India: 1947-1967
- 4.6 Political Democracy and Economic Development in India: 1967- 1990
- 4.7 Political Democracy and Economic Development in India: 1991 Onwards
- 4.8 Summary
- 4.9 Exercises

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As most of the old certitudes of Indian politics gradually crumble in a ‘transforming’ India, it is the ‘idea of democracy’ that has survived and endured thus providing one powerful continuity in it. It is remarkable given the fact that very few post-colonial states of Asia and Africa including those who shared the same colonial legacy i.e. Pakistan have been able to remain ‘actually existing democracies’ despite emphasis on the processes of democratisation and localisation in the present era of globalisation.

The above may be considered not a mean achievement if we reflect about India- the largest and the most diverse democracy in the world- as it was at the time of decolonisation. India almost lacked all the ingredients that make a liberal democracy a success. India had low levels of literacy, industrialisation and democratic consciousness. Another obstacle in the pathway to democracy building was in the form of centuries old hierarchical social order that was ‘almost deliberately designed to resist the idea of political equality’. The partition legacy in the form of the flared up cultural and religious distinctions was another hurdle.

How can we explain the survival and remarkable endurance of Indian democracy? Is it due to the limited exposure to the ‘democratic’ institutional politics provided to the nationalist leadership by the Britishers in the twentieth century? Or is it due to the translation of our traditional cultural values like pluralism, consensus, tolerance, inclusion and accommodation into modern political culture as an independent India experienced its first years?

The democracy in India in a significant way was prefigured in the form of the colonial legacy as the British introduced the representative legislative bodies albeit with limited power vide the Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935. Even though the grant of the voting rights was limited in nature the sheer number of the voters i.e. 40 million was the second largest in the non-communist world at that time. The groups who were accorded political representation were identified as religious communities with immutable interests and collective rights.

creation of a nation out of the country's diverse social order. The political leadership of an independent India inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru emphasised over the responsibility of the nation-state to recognise and accommodate the enormous diversity of India. Values of tolerance, pluralism and inclusion were actively promoted and these became the foundational principle of the nation formation and state formation projects that were set in motion simultaneously. The pluralist form of Indian democracy in its procedural form has been evident in the form of federalism, three language policy, reorganisation of the states on linguistic basis, affirmative action in favour of the marginal groups and the decision to desist from imposing a uniform civil code, secular citizenship defined by civic and universalistic criteria - all have been among the significant constitutional measures, legislative enactment and government policies indicating the constitutional/ legal recognition to four specific categories- religion, language, region and caste.

Whether it is the above two or more reasons that explain the resilience of democracy in India, it remains an irrevocable fact that democracy remains deep-rooted in India. India continues to have parliaments and courts of law, rights and a free press. In the words of Sunil Khilnani: 'as an idea as well as a seductive and puzzling promise to bring history under the command of the will of a community of equals, democracy has irreversibly entered the Indian political imagination'.

The greatest signifier of the success of Indian democracy, however, has been in providing space for political contestation and creating an opportunity for the assertion of a variety of claims articulated by the different groups. In the process democratic politics has even begun to corrode the authority of the traditional social order in India.

## **4.2 TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF DEMOCRACY**

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What do we understand by democracy in political theory? Democracy has increasingly been viewed as a form of good governance that paves the way for arriving at decisions among a group of individuals organised as a polity. The essential value of democracy lies in its moral superiority over any other way of arriving at decisions which take every citizen's interests into account, and are equally binding on everyone. The core principles that underpin and justify democracy in this sense are twofold. First, the individuals are autonomous rational beings who are capable of deciding what is good for them. Second, all individuals should have equal say in the determination of collective decisions, which affects them all equally.

It has been argued that unanimity is generally impossible to achieve when collectivity makes an attempt to arrive at a commonly agreed upon decision. Thus the most plausible procedure for arriving at a commonly agreed upon decision is the principle of majority rule which is most practical and morally acceptable. Due to the large and complex societies it is not possible to gather together to make decisions on every issue [say like in the city-state of Athens], even in the advanced capitalist democracies as C B Macpherson visualised in his enunciation of the participatory model of democracy [Life and Times of Liberal democracy]. Modern democracy therefore works with a set of procedure and the representative institutions by which people can elect their representatives and hold them periodically accountable.

If we see the democracy purely as a set of institutions- encompassing free and fair elections,

legislative assemblies, general legal framework and constitutional governments, then we are essentially privileging the procedural form of democracy. However if we have an idea of a democracy being peopled by the truly equal citizens, who are politically engaged, tolerant of different opinions and ways of life and have an equal voice in choosing their rulers and holding them accountable, then we are privileging the substantive notion of democracy. In liberal political theory, these two contrasting models of democracy are referred to as procedural [or formal] and substantive [or informal] democracy respectively.

It follows that in the limited proceduralist view of democracy the level of the electoral participation, the frequency of elections and the peaceful change in political power are taken as indicators of the health of democracy. However such a view is endangered by the fallacy of electoralism, as the social and economic inequalities involving the ethno-cultural communities (including the minorities and women) make it difficult for them to participate effectively are largely ignored in such a perspective.

The proponents of the substantive form of democracy, on the other hand, argue that the democratic project is incomplete until the meaningful exercises of the equal rights of citizenship have been guaranteed to all. On this account, free and fair elections, freedom of speech and expression, and the rule of law and its protection to all are necessary, but by no means sufficient conditions for a democracy to be meaningful. The project of democracy is not accomplished by merely securing legal and political equality; it may be severely restricted by inequalities, which deny many from having a truly equal opportunity to influence government decisions (Social agenda of democratisation). In the contemporary post-industrial / information societies the concentration of expert knowledge, symbolised by the increasing influence of public policy specialists over government policy and public opinion is another limitation. The experts have made the economic policy making insulated from the democratic pressures.

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### **4.3 DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT**

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The present era of globalisation is characterised by an upsurge of market economy and political democracy. These are both considered as virtue and necessity: whether it is the East European post-Communist societies or the post-colonial Asian, African and Latin American societies. This can be explained in terms of the collapse of communism / socialism that inspired economies based on development planning in the form of excessive or inappropriate state intervention in market economies.

In social sciences a great degree of literature, rich - both in terms of range and depth - is available on the themes of economic development and political democracy. Unfortunately they remain divided into two different worlds of politics and economics with little interaction. What is needed is to theorise the nature of democracy in such a manner that the evolving processes of economic development can be understood in the wider context of political democracy.

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The theorists of political economy like Deepak Nayyar have drawn attention to the fact that there has always been an inherent tension between the economics of markets and politics of democracy. It is explained in terms of the exclusionary nature of markets as against the inclusionary nature of democracy.

That the notion of majoritarian democracy is preferable to monarchies or the oligarchies has been questioned on the basis that it leads to the tyranny of majority. At the same time the argument that the markets protect the interests of individuals and minorities is limited. It has been argued that the markets are indeed the tyranny of minorities. Now in the market people vote with their money whereas in political democracy every one has equal vote. Thus there is always an inherent tension between the two institutions.

Then can we say that the combination of democracy and markets is sufficient or say necessary to bring economic development of the masses? What about the egalitarian development in planned economies without political democracy in the erstwhile communist states of East Europe and also in the South East Asian countries that had market economies without political democracy? And then in the post-communist countries where we have both market economy and political democracy we have so far witnessed prosperity for very few and misery for the majority.

We must understand that the markets tend to exclude people as consumers if they do not have any income or sufficient income [entitlement for Amartya Sen]. Markets also exclude the people as producers or sellers if they have neither assets nor capabilities [natural talents, skills acquired through teaching, learning from experience, education] commanding a price and also demand in the market. And then market excludes both the consumers and producers if they do not accept, or conform to, the values of the market system i.e. tribal communities or the forest people. Economic exclusion further accentuates the social and political exclusion. So the lower classes would suffer if the marketisation of economies take place, as the roll back of the state from the social and economic sectors would mean dilution of social security for the disadvantaged. Moreover the people devoid of entitlement, assets, or capabilities would not have the resources to claim or the power to assert their rights. Thus to conclude this part of argument we may concur with Niraja Gopal Jayal that in this cruelly Schumpeterian political world, there is an almost complete disengagement between the lives and aspirations of ordinary men and women, on the one hand, and the world of important national issues often revolving around the interests of the advantaged ones on the other.

It follows that economic stratification is inevitable in the market economies and societies, which systematically integrate some and marginalise others to distribute the benefits of economic growth in ways that include a few and exclude others. In such a situation the institutional arrangements that mediate between the economic development on the one hand and social development on the other become critical. Otherwise the economic growth would lead to regional unevenness and class inequality.

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#### **4.4 DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE POSTCOLONIAL SOCIETIES**

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Democracies in the postcolonial societies have been distinct from their western counterparts due to their historical specificities. Colonialism, as Ralph Miliband argued in ‘Marxism and Politics’, distorted the social, economic and political structures, thus making them unique. It follows that the theoretical tools developed for the advanced capitalist societies cannot be transposed simply to these very different societies. That explains the ongoing debates in

democratic theory concerning the ‘new’ democracies. Most significant among these are the debates on democracy and development; democracy and diversity; and democracy, state and civil society. Thus there has been a debate as to whether democracy and development are compatible in the post-colonial states. The economic ‘miracle’ experienced in the East Asian states have thus been attributed to their ‘soft authoritarian’ regimes. Given the fact that the postcolonial societies are multicultural and are riven by racial and ethnic conflicts, serious apprehension has been expressed towards the need to recognise the diversity and the inequality arising out of the embedded discriminatory practices that undermine the post-colonial democracies. As for the relationship between the democracy, state and civil society, it has been debated whether there can be a democracy or a market (read effective exercise of citizenship rights as well as the social aspect of democracy) without an effective state in the postcolonial societies.

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## **4.5 POLITICAL DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: 1947-1967**

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In the first years of independence the strategy of economic development was shaped by a political consensus. There was a long-term perspective in Nehruvian India. Congress accommodated the poor peoples under the rubric of socialism articulated effectively in the form of the Bombay Plan of 1944 and the new industrial policy resolution in 1948. Under this ‘Nehru- Mahalanobis strategy’, Indian state was to take responsibility for the provision of infrastructure as well as large and heavy industrial investment.

Democracy came to India neither as a response to an absolutist state nor as the realisation of an individualist conception of society. It also did not follow capitalist industrialisation and development. Hence there was a contrast with the experience in the advanced capitalist liberal societies of the West. The anti-colonial struggle was based more on the demand for an autonomous space for the nation than about individual freedom. Gandhian notion of a just state was premised on the idea that the collective interest must take precedence over individual interests. The nationalist leadership visualised a democratic republic with pledges to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for all its citizens. Universal franchise was thus granted in one go in a predominantly agrarian society lacking in terms of democratic consciousness.

In the above situation the state had an important role to play that was of a mediator between political democracy and economic democracy. Thus if the logic of the market meant exclusion of a significant proportion of people, particularly the poor, it was necessary for the state to ensure the inclusion of such people in the economic sphere.

As the colonial past and the nationalist present shaped the above strategy of economic development, conscious efforts were made to limit the degree of openness and of integration with the world economy, in pursuit of a more autonomous, if not self-reliant, development. It was a departure from the colonial era marked with open market and unregulated market that favoured metropolitan capital.

What were the objectives? They were to catch up with the industrialised world and to improve the living conditions of the people. It was believed that primacy of the market mechanism would lead to excess consumption by the rich and under-investment in sectors critical for development. At the same time, it was assumed that agriculture was subject to

diminishing returns so industrialisation should be preferred, as it was supposed to bring increasing returns and greater employment opportunities.

So the main inputs were: the lead role of public investment, industrialisation based on import substitution, the emphasis on the capital goods sector, industrial licensing to guide the investment in the private sector, relative neglect of agriculture, more emphasis on heavy industries than the traditionally small or cottage ones.

Large doses of public investment created a physical infrastructure and helped in setting up of intermediate goods industries, that reduced the cost of inputs used by the private sector and increased the demand for goods produced by the private sector. Import substitution was implemented through the market protectionism guaranteeing market for the domestic capitalists not for the present but for the future also as demand exceeded the supply as a result of import restrictions.

Due to its legacy of leading an anti-colonial struggle based on the core principles of nationalism and development, the Congress, became the ruling dominant party. There was a political consensus that industrialisation meant development and national interest was to be equated with people's interest. Redistribution as a policy was not encouraged, as redistribution could be only of poverty that would have harmed savings. The foreign capitalists and the Zamindars were excluded from the political economy of development. Land reforms could not be implemented as the lower level bureaucracy in alliance with the local landed politician lobby obstructed it. The glaring loopholes in the legislation did not help as also the position of the upper caste landlords. The net result was that the owners turned into cultivators. Community development programmes, Panchayati system, social legislation including reservations in the educational institutions and employment were subsequently introduced.

Let us make an appraisal of the development-planning model as it was implemented during this phase. What were the major gains? First, we can mention massive step up in terms of both industrial and agricultural growth. There was acceleration in the manufacturing industry in the 1950-1964 followed by deceleration until 1970s and again a renewed spurt led by an expansion of state expenditure. Second, there was a considerable diversification of industrial production as the capital goods sectors and other infant industries came up and achieved some level of production. Earlier only cotton, sugar and jute textiles existed. Third, domestic self-sufficiency in food production was achieved though food consumption remained low. It was a major achievement considering the fact that as late as in 1964-6, 12 percent of food grains required was imported.

As for the major criticism of the development-planning model, it was in terms of the failure of land reforms and the rise of a high cost industrial economy. The strategy of import substitution based on export pessimism also came under question. What emerged was a complex and wasteful system involving corruption in an institutionalised manner. Despite its phenomenal success the green revolution came to be criticised for being energy intensive and not labour intensive. Then dry land farming neglected. Urban-rural [India vs. Bharat] divide in economic terms got accentuated despite massive government expenditure.

In class terms a 'dominant coalition' comprising the proprietary classes namely the industrial

capitalist class, the land owning class and the bureaucracy, as Pranab Bardhan and Sudipta Kaviraj among others have argued, have benefited most from the ‘developmental’ policies under socialism like the grant of subsidies both to the rich farmers as well as the industrial capitalist classes. The governments became the ‘hospital’ for the sick industrial units as nationalisation took place in the name of helping out the working class. The professionals in the public sectors holding the ‘intellectual capital’ benefited from the institutionalised corruption as the state played the regulatory role in the economic arena.

In all fairness, however, there was always a conscious effort on the part of the Indian State to reconcile economic policies with the compulsions of the political process so that the conflicts in the interaction of economics and politics could be minimised. Politics of accommodation was followed. Welfarist policies were very much in place. That the sharing of the spoils was on agenda was evidenced in the form of the aim to have a socialistic pattern of society based on the twin objectives of eradication of poverty and equitable distribution of resources. Call for Industrial capitalism always combined with the radical rhetoric of a political democracy.

In sociological terms it was thought, very much under the influence of the post-war western liberal modernisation/ political development theory, that modernisation would reduce the linguistic diversities. Secularism would do away with the religious identities and affirmative actions would make caste wither away. Overall, welfarist policies were also to contribute in the homogenising agenda of nation building. Thus, in India, the ideal of social democracy and a welfare state along the non-capitalist path to development seemed achievable.

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## **4.6 POLITICAL DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: 1967-1990**

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The above consensus about the nature of democracy and development was broken as qualitative change took place in the interaction between the politics of democracy and economics of welfarism. The social groups who were on the margin of the society and were lying dormant became empowered with political voice. They now started making economic claims on a state that has successfully mediated between the politics and economics of Indian democracy. The ensuing process of mediation and reconciliation on the part of the Indian State had long-term economic and political consequences.

The discordant voices were due to the non-fulfillment of the promises and expectations as there was a rise in the level of poverty. (34 percent in 1957 to 57 per cent in 1970-71) Crisis in the economy in the mid-1960s was evident in the form of food crisis, as India became a basket case having a ‘ship to mouth existence’. The devaluation of rupee followed and planning was to be suspended for three years as industrial sector as well as savings and investments suffered.

The consensus was also broken because the second generation of political leadership that emerged in the aftermath of the Kamraj plan was devoid of the legitimacy, acceptance and charisma of the nationalist leadership. Regionalisation and ruralisation of the Indian politics took place, as the Congress no longer remained the dominant party having declined in both organisational and ideological sense. In the words of Yogendra Yadav, a ‘second democratic

'upsurge' took place in the form of a fundamental transformation in the terrain of politics which in turn is anchored in the process of social change. This transformation was a product of the change in the size, the composition and the self-definition of the voters as more and more citizens from the lower rungs of society participated in the electoral politics articulating and asserting their democratic rights.

There was also the rise of the dominant caste rich peasantry like Jats, Kammas, Kapus, Yadavas and Reddis in the face of the decline of semi-feudal landlords. These castes deserted the Congress to join or to create opposition parties. The newly entrant class of the rich peasantry asked for its due share of the benefits derived from the economic policies and sought an upward mobility in the political process. The response of the state was in the form of a strong, new, emphasis on agriculture in the form of green revolution. Thus for achieving food security 'betting on the strong' policy was adopted. Under the policy the better-endowed peasants and regions received extensive support. Though land reforms measures that had received partial success with the notable exception of the states like Kerala, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir were now not pursued, the Poverty alleviation programmes like DPAP, DWARKA were launched.

In the absence of serious programmatic efforts, the Congress under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, increasingly resorted to the Populist rhetoric in the form of the sloganeering, nationalisation of banks, abolition of privy purses. Dissent and regionalism in the Congress was met by a strategy of divide and rule by the 'high command' of the ruling Congress. The rich peasantry was co-opted into the dominant coalition as the majoritarianism under a representative democracy during the first phase gave way to authoritarianism. It all culminated into emergency that marked the overall failure of democracy in its procedural and substantive forms. In class terms the imposition of emergency can be also explained in the form of the lack of cohesion in the dominant coalition as the landed rich peasantry emerged in a big way being economically strong and numerically powerful. Political democracy had provided the institutional mechanisms to sustain the ruling coalition; lack of institutional mechanisms set in the crisis eventually.

Nevertheless the victory of the Janata Party not only reflected the sagacity of the Indian electorate but also proved conclusively that the democratic spirit had embedded in the political imagination of the Indian people.

The failure of Janata party government reflected the limitation of the coalition politics devoid of ideological unity and purpose. The return of a much chastened and insecure Indira Gandhi also saw the return of the politics of populism and patronage. Proliferation of subsidies resulted in massive state expenditure and loss of revenue, soft loans, loan waivers, sick firms being nationalised, cheap inputs being provided for the industrial capitalist class. In short, it was same regime under Indira Gandhi and later under Rajiv Gandhi in terms of its policies. The centralisation of political power, politics of nomination, marketisation of polity-all continued to remain the features of the period between 1980 to 1990. Massive allocation of funds was made under employment generating programmes like RLEGPs, NREP, and IRDP. As Deepak Nayyar observes succinctly, there was hardly much interaction between the economics and democratic politics now unlike the Nehruvian India. The money and muscle factor entered into electoral arena now dominated by what Rajni Kothari called the vote contractor. Those with money gained in the battle of ballot, as suitcase politics became the order of the day. Caste, ethnicity and religion now played far more significant role as the identity politics asserted in

continuation with the colonial legacy as it was first the colonial state that recognised different castes and communities and introduced separate electorate.

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## **4.7 POLITICAL DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: 1991 ONWARDS**

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The post 1991 India has been witness to an absence of consensus regarding its strategy of economic development as well as the evolving nature of its democracy. The long-term vision of political leadership of Nehru has been replaced by short-term strategies, as the adoption of the new economic policies of liberalisation and the emergent politics of empowerment seem to be moving the economy and polity in the opposite directions. What is of most significance is the unwillingness of the Indian State to mediate in order to effect the conflict resolution.

At this juncture it would be pertinent to address to the cause of a radical shift from the development-planning model to the model of economic liberalisation just after a minor economic crisis, when, despite decades of poverty, the mixed economy model continued unabated. And then, how come a minority government of Narasimha Rao could take such far-reaching policy change when the predecessor governments with the overwhelming majority like the Congress regime under Rajiv Gandhi were unable to do so despite apparent willingness?

The possible answer can be in the form of the immediate economic compulsion of crisis management. The political economists like Jayati Ghosh, Pranab Bardhan, Amit Bhaduri and Deepak Nayyar have referred to a combination of the national and international factors that explain that the shift was a crisis-driven and not a strategy-driven change in the economic policies.

These factors included the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the Communist regimes in the East European countries that were the biggest trading partners of India. The external debt crisis resulted as the short-term loans taken by Rajiv Gandhi administration could not be returned due to failure of the capital goods sector to export. Remittances from migrants in the gulf tapered off even as the oil prices increased in the aftermath of Gulf War. There was a flight of capital from the exchange market by the NRIs as they lost confidence in the social and political viability of the Indian State in the aftermath of the Mandal and Mandir controversy. Rise in consumerism indulged by the rising middle class, increased defence imports, inadequate resource mobilisation, competitive politics of populism were some of the immediate factors. And then the direct taxes were progressively reduced under the liberalising policies of Rajiv Gandhi regime while indirect taxes could not be raised.

The international factors included the conditionalities imposed from above by the international monetary institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. The Latin American and Sub-Saharan Africa examples along with the success stories of the South Asian countries were also put forward under the influence of rise of the neo-liberalism as the only viable model of ‘good governance’. It was argued that economic growth and economic efficiency could be achieved with the reduction in the role of the state. Fiscal discipline, access to foreign capital and foreign technology were other factors that led to a shift from the state led capitalism to market driven capitalism.

Do we have a future of the economic reforms in India? What are its implications for the democracy and development in India? It is very clear that the political instability in the present coalition era with frequent elections explains the prevalence of the short-term interests driven politics. Instead of taking hard measures to stabilise the economy and risking the adverse electoral verdict winning popular support in the elections, the continuation of populist measures have become the dominant factors in the policy making especially at the state level as a chief minister has an average of less than 3 years of tenure. Thus, the long-term perspective of the earlier phase is absent. In terms of democratic politics also, the consensus is gone. The corrupt and inefficient state level bureaucracy remains incompetent to carry out the reforms. Patronage, corruption and nepotism continue unabated. The nature of investment, whether foreign or domestic, remain suspect as most of the investments are in the consumer sector and not in the primary or capital goods sectors. Most of the investment, as Prabhat Patnaik argues, is in the form of 'Hot money' seeking quick returns. The rich state-poor state syndrome is also posing a challenge to the Indian federal democracy as the rich states, with their developed economic infrastructures, are acting as magnets where as the poorer states are being asked to fend for themselves without central assistance. Regionalism-an offshoot of colonialism and nationalism has been on rise as the regional imbalance increases. Initially it was the ethnic-cultural identity that was the basis for the reorganisation of the states but now the need for greater development and democratisation that is becoming the basis of the demand for separate statehood as was the case with the movements for the creation of Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Dialect communities are also joining the chorus as in the case of the demand for Bundelkhand and Ruhelkhand in UP. In the new economic regime, such demands are likely to receive impetus.

The withdrawal of the state from the social sector has been hitting the poor people as the whole notion of welfarism has come under question. In the name of fiscal discipline the state investment in the primary sectors of employment, health and education has been dwindling. New economic policies driven by the market laws of demand, supply and maximisation of profit are hardly concerned with the labour especially those employed in the informal sector. The competing federal states also tend to overlook the labour rights as they look for private investment.

There are other challenges to the success of the politics of economic reforms. The Gandhian values that still command influence among the masses are opposed to market economy as they emphasise on groups than individual interests. Profit making was not appreciated. The opposition to the economic reforms by the new political elite, failure to insulate the policy making from the populist politics, the contentious centre-state relations, competitiveness among the states are the other obstacles.

Thus the ongoing neo-liberal project of development based on the processes of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation has come to be questioned by the advocates of sustainable development strategies as well as by new social movements questioning the rationale of the prosperity of some social groups at the cost of others constituting majority.

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## 4.8 SUMMARY

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The above projects of social transformation arose out of deliberative legislation rather than the

participative democratic process. However they were products of a consensus negotiated and evolved in the course of the anti-colonial movement. They were to be realised within the framework of a democratic polity. The idea of democracy is expected to inform, inspire and cohere with the state's initiatives in the areas of welfare, secularism and development.

As discussed above, the traditional cultural values of pluralism and tolerance provided substance to the task of democracy building in India. The recognition of the diversities and accommodation of their concerns was the hallmark of the constitutional project of nation building involving the overarching goal of achieving development.

However the challenges before the Indian Democracy as of today remain formidable. The identities of caste and religion have bent the democratic idea to their own purpose. This is despite the fact that the social reforms and constitutional law have led to the dissolution of the oppressive bonds of caste and the social order and is no longer able to make the state redundant as in ancient past. As the social agenda of Indian democracy weakens due to the policies of economic liberalisation the challenge to the pluralist character of the Indian democracy from the ultra-rightist communal forces is coming up in the form of the demand to redefine democracy in emphatically majoritarian terms. Notwithstanding the upsurge of the new social movements taking up the issues relating to human rights, gender rights, backward classes and minority rights, environment, the civil Society in India is increasingly becoming the site of intense struggle involving the social groups. Ironically commitment to cultural rights for minority communities has been coming in the way of the principle of gender justice and also the Constitutionally guaranteed rights of equal citizenship as the simmering debate over the uniform civil code reveals.[refer Shah Bano case, 1986 and Supreme Court decisions most recent in 2003]. Identities have indeed been created through electoral politics leading to their empowerment but then the process has led to more conflict than competition. So new political entrants consider themselves as members of groups and communities, rather than liberal individuals.

As for the interface between the ideas of democracy and development is concerned, the challenge to create a more equal society remains formidable as the economic disparities continue to mount in the era of globalisation [refer the external pressure from the WTO regime; Need to legislate global regimes in the matters such as trade, environmental regulation and intellectual property and setting the global standard for 'good governance'].

To conclude, the economics of liberalisation and the politics of empowerment are going in opposite directions in the contemporary India. Willingness and ability of the Indian state as in the past to play the mediating role is simply not there. In such a situation there is a critical need to emphasise the role of the civil society and its citizens. For the politics of common goods and rights, it is imperative that the Indian State should adopt a strategy of selective globalisation that can enrich the pluralist character of the Indian democracy.

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## **4.9 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Explain briefly the evolution of political democracy and economic development in India during the phase 1947-67.

- 2) Analyse the process of transformation in the terrain of politics in the post 1967 era.
- 3) ‘The economics of liberalisation and the politics of empowerment are going in opposite directions in the contemporary India’, comment.
- 4) Write short notes on (1) Democracy and Development in the post colonial societies (2) Democracy as a form of good governance.

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## **UNIT 5 INEQUALITY: CASTE AND CLASS**

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### **Structure**

- 5.1 Introduction
  - 5.2 Notion of Social-Inequality
  - 5.3 Nature of Caste-Inequalities in India
  - 5.4 Caste as the Invention of Colonial Modernity or a Legacy of Brahmanical Traditions
  - 5.5 Nature of Class-Inequality in India
  - 5.6 Interrelation of Caste and Class Hierarchies
  - 5.7 Social-Inequalities, Development and Participatory Politics
  - 5.8 Summary
  - 5.9 Exercises
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### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The normative and democratic pillars of institutions and doctrines enshrined in the Constitution of India set the agenda of post-colonial state in India in terms of abolition or at least reduction of social-inequalities. The objective of ‘welfare’ state was to make a modern caste-less society by reducing centuries old disabilities inflicted upon the ‘depressed’ and attempt to improve their lot by providing them ‘reservations’ and ‘quotas’ in education as well as job market especially in state-bureaucracy and over-sized public sector enterprises. The Constitution of India requires the state to treat all citizens equally, without regard to birth, gender or religious belief. However, society does not function merely on the basis of formal principles. Enforcement of legal doctrines and attempt to remove social discrimination is a process entangled in the complexities of social formation. The pernicious aspects of *jati*, *varna* and class, therefore, still permeate our families, localities and political institutions. In this unit, our focus will be on various aspects of social inequality and their impact on democratic polity and political economy of development in the post-colonial state of India.

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### **5.2 NOTION OF SOCIAL-INEQUALITY**

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Human societies vary in the extent to which social groups as well as individuals have unequal access to advantages. Rousseau had made a distinction between natural and social inequality. The former emerge from the unequal division of physical and mental abilities among the members of a society. The latter arise from the social entitlement of people to wealth or economic resources, political power and status regardless of potential abilities possessed by individuals. Not only economic resources of societies vary according to the level of development and structural features of society, but also different groups tend to have differential access to these resources. Power enjoyed by the social groups also differ and offers another related social advantage. Similarly, conventions, rules, customs and laws confer greater prestige and status on certain groups and occupations in most human societies. Hierarchy, stratification, class-divisions are notions used by anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists to describe and denote social-inequality. Anthropologists generally distinguish three types of societies in terms of social-inequality. These are classified as egalitarian, rank and class societies.

Egalitarian societies contain fair amount of equality and no social group enjoys greater access to economic resources, power or prestige. Rank societies do not have unequal access to wealth or power, but they do contain social groups that enjoy greater honour and status. A pre-literate tribal society in which social ranking is based on rules of descent and alliances belong to this category. The complex class societies have unequal access and entitlement to economic resources, power and status.

In many pre-industrial agrarian societies, access to social opportunities and status was determined by birth. The ascribed role or status of individual was assigned by virtue of factors outside his or her own control such as birth, sex, age, kinship relations, and caste. This assigned role was rationalised as divinely ordained and natural. The estates or orders of medieval Europe were unequally ranked and this hierarchy of ranks was legally recognised and approved by religious-normative order of the society. Indian caste system was another type of validation of social hierarchy. The individual's professional or occupational role came to depend on individual effort and ability in the modern industrial and democratic society. This new role was emphasised in the political discourse of modernity and was seen as consonant with the democratic ideal. It involved an exercise of effort and choice as well as a fair deal of competition to occupy a given position. The society moved from the principle of hierarchy to stratification. According to the sociologists, hierarchy prevailed in societies based on castes or estates and social-inequalities were legitimated as naturally given. Stratification, on the other hand, is a feature of modern industrial societies in which inequalities do exist but are not considered as a part of natural or divine order. In this process of social change, inequality did not vanish or reduce, but changed its nature. Now class boundaries became more porous and permeable, individual mobility is possible and society's normative order is based on formal equality. However, there is still a large area of industrial society where roles are allocated by virtue of being male or female, black or white and so on.

G.D. Berreman suggests that out of 'differentiation' of persons, which is a natural and universal phenomenon, inequality or social evaluation of differences arises. He terms the behavioural expression of inequality as 'dominance' and combination of inequality and dominance is social-inequality. Dominance and status in egalitarian societies is often negotiable and contextual whereas in ranked or inegalitarian societies, inequality is institutionalised. It is embedded in a hierarchy of statuses and is not linked to individual differences of ability. Marxists generally tend to view gradations of power and status as correlated to the distinctions of class defined by economic position and accessibility of economic entitlements. In the Weberian paradigm, however, status and power are not entirely governed by economic divisions or control over economic entitlements. Although the term stratification reminds us of a geological image which signifies a sort of vertical layering or arrangement of social strata, social organisation is much more fluid and complex. A multiple set of factors affect a particular social formation and it is never a simple vertical or hierarchical arrangement of layers like the earth's crust. Political thinkers like Pareto, Mosca and Michels assigned primacy to power as the real source of inequality in society. According to them, power is the ability to make others do what they do not want to do and the elite groups exercise this power as they occupy the top positions within the institutions of a given society. Similarly, French scholar Bourdieu employs terms symbolic capital and distinction to identify social groups who enjoy more prestige and honour in society simply because they are endowed with more symbolic capital reflected in their pattern of

behaviour and taste. The notion of social-capital also has similar connotations. It demonstrates how certain social groups have greater capacity to form social-relations and competence to associate with others. They indicate that differences in terms of esteem, prestige and status rather than neat economic or political hierarchy may play the dominant role in some systems of stratifications.

### **5.3 THE NATURE OF CASTE-INEQUALITIES IN INDIA**

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Caste is the most contentious issue that has fascinated and divided scholars who have wished to study this system of stratified social-hierarchy in India. There is an enormous body of academic writing and political polemic on the issue. These are basically the part of debate on the transformation of Indian society under the impact of colonialism and its administrative mechanisms. Some argue for the continuities of pre-colonial social-structures including caste. Others stress the basic qualitative changes introduced by the colonial rulers.

Louis Dumont, the French scholar and writer of a famous book on caste, *Homo-Hierarchicus*, constructed a textually-informed image of caste. In this image, two opposing conceptual categories of purity and pollution are the core elements of caste-structure. These unique core principles of caste-hierarchy, according to Dumont, are observed in scriptural formulation as well as the every-day life of all Hindus. In other words, these values separate Indians culturally from the Western civilisation, making India a land of static, unchangeable, 'oriental' Brahmanical values. This notion of caste has been challenged by Nicholas Dirks and others. Dumont's notion was criticised as it failed to explain the social change, dynamism and individualistic strivings even within the traditional Indian society. Gerald Berreman pointed out that the principle of Brahmanical hierarchy was not uniformly followed by all Hindus. He also criticised the Dumontian notion that power and economic factors are distinct and epiphenomenal to caste. It has been pointed out by others that caste hierarchy is not a fixed hierarchy; rather it is context-specific and fluid and contains seeds of contestation among various castes. Nicholas Dirks cites ethnographic and textual evidence to demonstrate that Brahmins and their texts were not so central to the social fabric of Indian life. According to this view, power-relations and command over men and resources were more important. Brahmins were merely ritual specialists, often subordinate to powerful ruling families. The caste-based scriptural or Brahmanical model of traditional India was an invention of the British Orientalists and ethnographers, according to this view. However, caste played a very critical role in the Indian social-reformers' and nationalists' perception of caste. It was certainly not a mere product of British imagination.

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### **5.4 CASTE AS THE INVENTION OF COLONIAL MODERNITY OR A LEGACY OF BRAHMANICAL TRADITIONS**

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As we hinted above, two opposing viewpoints see caste differently. Some view it as an unchanged survival of Brahmanical traditions of India. According to this view, Brahmanism represents a core civilisational value and caste is the central symbol of this value. It is the basic

expression of the pre-colonial traditions of India. Contrary to this view, Nicolas Dirks, in his *Castes of Mind* (2001), argues that caste is a product of colonial modernity. By this he does not mean that caste did not exist before the advent of British. He is simply suggesting that caste became a single, unique category under the British rule that expressed and provided the sole index of understanding India. Earlier there were diverse forms of social-identity and community in India. The British reduced everything to a single explanatory category of caste. It was the colonial state and its administrators who made caste into a uniform, all-encompassing and ideologically consistent organism. They made caste a measure of all things and the most important emblem of traditions. Colonialism reconstructed cultural forms and social-institutions like caste to create a line of difference and demarcation between themselves as European modern and the colonised Asian traditional subjects. In other words, British colonialism played a critical role in both the identification and production of Indian ‘tradition’. The colonial modernity devalued the so called Indian traditions. Simultaneously, it also transformed them. Caste was recast as the spiritual essence of India that regulated and mediated the private domain. Caste-ridden Indian society was different from the European civil society because caste was opposed to the basic premises of individualism as well as the collective identity of a nation. The salience of this pre-colonial identity and sense of loyalty could easily be used to justify the rule by the colonial modern administrators. So, according to Dirks, it was the colonial rule of India that organised the ‘social difference and deference’ solely in terms of caste.

The attempts to downplay or dismiss the significance of Brahmins and Brahmanical order is not in accordance with familiar historical records and persistence of caste-identities even in the contemporary Indian social life. Caste-terms and principles were certainly not in universal use in pre-colonial periods. Caste in its various manifestations and forms was also not an immutable entity. However, starting from the *Vedas* and the Great Epics, from Manu and other *dharmaśastras*, from *puranas*, from ritual practices, the penal system of Peshwa rulers who punished culprits according to caste-principles, to the denunciations of anti-Brahmanical ‘reformers’ of all ages, everything points towards the legacy of pre-colonial times. It is true that there were also non-caste affiliations and identities such as networks of settlements connected by matrimonial alliances, trade, commerce and state service in the pre-colonial times. However, caste was also a characteristic marker of identity and a prevailing social-metaphor. Caste was not merely a fabrication of British rulers designed to demean and subjugate Indians. It did serve the colonial interests by condemning the ‘Brahmanical tyranny’, colonial administration could easily justify their codes to ‘civilise’ and ‘improve’ the ‘fallen people’. Moreover, strengthening of the caste-hierarchy could also act as a bulwark against anarchy.

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## 5.5 NATURE OF CLASS INEQUALITY IN INDIA

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Class societies are characterised by the horizontal division of society into strata. In Marxist terms, classes are defined by their differential access to the means of production. The dominant classes appropriate the ‘surplus’ produced by other classes through their control of means of production, and thus exploit their labour. The actual configuration of social classes varies from one society to another. The rise and growth of Indian social classes was organically linked to the basic structure of colonialism and bore the imprint of that association.

What constitutes the dominant proprietary class in the urban-areas is marked by plurality and heterogeneity in its composition. A clear-cut demarcation along the lines of merchant, industrial and finance capital is not possible in case of India. The Indian business classes exhibit a complex intertwining of functions. Under the colonial rule, the Indian businessmen were initially relegated to small private trade, money lending and acted as agents of foreign British Capital. The British capitalists and merchants controlled the upper layer of Indian economy represented by the big joint stock companies, managing houses, banking and insurance and major export-import firms. Despite obstacles and constraints, the Indian capitalist class grew slowly and steadily and breached white ‘collective monopoly’. With all structural constraints, colonialism also guaranteed the security of private property and sanctity of contract, the basic legal elements required for a market-led growth. The expansion of foreign trade and commercialisation eased the capital shortage and accelerated the growth of sectors where cost of raw-materials was low such as cotton textiles, sugar, leather, cement, tobacco and steel. Certain groups of Parsis, Marwaris, the Khojas, the Bhatias and Gujarati traders benefited from their collaboration with the European companies and pumped their resources into the manufacturing sector. This Indian capitalist class grew, diversified to some extent and acquired important position by 1940s. This class thrived during Independence under the government’s policy of import-substitution and quantitative controls. The ‘Public- Sector’ units provided the infrastructure and the intermediate and capital goods to this ‘protected’ class while the public lending institutions provided it with cheap sources of finances. The assets of the biggest 20 industrial houses increased from Rs. 500 crores in 1851 to Rs 23,200 crores in 1986. This was the result of benefits derived from state-developed infrastructural facilities, subsidised energy inputs, cheap capital goods and long-term finance made available to these by big monopoly industrial houses under the planning. On the other hand, almost 70% of the people exist on merely subsistence level and 76.6 million agricultural labourers earn only one-tenth of what an organised sector worker in the city earns. In the 1980s, unemployment reached about 10% of total active population. In the urban centres, the bulk of labourers are working in unorganised informal sectors. The vast army of pavement vendors, domestic servants, porters and street hawkers represent a kind of disguised urban unemployment.

The class-composition in the rural areas also bears the stamp of colonialism. The older group of rural gentry, although its wings were clipped away by the British colonial regime, was retained and transformed into a kind of rentier class of landlords invested with newly defined property rights on land. This was especially true of permanently settled Zamindari areas of Bengal and Taluqdar areas of Awadh. This landlord-rentier class generally emerged from the pre-existing groups’ of Zamindars and Taluqdars who had enjoyed the rights of revenue-collection under the pre-British regimes. They exercised “extra-economic” feudal coercion over their small marginal share-croppers. Since the Congress Party favoured a bureaucratic rather than mobilisational form for carrying out a gradual social transformation after Independence, the power and privileges of these semi-feudal agrarian magnates remained intact in some areas. These classes now managed the new democratic polity. The failure to implement radical agrarian reforms meant that the availability of resources and accessibility to spaces within the new polity to the socially marginal groups remained limited.

The rich farmers, however, are numerically the most important proprietary class in the rural areas. In areas outside Zamindari settled areas of Bengal, the colonial state settled land-

revenue with dominant cultivating groups. A class of rich farmers emerged from these groups. They took advantage of the expanding market networks under the colonial economy and they had resources like sufficient arable land, livestock, implements and better access to credit. They also became less dependent on money lenders and they took to usury themselves. The Jat peasants of Punjab and the Upper Doab, the Vellalas in Tamilnadu, the Kanbi-Patidars of South Gujarat, the Lingayats of Karnataka and the Kamma-Reddy farmers of Andhra constituted this group. The tenancy legislation under colonialism and after Independence initiated the process of transfer of landed resources from non-cultivating, absentee landlords to the enterprising rich farmers. Some older groups of rentier landlords also converted themselves into this class. The political clout of this class grew as it drew encouragement from state's policy of providing price-supports to agricultural produce and from liberal provisions of subsidised inputs such as water, power, fertilizers, diesel, credit and agricultural machinery. This class is easily identifiable by the ownership of landed and other agricultural resources. In 1970s, about 20% households of the rich farmers owned about 63% of rural assets such as land, livestock, building, and implements. This disproportionate access to rural assets is combined by its control over wage labour which is used to produce a sizeable marketable surplus by this class. The other pole of rural social-structure is the world of semi-proletariat having little or no control over productive resources. The agricultural labourers are a predominant group with little or no guarantee of a regular employment, often burdened by coercive domination of rich farmers.

The bureaucratic-managerial elite also constitute a significant class in India as the relatively weak capitalist class at the time of India's Independence was not in a position to completely subordinate the highly developed administrative state apparatus. The growth of non-market mechanisms and planning in the allocation of resources and economic patronage also resulted in the expansion of bureaucracy. This class expanded in the post-colonial phase with the spreading out of education and need for professional and white-collar jobs involving new skills and expertise. This is not merely an auxiliary class of bourgeois as there are conflicts of interests between the public sector professionals and private capital. The command over knowledge, skills, tastes and networks of relationships are notable features of this class.

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## **5.6 INTERRELATION OF CASTE AND CLASS HIERARCHIES**

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Caste and class point towards inequality and hierarchy. In both the cases, however, the principle of organisation differs. The core features of caste are: endogamy or marriage within caste, occupational differentiation and hereditary specialisation of occupations, notion of pollution and a ritual hierarchy in which Brahmins are generally at the top. Classes, on the other hand, broadly refer to economic basis of ownership or non-ownership relation to the means of production. But how does caste and class correlate to each other? Classes are sub-divided in terms of types of ownership and control of economic resources and the type of services contributed to the process of production. The Brahmanical ritual hierarchy of the caste is also not universally applicable and upheld by all. In many cases, ritual hierarchy is only contextual. The prosperous Jats in North India enjoy social and political dominance without equivalent ritual status. In most popular renditions of caste, hierarchy alone is emphasised and that too

from Brahmanical point of view. Sometimes, however, caste works as a discrete community, without hierarchical relationship to other segments of society. Our conceptual categories do not always recapture the existing social reality. For instance, a conceptual distinction is often made between sharecroppers and agricultural labourers. In actual life, however, there is a high degree of overlap and they do not constitute discrete entities. Similar overlap is found in the rentier-landlord and cultivator-owner categories. The picture becomes hazier when we turn to caste-class configuration.

Caste and class resemble each other in certain respects and differ in others. Castes constitute the status groups or communities that can be defined in terms of ownership of property, occupation and style of life. Social honour is closely linked to ritual values in this closed system. Class positions also tend to be associated with social honour; however, they are defined more in terms of ownership or non-ownership of means of production. The classes are much more open and fluid and have scope of individual upward social mobility. In caste system, only an entire segment can move upward, and hence, the mobility is much slower.

Although there is considerable divergence between the hierarchy of caste and that of class, the top and bottom segments of the class system are largely subsumed under the caste structure. The upper castes own means of production (land in rural areas) and act as rentiers. The landless agrarian proletarian coincides with the lower castes or dalits who provide labour services for the rentier upper caste people as well as rich prosperous farmers of intermediate level. At the intermediate level, articulation of class-identities is more complex. The process of differentiation of communities dislocates class-relations from the caste-structure. If caste and class show a fair degree of overlap at the top and bottom level and in some cases appear almost co-terminus, the picture is quite ambiguous at the intermediate level of caste hierarchy. Similarly, the processes of modernisation especially urbanisation, acquisition of education and new skills act as the forces of dislocation that puncture the forces of social inertia and modify caste-rigidity.

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## 5.7 SOCIAL INEQUALITIES, DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATORY POLITICS

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If social inequalities are so deeply entrenched, then how do they affect the developmental process and participation of deprived sections of society in a democratic polity? This key question has been answered in different ways. Kothari, while analysing the intrusions of caste into politics and politics into caste, distinguishes three stages in the progression of political modernisation after Independence. In the first stage, he says the struggle for political power was limited to the entrenched and the ascendant castes. In the second phase, competitions within these castes for power led to factionalism and in the third stage, lower castes have been mobilised and are asserting themselves in the political domain. In his words “It is not-politics that gets caste-ridden; it is the caste that gets politicised”. With the extension of franchise in the post-colonial India, each social group and sub-group got mobilised for a share in the developmental process and competed for positions in the state-bureaucracy. The Indian polity is, thus, governed both by vertical mobilisation by the dominant castes and horizontal alliances in the name of *jati* and *varna*. The political parties exacerbate the existing cleavages in a developing society like India. The salience of primordial ties of kinship, caste and community

play significant role in hindering the establishment of civil society. Moreover, there is never a set chronology of mobilisation and political modernisation, especially any pre-ordained and unconditional progression along a set path. In the rural hinterlands, cleavages of caste and community and articulation of kinship and territorial affinities work against implementation of a piece of redistributive land-reforms. The rich prosperous farmers use the existing social networks in the multi-class agrarian mobilisation in the electoral arena to mobilise and harness marginal and small farmers for their own economic interests such as lower taxes, higher prices for agricultural produce, better subsidies and cheaper credit facilities.

So, despite the egalitarian ideal of post-colonial Indian state, there are still disproportionate access to resources, power and entitlements between different social classes and castes. The relationships between the upper and lower castes in the rural areas are still governed by the ideology of caste. According to Andre Beteille, professionalisation and specialisation of modern service sector in the post-colonial Indian society has increased the role of formal education, technical skills and training; ‘family’ and not caste plays critical role in the social reproduction of inequality, especially in urban areas. However, it is still a debatable point whether the increasing bureaucratisation of professional activities per se enhances the chances of social mobility and equality of opportunities. Although, there may be no legal barriers to entry into new occupation, the unequal distribution of life chances, status and power on the grounds of birth determine the social and political trajectories that accord positions, ranks and power to the individuals.

The establishment of a formal democracy in itself is no guarantee that all citizens will enjoy equal access and participation in the political processes. Political privileges are retained and ingrained in many non-elective institutions, the civil bureaucracy and the police in particular. They protect the interests of the dominant proprietary classes and the upper castes. The lower castes and classes are not yet sufficiently empowered to shape and mould the political processes or the state’s social and economic policies. The powerful landed magnates of upper castes in the countryside and the industrial and business classes of urban rich make use of authoritarian streak inherent in the non-elective institutions to deny genuine democratisation of polity. The apparent assertion of their rights and mobilising capacity by the backwards and scheduled castes is used by the crafty politicians to augment their power and wealth. Such mobilisations, thus serve the interests of a spoils system and a thoroughly corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy instead of articulating a programme of equitable development and social empowerment. Apart from other institutional constraints, the failure of democracy to grant substantive democratic rights and deliver the promise of redistributive justice is rooted in the class and caste-based inequalities in India. Dreze found evidence of subtle forms of deprivation in the rural areas of the Eastern U.P. in terms of accessibility of the disadvantaged groups to schooling, health services and exclusion of marginal sections of population from effective participation in the political processes.

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## **5.8 SUMMARY**

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The post- colonial state in India accepted the formal principles of equality and social-justice in its governance. However, no social-entity exists in a vacuum. The functioning of our democratic polity is profoundly and unfairly influenced by the caste and class-based inequalities. The

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# **UNIT 6                  POLITICAL      ECONOMY      OF DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Structure**

- 6.1     Introduction
  - 6.2     The Global Divide
  - 6.3     Poverty of Income Comparisons
  - 6.4     Global Social Reality: Essentials of Maldevelopment
  - 6.5     Agenda of the Political Economy of Development
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## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

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India, an ancient civilisation and a richly endowed sub-continental country, is home to about one-sixth of humanity. An overwhelmingly large part of its people live a life of extreme poverty, though there is a tiny minority which enjoys a standard of living at par with the highest in the world. This is not the only sense in which India can be seen to be a country of extreme contrasts. A country full of diversity and plurality, its encounter with what is generally termed modernity occurred under the aegis of its colonial domination, based on political subjugation at the hands of Great Britain, the pioneer of modern industrialisation which dominated the processes of modernisation-industrialisation for a long period of world history. Though India successfully liberated itself from the colonial rule by means of a mass, popular struggle for independence, it is still striving to be able to win for its more than a billion strong population a standard of living, dignity and empowerment commensurate with its resource endowment, rich heritage, democratic polity wedded to the highest values humanity has been able to articulate to this day and rich human element. It is this arduous struggle for achieving for her citizens what is their long denied due which constitutes the basic challenge for the political economy of development. Given the history of how India came to lag behind and lost valuable historical opportunities in an increasingly inter-twined world and its internal processes became dysfunctional and even counter-productive over time, the political economy of development of India has to be viewed and analysed in the context of the global forces, processes and situation. The primacy of the internal dynamics of the Indian situation has to be constantly kept in view.

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## **6.2 THE GLOBAL DIVIDE**

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Poverty, unemployment, disease, squalor, frequent disasters, crime and vast inequities are openly visible but vary widely in different parts of the spaceship earth, including India. Though no part of the globe is entirely free from these avoidable problems, in over two-thirds of the world billions of human beings constituting the global majority face this grim fate to a disconcertingly large extent. Even in the rich, or high income countries, like the ones which are parts of the OECD, despite their very high average incomes, there are pockets of extreme poverty, frequent and often rising unemployment (along with a certain per centage considered by some to be irreducible), increasing inequalities of income, wealth, socio-economic power, rather high degree of social insecurity and rampant problems of alienation and anomie. These problems are very acute and can be considered the defining, main characteristics of hundreds of countries, of course, including India, often variously described as underdeveloped, developing, less developed, industrialising or backward or third world countries. The usual, official exchange rate based on per capita income statistics is misleading and a better picture is captured by the international comparative data based on estimates of purchasing power parity. On both these counts, an overwhelmingly large majority of the world population lives on a daily income of less than one US dollar and two US dollars respectively (See Tables I and II at the end). The high income countries produce nearly four-fifths of the global gross national income, while the low income countries are able to take less than 4 per cent of the global gross national income (GNI), and the middle income countries share is about 17 per cent of the total. It may be noted that the high income countries' population is about 15 per cent of the world population of nearly six billion. As many as over two-fifths of humanity lives in the low income countries while the middle income countries provide citizenship to about 45 per cent of the world population. There is a considerable number of poor, deprived, discriminated and distressed persons in the rich countries, just as there is a sprinkling of rich, well-to-do and better-endowed persons in the poorer countries. While there is a good deal of commonality of life experience, values, thinking and socio-economic strategies between the rich in both the poor and the rich countries, comparable links and empathy between the poor in the two sets of countries are not much in evidence.

Statistics about the vast disparities rampant in India are not authoritatively available. However, some idea of the prevailing disparities can be gleaned from some well-known facts about India. For one thing, agriculture continues to remain the main source of livelihood for nearly two-thirds of the population, a situation that has shown extreme rigidity, but the absolute number of people dependent on agriculture is now nearly three times the number which was dependent on agriculture at the time of independence. But over this period of over half a century, the share of agriculture in GDP has dwindled from about three-fifths of the total at the time of independence to a little below a quarter presently. At the same time, per capita net sown area has shrunk to 0.13 hectare, which is mere one third of what it was in 1947. Thus, despite the Bhudan movement and legal-administrative attempt to redistribute land, in effect, the concentration of land holdings has increased to such an extent that broadly speaking it may be said that the top 20 per cent of the land-holders control roughly 80 per cent of the cultivable area. Little wonder, in spite of some productivity gains the comparative position of the vast majority of the cultivators, of whom over 80 per cent are small and marginal farmers with non-viable tiny plots of land and inadequate and limited access to the

other complementary resources, has become worse-off. The position of the landless farm workers, of which an overwhelmingly large part come from the socially and economically worse off and discriminated dalits and tribal communities, who constitute the lowest rung of India's highly differentiated and stratified social order is the worst as along with income poverty, they who constitute a little less than a third of the rural population, have income insecurity reflected in inadequate and uncertain availability of gainful, productive work and are deprived of the most essential social-economic basic facilities and services like an appropriate roof over their heads, drinking water, literacy, sanitation facilities, access to medical services, electricity and food security. On the contrary, how a tiny minority is enjoying a life of wealth and luxuries of international standards is too well-known to need any statistical elaboration. In any case, even on the basis of a highly misleading concept, the official estimates place the number of people below the poverty line at some 260 million and the level of literacy is below than the sub-Saharan African countries who are considered the least developed countries of the world. In view of the above, it is pertinent to ask: how meaningful are the income comparisons across time, countries and various socio-economic groups?

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### **6.3 POVERTY OF INCOME COMPARISONS**

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The estimated income levels and differentials do not fully capture the socio-economic conditions of existence of the people. This is so for many reasons. For one thing, income is related to market-centric activities. But many critical and important activities, including those connected with material aspects and bearing on wellbeing, social role and esteem are non-market activities and involve family, community, state, civil society organisations, etc. These largely non-market activities have little to do with income flows. Then, market does not incorporate everyone; differentiates people on non-functional, unjust criteria and excludes a large number of people for varying lengths of time from participation in its ambit of activities and transactions. Many objective and subjective factors are not amenable to the logic and working of the market. Markets are intrinsically prone to manipulation by some against the interests of many. Thus the market processes of generating income flows tend to benefit some at the cost of the others. For example, use of natural resources like land, water, forests, etc. in the process of production can deprive some of their livelihood without any or inadequate compensation. Take the case of multi-purpose irrigation and hydel power projects in India. They submerge vast tracks of land, often with forest cover, natural forests of great antiquity frequently. These submerged areas lead to displacement of thousands of tribals and farmers and other poor people, disrupting not just their livelihood but the entire pattern of their lives. Whenever some rehabilitation efforts have been made, which is not always the case, they fall far short of full and reasonable compensation, leave alone proper rehabilitation and sharing of the gains of the project or some alternative. While a huge cost is incurred by these refugees of the so-called development, the beneficiaries are the people in the plains who are generally a part of India's small organised sector elite and their hangers on. The national income statistics surely shows a large gain from such inequity-fostering 'development'. It accrues to a small section who in no way compensate the poorer people who are made worse-off by this kind of development reflected in the GDP figures. Clearly, these projects add to the GDP as also to the woes of the peoples which no national accounts statistics ever captures. The last fifty years in India saw dozens of such projects. These worsened people are generally the poorer ones.

Thus market-generated income conceals its hidden, as well as non-monetary costs. Market generated income based comparisons take a highly limited and truncated view of life, society and future. The market tends to be highly myopic. Then, the costs of participation in the market processes as also of exclusion from these processes are not fully, correctly and realistically captured in the price and income figures. The effects caused by external economies and diseconomies too make income an imperfect indicator. After all who can deny the heavy costs imposed by the denudation of forests, degradation of land, pollution of water and air which even a country like India with relatively modest modern industrialisation has suffered over the period its GDP has started moving up after the first half of the 20th century. Many non-economic aspects are no less important to individuals, groups and societies for what may be treated as the essence of development but remain outside the purview of the market based income-generating activities. In other words, the market based income is an incomplete, partial and misleading indicator and, in some senses, can be inimical to general social wellbeing.

Then, national income aggregates and averages take the nation as a unit, as though it were internally a single, undifferentiated entity (like a black box) without internal dynamics and differentiation. Nations, like India, have vast internal differentiation in terms of control over, access to and quality of social, economic and cultural resources, as well as in terms of status and power; their historical experience too shows many different patterns of ups and downs. To these differences, one may as well add a regional dimension in a country like India with her sub-continental size. Then, even if different nations are not entirely unique, differences across nations far outweigh similarities. It is often said about India that it is a nation of stark contrasts, a country for which the only sustainable generalisation is that hardly any generalisation is valid. Hence it can be highly misleading to compare nations, their level, pattern, dynamics and future of development on the basis primarily of income data. The same would hold good, e.g. for inter-State comparison of per capita SDP among the Indian States. The apparent precision of such national and State income data is sham as its calculation is based on many unrealistic assumptions, imprecise sources of information and rule of thumb conventions especially in poor countries with a large unorganised sector. This is especially true of India where over 92 per cent of the work force derives their livelihood from the unorganised sector activities which contribute a little less than 60 per cent of India's GDP.

Income flows may be generated by production (regularly or on an ad hoc basis) or made available, by means of a transfer even with a guaranteed measure of regularity in many different ways. But in this process those who disburse income come to dominate and the recipients get dominated and subordinated. This involves the income transfer recipients in an unequal relationship of disempowerment and dependence, making them feel or explicitly forcing on them a feeling of inferiority. Such power relations are crucial in any society and even among nations. One possible reason why the rural poor have not been able to make any big dent in their levels of deprivation, even though crores of rupees have ostensibly been spent for their welfare and development over the past five decades is that these top-down programmes are paternalistic and make a sharp dichotomy between the benefactors and beneficiaries. To take another example, the "aid" recipients nations have to get the approval of the "donor" nations for their plans and policies on a regular, on-going, institutionalised, formal basis. Such nations compromise their national sovereignty and interest for the apparently easy option of getting concessional loans, access to technology, etc. but barter away in the process their vital national interests especially of those who are not able to participate in donor-approved plans,

programmes and policies. One has just to recall the ignominy India suffers year after year when it sends high-ranking officials to what used to be known as Aid India Club in order to win the approval of the so-called donor countries in exchange for their commitment to provide some development assistance in the form of official development assistance (ODA) which has been a small fraction of India's development outlays. Often such relatively low-interest-bearing loans were contracted for projects involving no foreign exchange outgo and were sought for sustaining India's chronic balance of payments deficit. The point is that though useful to a limited extent, international income comparisons, whether for the present or for long historical periods, are quite inadequate to define the essential questions and problems of the political economy of development.

Nevertheless, it is the main features of the global social, economic, political and cultural divide which constitutes the problematic of the political economy of development. Of course, the internal differentiation and inequalities of a country are related to the persistent and growing international inequalities and form a major component of the development discourse. However, in order to be able to discuss these issues properly we have to deal with the legacy of the persistent popularity and official level-excessive almost exclusive-recognition of the income-related yardsticks of development. It is no doubt true that income flow or access to regular supply of goods and services is essential and cannot be ignored and have to be ensured. The moot point is: can it be made the exclusive, all-important development factor, as an essential pre-condition for every thing else? An important factor responsible for taking such an exaggerated, and one-sided view seems to be the monopolisation of the development issues by economics in the form of a popular, technically rigorous and influential sub-discipline called economics of development, especially as it evolved in the rich countries. This discipline was substantially shaped and developed by the Establishment of the rich countries and the UN organisations dominated by them, of course, with a considerable contribution by the independent academics from several parts of the world, including India, who had little formal linkages with the ideological, cultural and technological apparatus of the rich nations. This is an approach which perpetuates the hegemony of those who can, by means of their command over resources and institutions, control the process of income growth along with cornering a better part of the incomes generated. Hence the existing power centres and controllers of the economy portray income growth as the essence of development. As a result, an apparently technoeconomic perspective on development, with accent on quantifiable aspects and macro economic variables like savings, investments, GDP, external balance, general price level, factor mobility, etc. came to dominate development related academic discourse, practical policy-making and international development activities and 'co-operation'.

Naturally, this exercise carries a strong imprint of the mainstream neo-classical economics which was concerned more with justifying, perpetuating with growing strength and selling the existing reality as rational rather than to explain it, let alone transform it for the good of the hitherto marginalised and excluded especially as the latter would have it. Hence, its concern with the growth of national income and following the patterns followed earlier on in the rich countries. It is basically to serve the processes of capital accumulation under the control of and in the image of the big corporates based in the rich, early-industrialised countries. The processes of industrialisation, technological innovations and capital accumulation contributed to the power, prosperity and global dominance of a minority of people from the rich countries (the North) with some junior role (in the global context) by the top governing and influential

strata from the poor, non-industrialised (in the modernisation related sense) countries. The outcomes of these processes were captured in the per capita income (average of national income) which thus bears no necessary positive relationship to the development and welfare of those not directly initiating and controlling capital accumulation, technical progress and expanding production processes.

Thus, it follows that GDP in various forms is not only an overly quantified indicator, but is also a highly imperfect, imprecise, incomplete, biased and misleading indicator. Given the historical legacy of multi-dimensional inequalities, it basically camouflages the interests of the big international capital dominating the rich, industrialised countries (tendentiously or mistakenly described as developed or advanced countries and following this usage the term has been adopted by many through sheer mental inertia). This is because the processes of capital accumulation, industrialisation along with consequential social relations, international relations, life styles, technologies, marketisation based cultural products and the symbols derived from or related to them mainly further the interests and power of those who are commanding these processes of capital accumulation and industrialisation. These processes exclude and marginalise a much larger number than the number they incorporate and empower and in the bargain, increase the dependence of the former majority on the latter minority. The Indian experience of modern industrialisation, both during the colonial period and the post-independence era, clearly shows that the share of industry in both the GDP and in the work force, remains a small fraction not only of the age-old agriculture, but also of the rapidly expanding services sector. In fact, the organised industrial sector employment, of over 400 million strong workforce of India, was in the year 2001 barely 7.43 million, that is under 2 per cent of the work force in both the public and private sectors taken together.

Thus one can see why there are powerful forces ranged in support of the perpetuation of national income as the indicator of development and economic growth (i.e., growth of Gross Domestic Product, GDP) as the most important objective and the very essence and definition of economic development. Not that the glaring and thoroughly exposed weaknesses, infirmities and distorted world view associated with treating economic growth as synonymous with not only economic development but development as such have not been recognised by many of the growth enthusiasts themselves. As correctives, they add some additional indicators to the GDP /GNP band wagon, qualify the growth indicator, even devise numerous alternative quantitative indicators (like quality of life, human development index, basic or minimum needs, social indicators of development, or growth with justice, comprehensive development framework, etc.), but in various direct and/or circuitous ways continue the adherence to and prominence of GDP or GDP based indicators and theories. If the centrality of GDP growth were to be sacrificed and replaced by alternative definitions, measures, indicators, etc. which are concerned with and reflect the conditions, interests, aspirations and institutions of the presently disadvantaged, discriminated and deprived people, the top-brass of both the industrialised and poor countries would be on way to losing their power and hegemony. No such harakiri can be reasonably expected from anyone. The other stakeholders have themselves to articulate their interests and values and define development in ways indicating that the people really matter. Then only would development be of the people, for the people and by the people.

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## **6.4 GLOBAL SOCIAL REALITY: ESSENTIALS OF MALDEVELOPMENT**

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But in order to see the impact of over half a century long unidirectional, no-holds-barred conscious pursuit of GDP growth by numerous means and strenuous ‘national’ and global efforts, (of course, in the context of the inherited, mostly colonial stagnation and retrogression legacy) let us first take note of some select aspects of the socio-economic conditions in the world especially in the poorer parts, in terms other than GDP. Since GDP growth was expected in terms of the hypothesis of trickle-down processes to benefit, incorporate and gradually to empower the poor in due (unspecified) course of time, the living conditions of the people in general were expected to gradually improve. The operation of the trickle-down process, via the elemental labour and commodity market processes of the spread effects via backward and forward linkages, it was recognised, may not go far enough to be able to deal with the enormity of the poor and deplorable living conditions across countries and continents. The trickle-down view is based on the supposition that as a result of growth and its diffusion, both poverty and inequality are reduced by gradually incorporating the masses from the rural and unorganised sectors. But, as a perceptive economist has shown, “(G)rowth can reduce poverty and inequality, growth can reduce poverty and increase inequality, growth can increase both inequality and poverty.” It all depends on composition of output, factor proportions in production, relative prices, location of production state policies, etc. The same would apply to employment generation as well. Hence it was stipulated, basically as an after-thought, including by some vocal proponents of the growth and market based approach, that there would remain many people who cannot be benefited and enabled to attain the levels of living made possible by the scientific and technological revolution (STR) of our age (may be, it was argued, owing, *inter alia*, to their proclivity to multiply fast and in large numbers, added and abetted by their non-material, non-forward looking, hidebound and/ or other-worldly attitudes and values). They thought of various pull-up programmes and policies, i.e., state-sponsored activities, to provide income, assets, social consumption, especially social services, including some measure of social security, for those who remain either on the fringes of the market system, or are constrained to remain outside it. In fact, the history of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century provides evidence of many large-scale attempts of state-directed poverty-alleviation programmes, particularly after discovering that the golden era of growth during the 1950s and 1960s saw an embarrassingly massive number living in sub-human conditions of absolute poverty. This is the genesis of well-known McNamara, Mahbub-ul-haq thesis, which found many other enthusiastic endorsers and adopters. Following the processes of fostering and accelerating growth by numerous strategies, policy interventions, direct involvement, etc. the trickle-down and pull-up processes did produce, in absolute terms and even in comparison to the colonial period outcomes, fairly impressive results. However, who had borne how much of the costs and benefits of the growth experienced is a question rarely asked as also the question regarding the absolute number of the poor, deprived and discriminated even after moving these economies to a much higher GDP growth path compared to the virtually stagnation phase seen during the long colonial period. However, the facts of changes which occurred globally during the last half of the century clearly bring out the widening income chasm along with worsening social, physical, moral and cultural conditions of existence for an increasing number. No one can seriously claim meaningful gains in terms of removing poverty,

unemployment, inequalities, ecological imbalances and disempowerment of the masses (and peripherals of the poorer countries ) except for the gung-ho over the East Asian experience.

Many studies by perceptive social scientists, as also a number of official documents, especially those coming from the Planning Commission, recognise that the preceding analysis is fully correct for India as well. The Tenth Five year Plan clearly states: “There are several aspects of development where progress has been clearly disappointing. Growth in the 1990s has generated less employment than was expected. The infant mortality rate has stagnated at around 70 per 1000 for several years. As many as 60 per cent of the rural households and about 20 per cent of the urban households do not have a power connection. Only 60 per cent of the urban households have access to drinking water in their homes, and far fewer have latrines inside their houses. The situation in this regard is much worse in the rural areas. Land and forest degradation and overexploitation of ground water is seriously threatening sustainability of rural households and food production. Pollution in the cities is on the increase.” (p.2). One can quote from many authentic sources, like the World Development Report and the National Sample Surveys to bring out many aspects of the deteriorating social conditions of existence for the majority of Indians. Even the conservatively arrived at figure of over 260 million persons living below the officially defined poverty line in terms of the inability to obtain the minimum essential calories every day is only 100 million less than the country’s population in 1951 when the per capita availability of food was higher than is the case presently. Over 45 million is the number of registered persons looking out for employment opportunities, while the official figure of unemployment rate is close to 8 per cent of the workforce.

Similar conditions prevail over much of Africa, Asia and Latin America where the majority of the world population lives. And let it also be remembered that there is a third world in the midst of every so-called first world country. Even now the life expectancy in the poor countries is 19 years less per person compared to the rich countries. Far more cruel is the fact that 13 times more children per thousand live births die in their infancy in the poorer countries over the level seen in the richer ones. (All sources are from the World Development Reports.) The poorer countries tend to spend on, highly unevenly and perversely distributed health services a paltry 4.5 per cent of their rather low GDP for a many times higher population compared to almost double, 9.7 per cent, of many times higher GDP, for far fewer number in the rich, mostly former colonial powers. Similar low levels of expenditure on education are seen in the poorer countries both in absolute and relative terms compared to the North. Largely token, imitative and non-functional education in the poor countries gets reflected in low levels of literacy and low and inappropriate skills along with rusting and/or disappearance of traditional skills. How flimsy are the literacy levels attained by means of special drives is illustrated by the fact that many of those declared as ‘literate’ relapse in a short course of time to illiteracy! Even on the basis of comparing income and other “social” indicators, the World Development Report (2001) maintains that: “Even if we achieve the goal of cutting global poverty ratio to half, the number of people living in extreme poverty will fall only by a third ! China and India will see the largest improvement, but in sub-Saharan Africa the number will rise. Europe and Central Asia where the number of extremely poor people rose during the transition period, should return to 1990 levels of poverty. Even under the most optimistic assumptions in 2015 there are likely to be 2.3 billion people living on \$2 a day or less that represents poverty in many middle income countries”. Clearly, the existing reality and likely future both give rise to serious misgivings about the rationale of persisting with the prevalent paths of ‘development’ or more of the same. This is not to undermine the attainment of partial,

limited, costly and top-sided gains. The point is that better alternatives can be sought and pursued which can avoid the negative features inimical to the interests of the majority of humanity, i.e., escape maldevelopment.

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## 6.5 AGENDA OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT

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Thus there is a clear recognition of the inability of growth-cum-poverty reduction policies to realise the potential opened up by the scientific and technological revolution (STR), resource availability (physical, financial, technical, human, organisational) and the basic humanistic value-structure ostensibly supported by almost all the major schools of thought and ideologies. The basic question facing development theories now is that despite over two centuries of modern economic growth based on industrial revolution of various vintages and over half a century of highly mobilised national and international endeavours, fairly limited positive as also perverse anti-development outcomes have been obtained. Moreover, the limited positive gains remain confined to a select few. Even this has been obtained at an incalculable economic and non-economic cost even to the ‘beneficiaries’ in terms of moral, social, political, psychic, aesthetic, communitarian aspects of life. Moreover, massive, multi-faceted deprivation, degradation and dehumanisation has become the fate of the vast majorities who were made to carry the cross of modernity and industrialisation. Thus, on balance, it may not be an exaggeration to treat the global growth and industrialisation of the last five centuries as a case of mal- or perverse development. Development as a normative, holistic, social process and outcome is, by definition, and in its essential logic, inclusionary, humanising, empowering, continuous and based on justice and freedom, has to be the concern of the political economy of development (PED) or development studies. Given the above-mentioned identification of the problem of development, it is clear the PED has to have an approach different from that of conventional or mainstream development theories. Surely, many elements and insights of the mainstream theories would be of great help to the PED, but by means of their creative, selective adaptation and reinterpretation. Many correctives, reinterpretations and alternatives have been proposed in response to the theoretical inadequacies and operational failures of the development policies derived from the growth paradigm. Employment, basic needs, redistribution with growth, capabilities approach etc. emerged as alterations, or corrections to the GDP approach. However none of these approaches seem to have identified the basic problematic of the development debate. The Table III (given at the end) borrowed from Frances Stewart and Severine Deneulin (2002,65) gives a summary overview of these alternatives.

Generally, the development theories have been addressed to those who can or ought to intervene for organising/accelerating development. It means national and sub-national governments, market entities, national and international formally organised groups, generally called non-governmental organisations (NGOs), but better treated as civil society institutions, were expected to respond to and make use of the development theories. Or make the road while travelling. By and large, the state and market institutions have been the major foci of theories, controversies and policy advice concerning development. Though the state-centricity has many limitations (like negating or downplaying, even restricting individual initiative fostering dependence, fostering excessive centralisation and paternalism, neglecting bureaucratisation, taking the nation-state as the unit of analysis, ignoring state character and politics etc.) the

poor and the deprived tend to see in the state a saviour; an entity in which the people in general can hope to have a voice and hand, at least eventually and may be at a certain remove disenchantment with both the state and market led to directing attention to civil society institutions. Among these, often it is the NGOs which mistakenly were treated as synonymous with civil society. The PED requires that in addition to the state and market, it should address the entire range of civil society institutions and should not remain focused exclusively on the state or the markets or NGOs. It is a fallacy to identify PED with collectivism or neglect of individuals. But yes, the PED does discard methodological individualism which treats the real and legal persons as autonomous operating entities.

The interest group coverage of the PED which studies societies with their multiple disaggregations is quite diverse and comprehensive. Since the processes of development are holistic the subject matter of the PED has to be comprehensively concerned, in a historical perspective, with the entire complex of the main institutions, structures, attitudinal and value premises of social individuals along with their interactive processes so as to point out their potentials and pitfalls. Of course, a holistic integrated approach too has of necessity to work in terms of abstraction from the secondary and relatively less important in a given context and has to operate in terms of key variables. It has to draw on the historical experiences of the alternative patterns, processes and trajectories of development in order to help explain the present situation and stage of development, isolate the key variables, their mode of interaction along with facilitating and retarding factors. Evidently, none of this would acquire the necessary edge and purposefulness unless one is able to identify in an integral manner the major players in the development processes and their values and interests. These processes are historical, organic, integrating various facets like the economic, political, social, cultural and ecological and, of course, are subject to influences from outside the national borders. Their normative ethical aspects cannot be ignored. The range of institutions from micro level to meso, macro and global levels, historically inherited ones and newly emerging or created ones, with all their diversity and commonality, contribute in no small measure to the tough challenge facing the theorists, analysts and practitioners of development. Drawing on a number of sources and historical experience of many countries over the last few centuries, we try to present an overview of some theories of the political economy of development.

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## **6.6 SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY: THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT**

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Compared to the mainstream economic theories of development the PED takes a rigorous, historical and deep-rooted view of the genesis, accentuation and perpetuation of the adverse and but avoidable state of affairs most of the world is facing in the diverse forms, particularly the citizens of the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America as well as the poor in the rich countries. In fact, at one level, certain nations are finding themselves in such unenviable positions; at another level, it is the great majority of individuals and variously constituted groups and classes who have been disempowered. The theories of development have to find common ground in the midst of this diversity so that theories can become applicable to each one of the specific situation in its historical conjuncture. Thus the theories of development are concerned equally with the fate, status and functioning of the people, the institutions and values in the rich as well as the poor countries in their international interaction as well as to the internal

relationships and dynamics within the countries. Unlike the ahistorical and linear view of lack or inadequacy or distortion of development, especially in terms of the inadequacy and lack of proportion between different factors of production (mainly inadequacy of reproducible physical capita *vis-à-vis* the labour force and the lower productivity vintage of the technology embodied in the available capital) which is treated as a kind of situation akin to pre-or prior state of the present day so-called developed countries, the PED takes an historical view of the socio-economic conditions of different people and countries as a product of the then prevailing conjuncture of resources, technology, institutions, values and attitudes. According to such a perspective, many of the present day poor countries were on the then prevailing frontline, especially China, India, etc. while the North was far behind. Thus the question becomes why, how and when the reversal of roles, situation and status or in one word, relative national power came about, rather than do the ahistorical and unrealistic exercise of backward extrapolation of present levels of GDP and population and work out the developmental lags of various poor countries *vis-à-vis* the presently rich, industrialised countries. A concomitant feature is that similar to the international differentiation and disparities and relative disempowerment, there took place an exacerbation of similar traits domestically, especially in those countries which lost out and became laggards internationally. This factor too calls for an explanation logically and historically in a manner inter linked with the international phenomenon. This approach and procedure also has the implication of avoiding the ethnocentric or North-Centric trap of defining the developmental state of the countries dubbed under-developed (developing or less developed) as the mirror image of the not-too-distant past of the present rich countries. This model of imitative, catching-up development or industrialisation denies the role of history, culture, freedom or independence (autonomy and autocentricity) natural endowments, changing geo-political factors and the independent processes of adaptation and development of technologies of the countries who could not become the early beginners on the path to the so-called modernity and came to be dominated and dependent.

Historical analyses of the proto-industrialisation, agrarian changes, industrial revolution, political and military hegemony of the Western countries, especially their maritime capabilities and power along with the active developmental role of the mercantilist states which played a big role in primitive or prior accumulation of capital, cultural, social and religious transformations, political upheavals changing the socio-political balance of power, etc. in Europe spread over a period of some five centuries were critical to the emergence of technological breakthroughs during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries which heralded the era of modern economic growth and growing inequalities, nationally and internationally. The political, economic and cultural domination of the African, Asian including India, and Latin American countries was not simply the other side of these changes in international relations, as the domestic situation in these countries too contributed to their sub-ordination. The way Japan escaped this misfortune of domination and denial owing to internal dynamics underscores the suggestion that the global factors were actively assisted or worked in conjunction with the domestic factors. It is too complex and lengthy a subject to go into the processes which empowered some countries (notwithstanding their internal, largely non-functional differentiation), while impoverishing and subjugating a much larger number of countries and an overwhelmingly large number of their people. Empirical studies along some such lines for each country have to be undertaken. The main point is that it was a combination of diverse factors which in an inter-related manner created the great chasm among nations and peoples within the nations leading to prosperity for some and

penury for the many. The long-term impact of these processes and their unwholesome outcomes for the poor countries was seen in the form of stifling of the positive, symbiotic linkages between various aspects of their social existence in the poorer countries, leading to worsening material, cultural and socio-political conditions. They became declining countries with impoverished and disempowered people.

For instance, the state was a potent instrument in the industrialisation process by way of creating both internal and external conditions for economic growth, industrial expansion, providing supporting services and facilities to entrepreneurs, inventors, traders, modernising artisans, etc., making the domestic and international conditions conducive to orderly functioning and expansion of economic activities, managing crises, distortions and contradictions. From ensuring cheap supply of inputs, including labour, to profitable sale of the output, protecting technology, ensuring access to profitable investment opportunities, providing markets for their expansion, protection against foreign competition, use of muscle power for ensuring access to cheap supplies, the state's benign presence was critical at every step in the rich industrialised economies. Obviously, the market forces too operated, but their deficiencies were made good and their strengths were encashed by a careful and friendly government. For a variety of reasons, many mainstream, development economists too recognise the critical part played by the state. In India where dozens of feuding monarchies were involved in fratricidal infighting, lacking any understanding of the emerging global challenges at around the time a new wave of internationalisation was sweeping across continents under the influence of the nascent processes of modern industrialisation, great historic opportunities were missed.

A comparative historical analysis of the experience of many countries would suggest that the state-market relative roles controversy is not about the extreme position of wholesale acceptance of the one and denial of the other. The question is about their relative roles in improving/deteriorating the conditions of nations, communities, individuals/firms, etc/ *vis-à-vis* the others in the process of development. But interests groups based ideological and political factors gave birth to extreme, conflicting and even mutually hostile positions, which are, in effect, neither fruit-bearing nor light-bearing.

The result of such approaches was seen in many forms. Some theories blamed imperialism as the sole culprit for the global divide and asymmetrical relationships and the tremendous human, social, economic and psychic costs it imposed. On the morrow of de-colonisation, others viewed the erstwhile hegemonic, exploitative powers as 'partners in progress', willing to share their capital, technology, managerial-organisational expertise, as poverty anywhere was viewed as a threat to prosperity wherever it existed. A whole series of variables like capital accumulation, supported by international capital movements in various forms, technology transfer, extension services, etc. were treated as components of development cooperation. Many rigorous and sophisticated models for fostering savings, investment, industrial enterprises, exports, human capital formation and skills, etc. were advanced. Some role was also assigned to the creation of equitable land ownership for facilitating agricultural and industrial growth. Different types of development planning models were advocated for mobilisation, co-ordination and adoption of a long time-horizon. This was the classical industrialisation path based on borrowed product-mix, technology, capital (finance), entrepreneurship and management. Many different ownership and management models like public sector domination, private sector domination, foreign capital domination and various combinations and permutations of the three (various mixed

economy models) formed parts of development literature.

This pattern of capitalist, mimetic, sub-ordinate or (asymmetrically) linked industrialisation was termed as a continuation of dependency relationship under formal/juridical national sovereignty. It was opposed as economic imperialism or colonialism without occupation or voluntary colonisation. Its opponents argued for revolution and de-linking, rather than gradual, evolutionary growth/development.

They maintained that under capitalism there may take place tremendous changes in productive forces unleashing wide-ranging gains in productivity across sectors and regions, but in an uneven, unsteady process entailing heavy and unequally borne costs and heavily concentrated sharing of the gains, its private ownership based corporatised social relations would become increasingly centralised and concentrated. As a result, it acquires a narrow national and social base of persons, families and firms in the command of the economy. It works to the detriment and deprivation of increasingly large number of nations, persons, and social groups as the process of extended reproduction through investment (whether in a balanced or unbalanced package) innovation satisfied the demands of the resource holders and excluded the rest. The narrowing base of command over capital, technology, finance, etc. extends to the cultural and political spheres. The poor are increasingly dominated and determined by the early industrialised super-rich countries and their power holder corporate bodies. These kind of arguments became the basis for a complete break from the capitalist world system, with some help from the socialist, centrally planned economies and mobilisation of their own workers, working poor and the intelligentsia, including at times sections of the business classes. Many versions and subportrayed capitalist industrialisation based on and deriving support from the presently powerful and resource-holding classes as well.

It was argued that the potential surplus in these former colonies and classes of these views emerged as in the case of the theories which similarly placed countries is way above the actually mobilised surplus . Similarly, poorly mobilised labour force was also treated as a source of potential surplus. Thus a case was argued for unshackling the economy from the stranglehold of former colonial powers and their mega multinational corporations (MNCs). Obviously, it involved diminished role for the indigenous counterparts of the multinational capital. These policies were not for a closed economy but certainly pleaded for a different, more egalitarian and broad-based new architecture of the international economic relations, which was eventually reflected in the UN resolution on the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The socialist block in the cold war era also gave support to such theories but instead of arguing for socialist revolution as the path to development (which was put on hold), they mostly argued for a transitional stage of non-capitalist development. The latter implied creation of large and growing state sector, modern industrialisation, high priority to basic, capital and heavy industries and increasing self-reliance, that is the national capacity to pay for one's international transactions.

What is really important but generally ignored is the feasibility and desirability of patterns of imitative, catching-up industrialisation and modern growth. The delinking, selective de-linking, or symmetrical re-linking schools accepted the need and desirability of going in for the same industrial and production structure as is prevalent in the rich countries, except for changed ownership and control, consequent changes in management styles and practices, a different sequence of intra-sectoral industrial growth, viz., the priority to heavy, basic and capital goods

industries and a more autocentric pattern of international economic relations. This stand puts heavy weight on a changed management system to give socially acceptable and desirable outcomes primarily on the basis of a changed pattern of ownership from private and private corporate to public (state) ownership. Clearly the possibilities of changed outcome in terms of product-mix, technological choices, labour relations, management styles, responsiveness to social needs, ecological considerations etc. are limited when a similar pattern of industries is adopted under two different ownership and management systems.

Thus employment, production of goods suitable for persons with low income-price frontier, shares in factor incomes, role and place of workers, regional pattern, ecological awareness, etc. become the issues which get subsidiary and derived consideration rather than independent, autonomous responsiveness to them. This lowers the priority of issues which have broader social bearing *vis-à-vis* sectional interests of those who hold considerable social and economic power. Such, sectional/ sectoral/ narrow ‘development’, essentially in terms of GDP indices involves unjustified and undesirable sacrifices, leading, essentially, to further enriching the rich and impoverishing the poor. The preponderance of the informal/unorganised sector, whether it emerged as a survival strategy by those who were left out or marginalised by the growth-centric processes and/or remained as a remnant of the primordial legacy of the period of stagnation and certainly is a fount of hidden resources and expression of the capabilities inherent in the poor, remained largely unrecognised in the dominant development models. On the contrary, these models or theories tended to postulate the gradual incorporation of these archaic forms by the modern, high productivity sectors. The Indian case has shown that it is the unorganised sector which provides the dynamic element of the economy providing livelihood to an overwhelmingly large part of the population estimated as high as over 92 per cent of the work force.

It may be mentioned however, that many ‘reformed’ concepts, processes and agents of development try to combine the growth of the economy simultaneously or subsequently with the task of reducing/removing the factors which make the emerging reality involutionary, narrow-focused and, full of heavy social costs. They continue to cause widespread disenchantment (while the GDP indices may show impressive gains). However, it has to be recognised that the insights about techno-economic aspects of the processes of expansion, improvement, transformation, as evolved by various ‘development’ theories, retain their limited specific value and validity. But the unfinished agenda of development, the distortions engendered by them and the avoidable human and social costs dictate the necessity of the attempts to change the content and substance of development according to wider social perspective, recognising conflicts, trade-offs, predatory tendencies as well as commonalities, mutualities and symbiotic linkages through processes which, instead of stifling human personality and potential through limiting/distorting the choice space, expand and help flowering of the human potential in a harmonious social milieu. Among the former category of reformist development theories and techniques mention may be made of various macro economic models of overall, sectoral and regional growth, inter-industry relationship models, balanced and unbalanced growth theories, big push theory, basic needs theory, growth with justice theories, autocentric growth theories, etc. The main point is: they become aids to decision-making and implementation, but broader, more basic social forces and organic unity of social structure rarely acquire primacy in these theories and models.

At this point, it is pertinent to bring in the questions raised and responded by another branch of partial, sectoral theories of development. Our reference is to various theories of social and political development. The PED would hardly be at ease with, or accept as relevant and proper such partial, truncated, limited context, isolated theories. But again, the essential message emerging from these theories is to emphasise the organic unity of the social phenomenon. More particularly, it is quite naïve and a legacy of excessive economism to consider production, productivity, cost of production, etc. as efficiency related ‘economic’ issues, as different from employment, education, health, social security, gender-issues, child welfare, etc. as ‘social’. Similarly, the role of political and administrative processes are placed in the box of development administration and when it is extended to include question of grassroot participation, relative and absolute social justice, forms and methods of governance and choice of representatives, these are taken as questions belonging to political development. These are the results, *inter alia*, of excessive identification of growth with development and show the influence of academic division of labour and specialisation in the academic sphere of course, with their patrons and supporters in the social system. The PED attempts to evolve a unified integrated social science perspective on the question of development. The process of evolution, refinement on the basis of practical feed back and as a result of academic interaction concerning the PED is still in its infancy. The alternative development, post-development, anti-development and anti-modernisation schools are more an outcome of widespread disenchantment with the mainstream theories and models of economic development than systematically, comprehensively evolved set of relevant ideas, theories, concepts, etc. The need to draw heavily on development history for evolving development theories cannot, in any case, be over emphasised.

The adverse effects of the prevalent approaches to development are too well-known to need reiteration. As a result of the partial, specific discipline (mainly economics) based approaches, many parts of the world witnessed distorted, aborted, partial, violence-ridden, unbalanced, non-sustainable, iniquitous, socially costly and environmentally dangerous and/or destructive changes in many spheres of social and individual lives during the last century, especially in its later part. India too underwent such an experience. True, these far-reaching and swift changes did serve some sectional interests pretty well, especially from a short-term point of view. But the diminishing and negative returns from these non-sustainable changes (often described as development) did not go unnoticed.

The actual working and results of the GDP growth paradigm can be graphically illustrated in terms of the behaviour, both autonomous and induced, of capital accumulation, along with the role of international resource ‘transfer’ or more precisely, capital movements across national borders.

## **6.7 CAPITAL ACCUMULATION: ROLE AND LIMITATIONS**

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A direct result of identifying economic growth with the growth of output was the assignment of critical development/industrialisation role to capital accumulation. Many consider the relative inadequacy of the capital stock and slow growth of capital formation as the main cause of low income, poverty and backwardness. Hence capital accumulation, i.e., pushing up the rate of savings and investment (along with embodied advanced technology) was treated as the key developmental variable and locus of development policy and planning. Early development

economists like Arthur Lewis and the stages of growth theories maintained that a transition to a high savings and investment rate economy lays down the basis for self-sustaining growth of income. Various policy instruments based on both Keynesian and Post Keynesian macro economic theories were honed for accelerating capital accumulation. While more capital does normally contribute to a higher flow of output, both theory and actual experience show that the relationship is neither a certain, one-to-one relation, nor always a positive and fixed one. Moreover, the direct and indirect effects of the production of such capital-based incremental incomes are not always positive and desirable as we saw while discussing the limitations and inadequacy of income-related indicators. The wide divergence, between capital output ratios and their volatility across nations, industries, periods of time, sectors, etc. give reason to believe that positive rates of growth of capital formation cannot always and necessarily be associated with increasing output flows. Many different types of reorganisation, restructuring, policy interventions etc. are possible to increase the income and welfare levels for both individuals and communities with and/or without additional capital accumulation. Many such interventions, both redistributive and expansionist, are independent of physical and financial capital formation. However, over a long period, the role of capital formation as a necessary condition for increasing the flow of goods and services cannot be denied. A number of other factors and circumstances intervene in order to determine the effect of capital accumulation. The theory of X-efficiency is concerned basically with such effects. Hence it is a factor which by itself cannot be treated as decisive. Even the prospects, rate and form of capital accumulation are contingent on a host of economic and non-economic, past and present factors, including the expectations about the future. Embodied and disembodied technology, existing proportion between land, labour, capital, technology and relative factor prices, social political and economic institutions, volume and pattern of demand, entrepreneurial mental make-up (the animal spirits), global configuration, etc. are among the scores of factors which make capital accumulation itself a dependent variable. In this context, one may recall the situation visible in India's organised, especially the organised industrial sector, which in spite of being the beneficiary of disproportionately large stock of capital and of the most advanced technology, contributes a relatively small part of employment and GDP.

Then, along with the domestic factors, like the inherited socio-economic structures and institutions, international factors and environment too exert a powerful influence on capital accumulation (its rate, pattern and management), especially global inequalities, dynamic comparative advantage, international division of labour and global power balance, especially the distance between nations in terms of economic and military might. The greater the productivity differential of a country *vis-à-vis* the rest, the smaller its absolute and relative size, the lower its existing technological capabilities and the more it aspires to become like the higher productivity countries, the more difficult it is for the lower-end country to undertake non-exogenous, autonomous capital accumulation. Of course, the prospects may change dramatically if a qualitatively different non-imitative development path and pattern are adopted. The point is: capital accumulation is itself a dependent variable impacted by a large number of economic and non-economic factors. The pattern of capital accumulation, its institutional organisational form and structure, technological form, etc. are critical to the determination of its role in the processes of change and transformation. The conventional, mainstream development economics has an obsession with capital formation (as seen in the literature on growth models and determinants of contribution to GDP). This is basically under the influence of GDP growth

based imitative, catching-up industrialisation paradigm. It refuses to recognise that the past successful emulators, who not only caught up with the forerunners but even excelled many of them had only a relatively small gap to bridge, had similar socio-economic and cultural background, were political rivals in international geo-politics with a strong nationalistic urge to catch-up and excel, and were lucky enough to be favoured by a number of internal and external propitious factors. As of now, for the present day poor, late industrialising, ex-colonial countries with a vast income, assets, technology gap, legacy of colonial exploitation and denudation, having a huge backlog in physical and social infrastructure, the capital accumulation-based imitative, growth path would tend to increase the gap and strengthen and perpetuate dependence. For sometime it was quite popular to cite the case of the East Asian tigers as cases of successful catching up. But recent events and deeper analyses have shown that even ignoring the special and unique circumstances which gave these economies (in fact, two of them being tiny city states and one also a direct colony are hardly relevant in any international comparative perspective) their short-lived gloss, are not at all cases of independent, autonomous, people-empowering, holistic and just development which the poor and weakened economies can take as their role models.

It is true that both time-series and cross-section data for a number of countries show a strong association between long-term changes in the rate (and also technical and organisational forms) of capital accumulation. But this evidence leaves open the question of the determinants of the rate and pattern of capital accumulation, including the impact of income itself on capital accumulation.

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## **6.8 INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL FLOWS**

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The above conclusion squares well with a concomitant of the theories which assign primacy and decisiveness to capital accumulation as the developmental variable. According to this concomitant proposition the poor, less developed, late-industrialising countries with low technological capabilities and weak states, have to depend on international capital ‘transfers’ from the rich, early industrialised countries in order to break free from the vicious circle of low income, low-savings, low capital accumulation, and hence low income, operating in a cumulative manner.

Ever since the end of the Second World War, especially after the US President Harry Truman’s oft-quoted Inaugural Speech, recognising ‘underdevelopment’ and accepting the challenge of ‘development’ (in effect, an attempt to make the so-called underdeveloped world a poor asymmetrically-linked carbon copy of the rich, early industrialised countries), the policy of capital transfers has been an important fulcrum of development economics and policy. The World Bank as a multi-lateral agency along with its regional affiliates are engaged in the highly lucrative business of what is called development finance. Encouraging international capital flows in various forms like official development Assistance (ODA), i.e., concessional loans, grants, foreign direct investment (FDI), portfolio investment, external (private account) borrowing, trade credits, etc., is considered a prominent plank of international development co-operation both by the recipients and the ‘donors’/lenders/investors.

These inflows were justified in terms of the two-gap theory i.e. making good the deficiency of savings (an outcome of low incomes) and of foreign exchange (following from “export

pessimism”, caused by low level of industrialisation, low elasticity of both supply and demand of primary commodities). Moreover, it was maintained that capital inflows bring along with them ‘advanced’ high productivity technology, new products, which can complete the production circuit and help ‘modernise’ the economy. Thus, it was argued, increased income flows and advanced product-mix resulting from international capital flows can help initiate and sustain growth in the poor, low average income countries. Ever since the end of the Second World War, the processes of capital movement have been going on in various forms, moving finance from the early industrialised to the late industrialising economies though lately fears regarding reverse flow of resources have also been expressed.

It is difficult to provide an independent, separate, overall empirical assessment of the impact of the international capital flows, owing to the difficulty of separating out the effect of various variables and processes which have operated simultaneously. However, cumulatively debt liabilities of the poor economies have escalated to such proportions that often the debt-servicing amounts exceed the fresh new inflows. In this way, on a net basis, one comes across a certain measure of reverse flow of resources from the capital-deficient to the capital-surfeit economies. Then, the relative importance of ODA has declined *vis-à-vis* FDI and foreign portfolio investment. Short-run speculative capital movements have reached astronomical proportions destabilising economies. According to the World Development Report 2000-2001, total flows in 1999 came to 82892 million US dollars. Of this private account flows were the largest at 71446 million US \$ while ODA was 6193 million US\$ and the grants by the NGOs were 2232 million US\$. These figures include the amounts going to Russia and other transition economies. It may be noted that FDI still moves overwhelmingly within the well-to-do countries, which highlights the role of profitability, demand (*vis-à-vis* needs) and mutual complementarily between the rich investing and recipient economies. The transnational companies, with their branches and affiliates, are the main agencies, with their global business interests and active participation in global financial and currency speculation, and as main players in global market for corporate control by means of mergers and acquisitions. A good part of FDI is by the principals in their branches and some profits are obtained improperly by means of transfer pricing. The product-mix, technology, energy-use magnitude and pattern, small islands of very high salaries and perks among the top executives of TNCs, tax-avoidance and evasion, bribing of politicians and bureaucrats, active promotion of consumerism, disregard of local-national cultures, attempts to have homogeneous consumption pattern in order to reap the economies of scale and scope, finance and currency market speculation, etc. are the features of FDI by the TNCs which have generally been regarded negatively from the point of the poor men and women of both the poor and the rich countries. Their impact on labour and employment, especially by means of shifting the location of their production facilities has not been viewed positively. Similarly, they have in various ways weakened national sovereignty of the poor countries and weaken the forces of inward-looking, people-centric policies. Most serious of all has been their impact in the form of increasing dependence. In any case, their experience highlights both the non-feasibility and non-desirability of catching-up modernisation. In countries like India, FDI and external finance are relatively unimportant as even after opening up and giving red carpet treatment to foreign capital, they have rarely exceeded 2 per cent of GDP, compared to the over all rate of investment of over 25 per cent generally.

## **6.9 ROLE OF THE STATE**

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The above illustrative, brief analysis of the role of capital accumulation and international capital movements hopes to have shown the limitations, perversities, non-feasibility and non-desirability of the spontaneous as well as conscious endeavours to develop by means of capital accumulation as the principal engine of growth (supported in numerous ways by the international economic relations under the hegemony of the early industrialised, ex-colonial powers). True, production must increase and for this purpose, generally capital accumulation is needed especially when other factors of production are available. But this is a means to numerous higher ends, and has to be the result of changes in “the socio-economic institutional structure” prevalent in the poor countries which thwart the development at micro and macro levels. By leaving unchanged and, in fact, strengthening the existing dysfunctional, distorted and anti-developmental structures, institutions and relationships and depending on capital formation as the prime, major instrument in such a framework, one would strengthen the anomalies, alienation, oppression and denial of human and national potential. Development is basically a socio-economic exercise (in sum, development is best summed up as both national, community and individual empowerment). Its techno-economic aspects have to be subsumed as subsidiary ones commanded by the former by removing their unjust, oppressive features, even though a drastic restructuring may be an essential pre-condition. The popularity of resource transfer policy, with the UN organisations’ never-fulfilled targets of ‘assistance’ from the rich to the poor countries, seems to be derived from its inherent capacity to serve the interests of the governing elite both in the so-called donor and recipient countries. For the former, these transfers create demand and market for their goods and services (exports), give them global hegemonic power over the course of ‘development’ of the poor countries. For the elite from the poor countries, apart from reducing the necessity to tighten the belt and generate savings, such inflows give them, access to technology, brand names and opportunities for luxurious levels of consumption and help create illusion of development. In any case, in an unequal society, any resource infusion without institutional-structural change gives disproportionate benefit to the people in the top rungs.

The PED critique of the conventional development economics goes beyond a critical examination of the policy variable of capital accumulation. It is true that until the “counter-revolution” in development economics in the first half of 1970s, there was little, difference of opinion concerning the key and leading catalytic, entrepreneurial role of the state in energising, directing and even directly conducting the processes of capital accumulation, industrialisation and economic growth, along with satisfying some societal welfare concerns. Within the broad parameters of active statist development policy there were, of course, differences of emphasis, nuances, choice of agencies, instruments and organisational forms, durability of statist interventions and their relationship with various domestic and external social and economic groups. The post-colonial urge for self-reliance and striving for relatively independent place in the comity of nations too had few exceptions. In societies where the state was among the relatively advanced and better organised institutions with its constituents exposed to the historical experience of the early industrialisers, the state directed and commanded the processes of accumulation and successfully created other alternative foci of power and capability, especially in countries with restrictive approach towards FDI. In any case, “aid” or concessional foreign assistance mainly at state to state level played a critical role in the growth acceleration experience until the first

oil shock of early 1970s. In India, the public sector was given the leading role, especially direct entrepreneurial role for providing the basic economic and physical infrastructure and setting up heavy and basic capital and intermediate goods industries, pushing up the rate of savings and investment , regulating, guiding and supporting the growth of private industrial sector in designated areas and taking care of some of the imperatives of social welfare of , especially, the weaker sections. It really went a long way in discharging these historic tasks, though the process could not be sustained and the public sector or the state came under severe attack in the economic sphere.

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## **6.10 THE COUNTER REVOLUTION IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS: THE LPG PACKAGE**

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In this broad consensus on the state activism in development processes, not much attention was given in the early stages to the question of state character and state capacities as also the role, nature and tactical and strategic position of the powerful social groups who would be rivals to the development state. A class-neutral state representing broad, general social interests in a long-term perspective, capable of acting concordedly on the sticky constraints, taking into account present and future externalities and overcoming myopia was assumed to be an effective agency for carrying out the developmental tasks. Its task was assumed to command general social consensus, especially as a part of early nationalist euphoria in the early post- independence period. The role and attitude of India's business classes towards the public sector, initial support, but constant campaign to denigrate it and manipulate its actual operation in tune with its broad interest highlights the naivete of the early euphoric approaches to the role of the state. However, as experience accumulated, there emerged realisations regarding the real state character, capacities, its relationship with society, more particularly with the business classes and the organised working class and the impact of its internal organisational dynamics, leading in some cases to characterisations like soft-state, or the state as a part not of the solution but problem set, or, the need to develop and reform the state in order to use it effectively as a harbinger of development. The neglect of some of the crucial aspects of state interventions gave rise to disappointment and disenchantment, strong enough to drown the voice of the state protagonists. Many changes in the rich, powerful nations like the end of the golden era of capitalist expansion, stagflation, the burdens of cold war geopolitics, emerging competitive strengths of the exports of the newly industrialising countries and some snatching of space by relatively successful East Asian Tigers, along with the domestic political economy getting dominated by public spending and working class assertion owing to near full employment and cradle to grave social security tended to strengthen anti-statist -corporatist forces in the rich Western countries. There emerged strong streaks of discontentment and disenchantment in the weaker countries. Their growth was turning out to be costly and non-sustainable. Their main problems of poverty, unemployment, deprivation and inequalities were getting accentuated, despite and along with hitherto unprecedented growth rate, industrialisation and growth of the state sector. There appeared in many poor countries comparatively stronger business and industrial classes which flourished under statism both formally and by resorting to informal, underhand devices. In any case, there was growing concentration and centralisation of economic and political power. Popular forces did not benefit to any appreciable degree, especially in relative terms; they had limited participation, mainly passively, in the growth process and hence could not develop any deep links and commitment to the state-led

industrialisation and growth of GDP as the prime target variable. The organised sector remained tiny and the large and growing informal sector was getting increasingly marginalised.

Prompted by and taking advantage of the emerging many faceted imbroglio, the ‘counter-revolution’ in development theory tried to undo whatever limited concern with society-wide, state-led, (public sector and public investment based) processes of growth which were witnessed so far. The phenomenal growth of the debt-burden, extreme external account vulnerability and the acute fiscal crisis of the state came handy to the powerful multilateral financial institutions increasingly adopting the agenda of global financial institutions and the TNCs to push ahead with a no-holds barred agenda of hegemonising the world economy, especially in the wake of the ideological euphoria created by the collapse of existing socialisms. It adopted an out and out market-based neo-liberal agenda, popularised as Washington Consensus, as the new ‘development policy’. It was imposed on dozens of the debt-ridden, poor and weak economies simultaneously in the form of IMF-World Bank conditionalities for bailing them out of their foreign currency liquidity crises. In India, this programme of structural adjustment was adopted in the early 1990s in response to a similar crisis like situation. Its main elements were: a big retreat of the state from both directly participative and regulatory role in favour of unregulated, market-driven foreign and local capital, mainly the former. This policy also involved privatisation of the public enterprises which hitherto dominated many an economy. The opening up of the economies of the weaker countries according to the WTO rules (globalisation) and creation of facilitating conditions for the uncontrolled functioning of the market forces were the other elements of the neo-liberal ‘development’ agenda. This package was supposed to usher in an era of uninterrupted high growth which, in turn, was expected to reduce poverty by the trickle-down and pull-up processes. The entire decade of 1990s witnessed large-scale application of this model, but with increasingly frustrating, destabilising and anti-poor and anti-working class results. In effect, it became difficult to continue the growth momentum as the narrowly-focused growth and anti-employment bias of the liberalisation policies led to unused capacities and weakening of the demand for investment and the fiscally-constrained state could not undertake revival by pump-priming. In response to such disastrous outcomes, there is a widespread disenchantment with liberalisation-privatisation-globalisation (LPG) package, which is the core of the counter-revolution in development economics. In opposition to it and as civil society institution’s initiative many grassroot movements have made small beginning in their attempts to expose the pseudo development theories and their policy package and mobilise popular masses in defence of their interests, independence and democracy. In fact, owing to the strong links between the international debt-crisis and the Washington Consensus, it has been argued that the LPG policy package is basically a debt-collection device along with the maintenance of demand for international financial resource transfers. Surely, the alternative is not to go back to limping, half-hearted, ineffective statism, which owing to its GDP-centric paradigm and subservience to the powerful classes, groups, occupations tended, in effect, to strengthen the strong and weaken the weak. Instead of empowerment of the weak, further disempowerment was an outcome of the counter-revolution in development economics. The search is on for alternatives which are not paternalistic, top-down, iniquitous, eco-hostile and highly centralised, which do not replicate in the South countries, an anomalies and alienation-ridden maldevelopment as seen in the North. This surely is a major task facing the political economy of development. As the growth momentum of the liberalisation period could not be continued and a prolonged deflationary or slow-down phase has set in which, along with

negative trends in employment are threatening the livelihoods and security of the people in India, the search for alternatives remains a valid pursuit in India as well.

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## **6.11 OUTLINE OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY (PE) APPROACH**

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The foregoing clearly sets up the agenda to be addressed by the PE approach. Nations have come to be treated as units of analysis (e.g. as ‘advanced’ and ‘backward’ nations) in the development discourse as a result of continually growing international inequalities in the world. The historical world-scale processes of political conquest, ethnic cleansing, unilaterally beneficial economic domination by means of a variety of economic transactions in goods, factors and financial markets and cultural hegemony as seen markedly over the last five centuries or so have made very considerable contribution to these patterns of domination and disempowerment. But differentiation and stratification in regional, inter-state, inter-personal, inter-class, inter-occupational and many other dimensions within a nation are no less pronounced feature of the present era. A historical overview of the last five centuries is bound to show how the internal socio-economic situation and culture of the concerned countries contributed to the process of sharp international disparities and unequal access to and benefits from the processes of modern economic growth. This period can, following Braudel, be considered as the era of capitalist growth, whose diffusion, transmission, forcible imposition or conscious adoption remains incomplete, uneven, divisive and, on balance, one which created at great multi-dimensional costs hitherto unprecedented potential and opportunities which, however, remain elusive for an overwhelmingly large majority of the humanity on account of the hegemonic control acquired by a tiny minority both across and within nations. The PE approach views the challenge of development in this historical, holistic, long-term value-laden perspective. It follows that the PE development discourse and policy, which, by its very nature has a “unified and systematic methodology of its own” (S. Tsuru) and encompasses and integrates many disciplines, takes an approach to development which is simultaneously aggregative and disaggregative, macro as well as micro and meso and rises above narrow and artificial disciplinary boundaries. It does not necessarily prescribe from above a universally valid and relevant development path, but rather leaves it to be made by the development-deprived people themselves as they travel along the self-chosen and self-made path.

The task of the PED is not necessarily and merely ideological (certainly far from bound to any narrow, exclusivist ideology). It has to contend with practical, daily bread and butter issues as well as long-term compulsions and trends at many different levels. It must be recognised that despite its clear superiority on intellectual and practical planes, it does not cohere well with the interests of the powerful stakeholders of the prevalent order. Hence it remains much less popular and powerful than the narrow, truncated, theories of growth and development steeped essentially in the neo-classical economics. In fact, quite a few political economy approaches adopted the agenda of modern catching up industrialisation and, despite different values and institutional preferences, could not carve out separate, independent and widely acceptable niche for itself. The fiasco of the existing socialism in many parts of the world is a testimony to the incomplete, partial and imitative agenda adopted by some of the PE approaches. So much so that even in many strands of political economy approaches, the content and agenda of ‘development’ is borrowed practically wholesale from the experience

of the early industrialised capitalist countries situated at the top of the unequal global system. At times, this is done in the name of the universality of the scientific and technological revolution. Thus instead of advocating alternative industrialisation or alternatives to industrialisation, and in so far as industrialisation and development were treated as synonyms, alternatives to development as well, certain schools of political economy plead for alternative institutional agencies (like the state, or cooperatives/collectives) and sequence, with a view mainly to swiftly and surely catch-up and surpass the pioneer industrialisers, of course in the process hoping to avoid some of the gross inequities which characterised the capitalist growth path. The objective of replicating the advancement of productive forces at a super high speed for telescoping the process was to be accompanied by a different set of social production relations, based essentially on a juridically or formally different kind of social or state ownership and centralised, planned public management. It involved homogeneity of outcomes in terms of life-style as reflected in the consumption pattern but without the massive, unjust and self-reinforcing inequities resulting in widespread deprivation and volatility. Thus the pattern of development, in some important aspects, especially in material-economic aspects bearing on consumption patterns, product-mix and some major aspects of life style following from physical- technical conditions of work, was technologically determined on the basis of mimetic pursuit of industrial advancement particularly the neglect of ecological sustainability involved in very high levels of energy and material intensity and spatial concentration of production.

As a result of the theoretical advances, lessons at the school of hard knocks and heightened democratic consciousness and commitments, pre-determined replication of known and experienced patterns of development, swiftly, with lower costs, under supposedly more democratic and accountable institutional dispensations has increasingly fewer advocates. Clearly, one-medicine-suits-all approaches apart from being impervious to different and changing circumstances and contexts, are top-down, paternalistic in content and design and are highly centralised and become in practice non-democratic. A political economy approach upholding the values of democratic empowerment of the people, respecting their freedom, dignity and harmonious social existence cannot stand for a development paradigm which yields involutionary results, fosters alienation and anomie and restricts peoples' free choice space, whether individually or through collective massively large communitarian institutions.

The PE of development cannot logically and rationally work in terms of a deterministically, pre-determined, universal concept/pattern of development. No one pattern of good, wholesome life, at individual, family or communitarian level, can be universally acceptable/desirable and can respect people's autonomy and freedom and needs, let alone provide for collectively and severally articulated changes in these concepts/patterns. The need, therefore, is not just to get rid of a universal, ethnocentric, involutionary agenda of material wellbeing on the lines imitating the experience of those who made an early start in what has come to be treated as modernisation and industrialisation and high level of economic growth/development modern economic growth a la Kuznets. The normative aspects which are essential ingredients of the PE paradigm of development and are based on values of equity, freedom, human dignity, harmony, happiness, etc. which permit full flowering of human personality and at the same time contribute to collective good. Essentially, the PE approach avoids binary modes of thinking and thus enlarges the open, plural choice space available individually and collectively, along with the provision of conditions in which the people are enabled to exercise their right of making choices. This is the agenda of equitable, collective empowerment with its normative baggage as its integral

part.

It follows that the PE of development cannot proceed with its own agenda in the course of extending and enriching the development discourse without a prior exercise of demolition of the oddities and distortions which have found their way into it and, in fact, come to dominate both academic and policy level development discourse and practice. The positive component of the agenda thus provides useful opportunities and instruments redefining/ redesigning the presently popular development discourse in directions which can meet the challenges hitherto avoided or underplayed in the development discourse.

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## 6.12 SUMMARY

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Pointing to the global divide between the rich and the poor in both developed and developing countries and the fact that growth and income levels are not necessarily an indication of an increase in the standard of living, this unit discusses the political economy of development and some of the important political economy theories of development and its applicability especially with regard to India. Income cannot be made the only development factor which seems to be the result of monopolisation of development issues by economics especially as it evolved in the rich countries. The Income approach basically serves as the process of capital accumulation under the control of big corporates based in the rich countries. This unit shows that development as a normative holistic, social process and outcome is by definition and in its essential logic the concern of the political economy of development (PED) or development studies. PED requires that in addition to the state and the market, it should address the entire range of civil society institutions and should not focus exclusively on the state, market, or NGOs.

The unit also shows the limitations of capital accumulation and FDI inflows as a means of growth. The liberalisation-privatisation-globalisation (LPG) package suggested by the IMF and World Bank for bailing poor and weak economies out of their crises resulted in a big retreat of the state and disenchantment. A political economy approach cannot stand for a development paradigm which restricts peoples free choices and cannot have a predetermined universal pattern of development.

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## 6.13 EXERCISES

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- 1) Can estimates of income levels in countries be taken as a precise indicator of the level of development? Explain giving examples.
- 2) What is the agenda of the theories of the political economy of development (PED)? What are the important aspects of PED?
- 3) What are the limitations of capital accumulation and international capital flows in economic growth?
- 4) Write a brief note on the LPG package in development economics.

Tables:

**Table I : Population and National Income**

	<b>Population (Millions)</b>	<b>Grass National Income (Billion US \$)</b>
Low Income Countries	2417	1008.4
Middle Income Countries	2665	5285.5
High Income Countries	896	23701.7
World	5978	29994.6

Source: World Development Report-1999-2000.

**Table II : Poverty Indicators**

	<b>Poor on \$ 1 a day (Mill.)</b>			<b>Poor on \$ 2 a day (Mill.)</b>					
East Asia & Pacific	452	267	101	65	1089	885	472	323	
Excluding China	92	54	20	9	285	252	187	115	
Europe & central Asia	7	18	9	6	44	98	58	97	
Latin America & Caribbean	79	61	58	43	167	159	162	133	
Middle East & North Africa	6	6	6	5	59	85	80	58	
South Asia	495	522	411	297	976	1095	1214	1078	
Sub-Saharan Africa	292	302	426	261	388	489	690	637	
Total	1276	1175	1011	777	1718	2812	2675	2275	

**Table III : Alternative Approaches to Assessing Well-Being \***

Approach to development objective	Greater weighting income of QOL	Use of outcome indicator	Priority given to liberty	Philosophical Justification of approach	Justification for choice of indicators	Justification of weighting of indicators
GNP	No	No	Not explicit; but consumer choice is needed to justify indicator	Yes-utilitarianism	Yes, but not satisfactory	Yes, but not adequate
Employment	Indirectly	No	No	Weak	No	Only one indicator
Redistribution with growth	Yes	No	No Not explicit;	Yes-utilitarianism, plus giving	Yes, but not satisfactory	Attempted but not solved

				but consumer choice is needed to justify indicator	greater weight to poorest	
PQLI	Indirectly	Yes	No	Pragmatic/Moralistic	Some	No
Basic Needs I (ILO)	Indirectly	No	No	Pragmatic/Moralistic	No	No
Basic Needs II (Streeten etc.)	Indirectly	Yes	No	Pragmatic/Moralistic	Some	Rough
Rawlsian	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Overlapping Consensus	Overlapping Consensus
Capabilities (Sen)	Implicit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Indirectly-evaluation exercise	Indirectly-evaluation exercise
Capabilities (Nussbaum)	Implicit	Yes	Yes	Yes-Aristotelian	Overlapping Consensus	Overlapping Consensus
* It appears reasonable to treat what Stewart and Deneulin call wellbeing as equivalent to development in most of the popular and critical writing on development.						


## **UNIT 7 STRUCTURE AND GROWTH OF**

### **ECONOMY (POVERTY, SURPLUS AND UNEVENNESS)**

#### **Structure**

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Growth Performance of the States
- 7.3 Defining Poverty and Poverty Line
- 7.4 Trends in Poverty Ratio
- 7.5 Poverty Reduction not by Income Alone
- 7.6 Summary
- 7.7 Exercises

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

There has been a marked structural transformation of the Indian economy in the 1990s *vis-à-vis* that of the 1980s. The intersectoral composition of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) underwent a significant change after the initiation of reform process in 1991. The services sector has come to occupy a place of prominence in terms of relative contribution to GDP.

The relative share of agriculture and allied activities in GDP during the period 1992-93 to 1997-98 declined to 27.5 per cent from 34.5 per cent in 1980-81 to 1990-91. On the other hand the share of industry increased from 23.2 per cent to 25.9 per cent and that of the services sector moved up substantially from 42.2 per cent to 46.6 per cent in the same period.

This compositional shift in favour of the services sector has been brought by accelerated expansion in the service sector output at a rate of 8.4 per cent in the period 1992-93 to 1997-98 compared with 6.5 per cent during 1980-81 to 1990-91.

There has been a relative deceleration in the performance of agriculture during the 1990s despite favourable monsoons, increase in net irrigated area and positive terms of trade. The decline in public investment and the limited infusion of new technologies may have contributed to the poor performance of agriculture.

However the Indian economy attained and maintained a high GDP growth in the 1990s despite substantial deceleration in agriculture growth. For example in 1995-96 when the economy achieved a record of 8.6 per cent in GDP, the agriculture sector witnessed a negligible 0.2 per cent growth over the previous year. In fact, as the RBI Report of Currency and Finance (1998-99) states that the recent years experience shows that the growth of services sector has imparted much of resilience to the economy, particularly in terms of adverse agriculture shocks.

Thus economic growth is becoming less vulnerable to agricultural performance and to vagaries of monsoon. While the improvement in growth has emerged from both the industrial and services sectors, there is a marked difference in the sectoral composition of growth as between

these two major sectors. Within the industrial sector the major impetus to growth has come from manufacturing, while both ‘mining and quarrying’ and electricity, gas and water supply registered lower rates of growth. The services sector on the other hand, experienced higher growth in a more uniform and consistent manner with sectors like trade, hotels, restaurants, storage and communication, whereas financing, insurance, real estate and business services are experiencing high trend growth rates. A possible interpretation of this phenomenon could be an upsurge of industry-related services sector in recent years.

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## **7.2 GROWTH PERFORMANCE OF THE STATES**

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There is considerable variation in the performance of individual States, with some states growing faster than the average and others slower. (Table1) The degree of dispersion in growth rates across states increased very significantly in the 1990s. The range of variation in the growth rate of State Domestic Product (SDP) in the 1980s was from a low of 3.6 per cent per year in Kerala to a high of 6.6 per cent in Rajasthan, a factor of less than 2. In the 1990s the variation was much larger from a low of 2.7 per cent per year for Bihar to a high of 9.6 per cent per year for Gujarat, a factor exceeding 3.5.

The differences in performance across States become even more marked when we allow for the differences in the rates of growth of population and evaluate the performance in terms of growth rates of per capita SDP (Table 2). The variation in growth rates in the 1980s ranged from a low of 2.1 per cent for Madhya Pradesh to a high of 4.0 for Rajasthan, a factor of 1:2. In the 1990s it ranged from a low of 1.1per cent year in Bihar and 1.2 per cent in Uttar Pradesh to a high of 7.6 per cent per year in Gujarat, with Maharashtra coming next at 6.1per cent. The ratio between the lowest (Bihar) and the highest (Gujarat) is as much as 1:7.

The increased variation in growth performance across States in the 1990s reflects the fact that whereas growth accelerated for the economy as a whole it actually decelerated sharply in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, all of which had relatively low rates of growth to begin with and were also the poorest States. There was also a deceleration in Haryana and Punjab, but the deceleration was from relatively higher levels of growth in the 1980s and these states were also the richest.

Six states showed acceleration in the growth of SDP in the 1990s. The acceleration was particularly marked in Maharashtra and Gujarat, both of which were among the richer states, but there was also acceleration in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh all belonging to the middle group of states in terms of per capita SDP.

It is important to note that the high growth performers in the 1990s were not concentrated in one part of the country. The six states with growth rates of SDP in the 1990s above 6.0 per cent year are fairly well distributed regionally i.e., Gujarat (9.6 per cent) and Maharashtra (8.0 per cent) in the west, West Bengal (6.9 per cent) in the East, Tamil Nadu (6.2 per cent) in the South and Madhya Pradesh (6.2 per cent) and Rajasthan (6.5 per cent) in the North.

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## **7.3 DEFINING POVERTY AND POVERTY LINE**

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Primarily influenced by research work on India, the World Bank defined absolute poverty as

the bottom 40 per cent of the population in developing countries. The first absolute definition of poverty was that of Dandekar- Rath, who defined it as an expenditure of Rs.15 per capita per month for the Indian rural population at 1960-61 prices and Rs.18 per capita per month for the urban population.

The Government of India set up an Expert Group to suggest a methodology to measure poverty. The group submitted its report in 1993 and suggested a new poverty line of Rs.49 and Rs.56 for rural and urban areas at 1973-74 prices.

The availability of an absolute poverty line allows comparisons across countries. Over the last decade, most comparisons of international poverty line have been made by the World Bank and the definition used is a purchasing power poverty line of US\$1.08 per day at 1993 prices.

The most widely used measure of poverty in India is the ‘Head Count Ratio’ (HCR). This is a measure of income poverty. In the early 1960s, the GOI appointed a special working group of eminent economists to assess the level of poverty in India. The experts came up with a definition of the poverty line. This was based on a nationally desirable minimum standard balanced diet prescribed by the Nutrition Advisory Committee. In other words any family who could not afford to buy a rudimentary food basket, which when consumed yielded a minimum level of calories, was considered poor. They declared that 50 per cent of Indians lived below the poverty line.

However a poverty line thus defined is something of a destitution line since it takes into account only the expenditure required for subsistence food, leaving out everything else needed for a minimally decent living such as basic housing, clothing, education and health services.

Differences in methodology and assumptions can lead to quite different estimates. Until recently for example, there were two sets of poverty line estimates for India using the same criteria of minimum calories requirements. In 1993-94, according to Planning Commission, only 19 per cent of India’s population was below the poverty line. This was the official estimate. Estimates based on consumer expenditure surveys carried out regularly by the National Sample Survey (NSS), however, placed the proportion of India’s population below the poverty line at 36 per cent. In February 1997, the Government of India accepted the recommendations of the Expert Group on Estimation of Proportion and Number of Poor (1993), which rejected the adjustments made by the Planning Commission to arrive at estimates of poverty. As a result the official estimate of India’s population below the poverty line was 35 per cent in 1993-94.

The head count ratio is computed on the basis of NSS data on consumption expenditure. People with an income below the poverty line are poor and the proportion of the poor to the aggregate population is the Head Count Ratio. Because of the alarming population rise, the absolute numbers continue to spiral even while percentages reflect a downward trend. So the poor doubled from 170 Million in 1957 to an estimated 320 Million in 1994.

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## 7.4 TRENDS IN POVERTY RATIO

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The overreaching objective of India’s development strategy has been the eradication of mass poverty. The proportion of poor in India has fluctuated widely in the past, but the trend is

downward. Trends in income poverty are far from uniform. They can be roughly divided into three periods.

Between 1951 and the mid 1970s: Income poverty reduction shows no discernible trend. In 1951, 47 per cent of India's rural population was below the poverty line. The proportion went up to 64 per cent in 1954-55, it came down to 45 per cent in 1960-61, but in 1977-78, it went up again to 51 per cent.

Between mid 1970s to end 1980s: The decline was more pronounced between 1977-78 and 1987-88 with rural income poverty declining from 53 per cent to 39 per cent. It went down further to 34 per cent by 1989-90. Urban income poverty went down from 45 per cent in 1977-78 to 38 per cent in 1982-83 and further to 33 per cent in 1989-90.

After 1991: The post-economic reform period after 1991 witnessed progress and setbacks. Rural income poverty increased from 34 per cent in 1989-90 to 43 per cent in 1992-93 and then fell to 37 per cent in 1993-94. Urban income poverty declined from 36 per cent in 1988-89 to 34 per cent in 1992-93 and further to 30 per cent in 1993-94. (Table 1)

The differences in growth performance of the individual states (Table 2) have important implications for poverty reduction; which is a critical objective of national policy. The only available estimates of poverty in individual states are those derived from the so-called large sample surveys covering about 120,000 households, which are conducted by the NSS every five years. The NSS also conducts annual surveys but the sample size is too small to provide reliable estimates of poverty for individual states. Large sample surveys were conducted in 1983, 1987-88 and in 1993-94 and state specific poverty estimates made by the Planning Commission using these surveys are presented in the Table 4. They show that for the 14 major states as a whole, (which together account for 95 per cent of the total population) the percentage of the population below the poverty line declined from 43.8 per cent in 1983 to 36.3 per cent in 1993-94.

The state level shows that all the states experienced a decline in poverty over the ten year period with only two exceptions—Bihar and Haryana, both of which showed an increase. The increase in poverty in Bihar can be explained by the fact that per capita SDP in the state grew at less than 0.8 per cent per year between 1983-84 and 1993-94 (Table 5) However it is observed that the deterioration in poverty in Haryana is difficult to explain since the per capita SDP grew at 3.4 per cent per year over the same period. It is of course possible for poverty to increase despite an increase in per capita income if the distribution worsens sufficiently, but it is difficult to believe that distribution in Haryana could have worsened sufficiently to offset an increase of 40 per cent in the per capita SDP over the period. This is especially so since trends in Haryana could be similar to those in Punjab which shows a steady decline in poverty in the same period.

Estimates of poverty in individual states beyond 1993-94 will only become available when data from the 60th Round of the NSS for 1999-2000 becomes available. In the absence of estimates based on a comparable survey, we can only speculate about what might have happened to poverty in individual states, on the basis of what we know about economic growth in these states after 1993-94. The all India experience in the 1960s and most of the 1970s showed that poverty reduction was negligible when per capita GDP growth was below

2 per cent, but it began to decline when per capita growth accelerated to 3 per cent and more in the late 1970s and 1980s. Generalising from this experience one should expect that some poverty reduction should have occurred in all states where per capita growth exceeds 3 per cent or so after 1993-94 unless the nature of growth has changed significantly compared to the earlier years.

In India no one has done more to bring objectivity to this debate than Dr. Surjit Bhalla of Oxus Research. According to him economic reforms initiated in 1991 have led to a radical transformation in the well being of the bottom half of the population.

It is instructive to see in the following Table, how the rate of decline in poverty has accelerated since reforms began in 1990.

<b>Between</b>	<b>All India per cent</b>	<b>Rural per cent</b>	<b>Urban per cent</b>
1973 & 78	3.6	3.1	4.2
1978 & 83	6.8	7.4	4.4
1983 & 88	5.6	6.6	2.6
1988 & 93	2.9	1.8	5.8
1993 & 99	9.9	9.4	8.78

Source: Economic Survey 2000 – 2001

Growth helps to reduce poverty because of three central reasons:

- It creates jobs that pull up the poor into gainful employment by providing more economic opportunity;
- It provides the revenues with which we can build more schools and provide more health activities for the poor; and
- It creates the incentives that enable the poor to access these facilities and also for the advancement of progressive social agendas generally.

The Indian experience has been that our policies produced an annual growth rate of nearly 3.5 per cent for almost a quarter of a century up to the early 1980s. The economist Raj Krishna described this as the Hindu growth rate. The low growth rate according to economists was as a result of four sets of policies.

- Anti-globalisation policies that meant that India failed to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the growing world economy regarding trade and inward flow of direct foreign investment;
- Reliance on public sector enterprises afflicted by inevitable overstaffing and lack of incentives that steadily led to losses that meant serious inefficiencies and also a serious strain on revenues;
- Defence of capital intensive choice of technologies in the public sector enterprises which

intensified the sorry performance of these enterprises; and

- Our overwhelming expansion of direct controls that hindered sustained development.

Datt and Ravallion, in their papers, have analysed the determinants of and factors that influence the trends in poverty in India. As per their findings poverty ratio goes down by 1 per cent for every 1 per cent increase in NDP (Net Domestic Product) per capita. Second, a decomposition of the changes in the poverty ratio into a growth component (i.e. growth in mean consumption) and a redistribution component shows that nearly 87 per cent of the observed decline in poverty ratio was accounted by the growth component. Third, the sectoral composition of growth matters in that rural economic growth contributes far more to poverty reduction than urban economic growth. Fourth, initial conditions relating to human resources and infrastructure development accounted for a sizable share of the differences between states in reducing rural poverty.

As Datt and Ravallion point out the non-farm economic growth was less effective in reducing poverty in states with poor initial conditions in terms of rural development and human resources. Low farm productivity, low rural living standards relative to urban areas and poor basic education all inhibited the prospects of the poor participating in the growth of the non-farm

~~sector. Given that the threat of reforms thus far has been to liberalise foreign trade in non-agricultural commodities and removal of industrial licensing that constrained capacity creation, the effect of reforms on poverty has to come from its effect primarily on non-farm output. To the extent this effect is diluted by poor initial conditions in the populous interior states, in which a large majority of India's rural poor live, one can only see relatively modest reductions in poverty from reforms.~~

~~The association between rapid growth and poverty alleviation is clear since the 1980s. However, the growth of the 1980s was not due to any systemic reforms of the development strategy pursued since the 1950s. The acceleration in growth was largely due to growth in the domestic demand following the abandonment of macro economic prudence of the earlier three decades and the adoption of an expansionary fiscal policy. This reckless macro economic expansionism with no fundamental reform of severe micro economic distortions led to growing fiscal deficit that were financed by increasingly costly domestic and external debt. Clearly the fiscal situation was unsustainable and led to macro economic and balance of payments crisis of 1991. Thus stabilisation and systemic reforms were unavoidable given the economic situation India faced in 1991. But the question was not whether reforms could have been avoided but one of ensuring that the poor share in the benefits. The reforms have made substantial progress in some but not all sectors of the economy. Given that poverty is largely a rural phenomenon (more than 80 per cent of India's poor live in rural areas) and that casual labourers (in agriculture and in non-farm activities) and marginal farmers constitute a large part of the poor, for reform to have a substantial impact on poverty, the growth it generates has to be labour-intensive and it has to extend to rural areas. Unfortunately the reform process so far has not adequately met this desideration.~~

- 1) First, the reform process has hardly touched agriculture. Not only Indian agriculture is largely insulated from world markets but also there are restrictions on domestic trade in agricultural commodities such as monopoly procurement by the government in Maharashtra and export restrictions on cotton, restrictions on inter-state movement of certain commodities

on private account and so on.

- 2) Second, there have been no reforms of the labour market regulations. A small part, less than 10 per cent of the labour force that is employed in organised manufacturing and the public sector enjoys job security, relatively high wages and other perquisites. The rest of the labour force has no protection.
- 3) Third, there is a crippling regulation that reserves certain commodities for production by the small-scale industries. This has led to inefficient and sub-optimal capacity of firms. Moreover certain dynamic export commodities such as garments, leather products, shoes and toys are reserved for the small scale sector which has led to countries like China outperforming India in gaining export shares.
- 4) Fourth, the benefits of foreign trade and investment licensing reforms would depend also on other conditions such as availability of adequate power, efficient and inexpensive transport and telecommunications, particularly rural road and telephones and improvements in the educational attainment of the labour force. As the study of Ravallion and Datt suggests the poverty alleviation potential of the growth induced by reforms would have been much higher had these factors been more favourable than they have. In conclusion it can be said that there is some evidence that the decline in poverty has slowed down after the initiation of reforms of 1991, since the reforms were unavoidable, the real question is how to make the growth induced by reforms more effective in alleviating poverty. With extension of reforms to the agricultural and rural sector, introduction of reforms to labour and product markets so that growth is more labour intensive and improvement in the quantity and quality of infrastructure services as well as the educational attainment and deepening the reforms, the decline in poverty would be considerably accelerated.

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## **7.5 POVERTY REDUCTION NOT BY INCOME ALONE**

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The overwhelming attention paid to measuring and monitoring income poverty has resulted in a gross neglect of other serious forms of human deprivation. Some of these deprivations are loud and visible—child labour, illiteracy, damaged environment. Others are largely silent but visible—caste discrimination, discrimination against women and girls and child prostitution. Many other forms of deprivations are to this day, silent and invisible. These include for instance, issues of women's health, domestic violence, and child malnutrition. These deprivations are not related to income poverty levels in any predictable manner. Haryana is one of the richest and fastest growing states in terms of per capita income. Yet infant mortality at 68 per 1000 live births is four times higher than in income-poorer Kerala. And women in Haryana suffer systematic deprivation that gives them one of the lowest female to male ratios in the country—865 per 1000 males.

Income levels often fail to capture deprivations along other dimensions of human life. Rural Andhra Pradesh and rural Madhya Pradesh, for example, suffer from similar levels of educational deprivation – an illiteracy rate of 64 per cent, but the proportion of income poor is 22 per cent in Andhra Pradesh and 42 per cent in Madhya Pradesh. Again the extent of urban illiteracy is the same in Punjab and Orissa (28 per cent) and yet the proportion of urban

income poor is 11 per cent in Punjab and 41 per cent in Orissa. Similarly, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh that report the lowest levels of child malnutrition do so despite having relatively low levels of per capita income. Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra report the same levels of child malnutrition even though Maharashtra's per capita income is more than double that of Madhya Pradesh.

Levels of affluence or the lack of incomes also fail to measure the richness – or poverty of human lives. Urban poverty rates for instance, have been consistently lower than rural poverty rates nationwide and across all states. Also, urban income levels are typically higher than rural incomes. Yet visitors to India's major cities will observe that traffic congestion has increased dramatically and so has air pollution. Respiratory problems have gone up and there is a severe shortage of water and electricity. The poor, especially those living in urban slums, estimated to be around 30 per cent in metropolitan cities, experience the decay even more: clogged drainage pipes, stagnant water, filthy public latrines, un-cleared garbage piles, and an increasingly unhealthy environment around them. Most significantly, infant mortality in urban areas has remained stagnant in recent years for the country as a whole, and has gone up in several states. The declining trend in urban income poverty does not capture such dangerously deteriorating living conditions.

All this is not to say that income does not matter. It does, but people often value other things in life much more than income. Even to the very poor, self-respect and a good reputation means a lot. They often articulate their immediate needs as a good education for their children, access to good health care facilities, and a safe environment. They detest exploitation and discrimination. To most people, to be treated with dignity and respect matter much more than incomes.

There is a long way to go in ending human deprivations. Access to quality health care, basic education and other essential services have to improve dramatically. Caste, class and gender barriers have to breakdown. Physical provisioning has to be expanded considerably. Less than a third of India's nearly 600,000 villages have a primary health care centre or sub-centre located within the village. For Madhya Pradesh with nearly 72,000 villages, the coverage is 13.5 per cent and in Uttar Pradesh with 113,000 villages it is only 20 per cent. Only around 25 per cent of all deliveries take place in institutions, and trained birth attendants attend to only a little over a third of all deliveries. More than 95 per cent of rural households do not have access to proper sanitation facilities. Only around 40 per cent of households have access to electricity.

If living conditions have to improve, what then needs to be done differently? First, India has to recognise and capitalise on the strong complementarities that exist between economic expansion and the improvements in the quality of people's lives.

In 1960, the levels of income in Botswana and Indonesia were lower than in India. But by 1993, the situation was reversed. During this period, Botswana and Indonesia also recorded significantly rapid advances in health and education than India did. Again, in 1960, South Korea and India had similar levels of per capita income. By 1993, South Korea's income was nearly 8 times higher than India's. This increase in income between 1960-93 coincided with a period when life expectancy in South Korea went up from 54 years to 71 years, and adult

illiteracy fell from 46 per cent to 2 per cent. Similarly, China, Indonesia and Thailand have all achieved and sustained higher levels of per capita incomes than India because they have done much better in terms of expanding human capabilities. These countries recognised the strong complementarities between income expansion and social development. If human poverty has to be eradicated, India must, as a priority, invest in its people – in their health and education.

Second, India needs to strike a balance in its development. This balance is not on the economic front alone—between receipts and expenditures, between imports and exports, between savings and investments. A balance is needed between economic growth and an expansion of social opportunities. A balance is needed between the assurance of economic rights and political rights. A balance is needed between expansion of physical infrastructure and basic social infrastructure. The priority has to shift to basic education, to preventive and promotive health care, to assuring basic economic security and livelihood. At the same time, several imbalances need to be corrected: between men and women, between rural and urban areas, between socially disadvantaged communities and the rest of the society.

Third, there is the issue of resources clearly, more financial resources are required if all children have to attend school, if all villages must have access to a primary health care centre, if all communities must have access to safe water, if all pregnant mothers have to be assured of safe motherhood. Additional resources could be mobilised by reducing defence spending. But there is also need for getting the priorities right. Expenditures must be utilised for improving the quality and efficacy of services, for correcting imbalances in public expenditures, for plugging leaks and reducing wastage, and for ensuring greater efficiency in spending.

Fourth, the State, instead of abdicating its responsibility for expanding social opportunities, needs to play a more proactive role rather than it has in the past. The state in India often achieves what it sets out to do. If something has not been done, it usually reflects unwillingness rather than an inability to act. For example, the state has shown dynamism in reducing controls, liberalising the economy, and opening up the economy. The recent Constitutional Amendment to ensure women's participation in local governments displays an extremely progressive and proactive face. On the other hand, the state's effort at abolishing child labour, preventing child prostitution, and until recently, addressing the problem of AIDS reveals shocking recalcitrance. Similarly, its unwillingness to make primary education compulsory, despite the affirmation in the Constitution of India, reveals inexplicable reluctance. For many of these matters, sustained advocacy, open debates, concerted pressure and public action are urgently needed to provoke a positive response from the state.

Fifth, opportunities must be created and expanded for women to participate more fully in economic and political decision-making. The human development experience from Kerala and Manipur suggest that society's well-being improves when women enjoy greater freedoms—economic, social and political. But ensuring greater freedom for women is not easy. Unfortunately, many see it as usurping of power from men with no net gains. Quite the contrary, the overall gains to society increase many times when men and women contribute equally. However, to achieve this, changes are required in the way people think and behave, in the way society perceives the role and contribution of women.

Finally, economic growth has to be participatory; it must be planned and managed locally by people whose lives it affects. Communities must participate actively to shape programmes,

ensure that opportunities are expanded, and that the benefits are shared equitably. For this, structures of local self-governance must be strengthened; and people's participation has to become a way of public life.

Is there then hope for optimism? Yes. First, the official stated policies for poverty eradication reflect human development priorities. Second, following the post-1991 reforms, economic conditions are more favourable. Third, democratic participation is opening up. This is not just through local governments but through people's organisations, and in particular women's groups that are frequently organised around credit, economic activities and social empowerment. At the same time, there are some causes for concern. The focus on reducing fiscal deficits is forcing major cuts in social sector spending. The pressure to pursue state minimalism is leading to an abdication of state responsibilities—as the pressure to privatise is beginning to affect people's access to basic health and education.

What does India need to do? Mahatma Gandhi had once remarked: "India's salvation consists in unlearning what she has learned during the past fifty years". Similar changes are now required in thinking, in living, and in cultivating a genuine public spirit. India needs to get its development priorities right. We need to undo and unlearn. At the same time, we also need to learn and act. If human poverty has to be eradicated, attention must shift from income poverty to the poverty and inequality of opportunities—economic, social and political. India needs sustained public action to be guided by strong human development priorities.

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## 7.6 SUMMARY

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The Indian economy has seen marked structural transformation in the 1990s with the services sector occupying a place of prominence and agriculture seeing a decline. The economy maintained a high GDP growth, the major impetus coming from the manufacturing and services sector. The states in India show increased variation in growth performance. Whereas it accelerated for the economy particularly for Maharashtra and Gujarat, it decelerated sharply in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa.

The objective of India's development strategy is the eradication of mass poverty. But while the percentages show a decline in poverty, absolute numbers of poor has increased because of the alarming population rise. There is a clear association between rapid growth and poverty alleviation. Poverty in India is largely a rural phenomenon as more than 80 per cent of India's poor live in rural areas. Thus for reform to have a substantial impact it has to extend to rural areas. Income levels alone should not be a measure of poverty as they often fail to capture other dimensions of human life. Other deprivations like child labour, malnutrition, illiteracy, prostitution, caste discrimination are not related to income poverty levels in any predictable manner. Levels of affluence are not a measure of the poverty of human lives. Thus India needs to strike a balance in its development—in its economic and social front, with the state playing a more proactive role.

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## 7.7 EXERCISES

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- 1) Has acceleration in GDP of India resulted in a uniform increase in the growth rate of

SDP?

- 2) What is meant by poverty line? Explain with reference to India.
- 3) How has India fared in poverty alleviation? What steps do you think India should take to improve the quality of its peoples' lives?

## Appendix

**Table 1 : All India Trends in Poverty (Per cent of population below poverty line)**

	Rural per cent	Urban per cent	National per cent
1983	45.31	35.65	43.00
1986-87	38.81	34.29	37.69
1987-88	39.23	36.20	38.47
1988-89	39.06	36.60	38.44
1989-90	34.30	33.40	34.07
1990-91	36.43	32.76	35.49
1991-92	37.42	33.23	36.34
1992-93	43.47	33.73	40.93
1993-94	36.66	30.51	35.04
1994-95	41.02	33.50	38.40
1995-96	37.15	28.04	35.00
1996-97	35.78	29.99	34.40

**Source:** Datt (1997) and (1999)

**Table 2 : Annual Rates of Growth of Gross State Domestic Product (SDP)**

	1980-81 percent Pa	1991-92 percent Pa
	1990-91 percent Pa	1997-98 percent Pa
Bihar	4.66	2.69
Rajasthan	6.60	6.54
Uttar Pradesh	4.95	3.58
Orissa	4.29	3.25
Madhya Pradesh	4.56	6.17
Andhra Pradesh	5.65	5.03
Tamil Nadu	5.38	6.22
Kerala	3.57	5.81
Karnataka	5.29	5.29
West Bengal	4.71	6.91
Gujarat	5.08	9.57
Haryana	6.43	5.02
Maharashtra	6.02	8.01
Punjab	5.32	4.71
All 14 states	5.24	5.94
GDP	5.55	6.89

**Source:** CSO and National Accounts

**Table 3 : Annual Rates of Growth of Per Capita Gross State Domestic Product**

		1980-81	1991-92
		1990-91 percent Pa	1997-98 percent Pa
1	Bihar	2.45	1.12
2	Rajasthan	3.96	3.96
3	Uttar Pradesh	2.60	1.24
4	Orissa	2.38	1.64
5	Madhya Pradesh	2.08	3.87
6	Andhra Pradesh	3.34	3.45
7	Tamil Nadu	3.87	4.95
8	Kerala	2.19	4.52
9	Karnataka	3.28	3.45
10	West Bengal	2.39	5.04
11	Gujarat	3.08	7.57
12	Haryana	3.86	2.66
13	Maharashtra	3.58	6.13
14	Punjab	3.33	2.80
15	Combined SDP of all states	3.03	4.02

Source: CSO

**Table-4 : Per centage of Population in Poverty**

	1983	1987-88	1993-94
1	52.22	52.13	54.96
2	34.46	35.15	27.41
3	47.07	41.46	40.85
4	65.29	55.58	48.56
5	49.78	43.07	42.52
6	28.91	25.86	22.19
7	51.66	43.39	35.03
8	40.42	31.79	25.43
9	38.24	37.53	33.16
10	54.85	44.72	35.66
11	32.79	31.54	24.21
12	21.37	16.64	25.05
13	43.44	40.41	36.86
14	16.18	13.20	11.77
All 14 states	43.80	39.92	36.25
All India	44.48	38.86	35.97

**Source:** Planning Commission



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# **UNIT 8 LEGISLATURE**

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## **Structure**

- 8.1 Introduction
  - 8.2 Legislature
    - 8.2.1 Structure
  - 8.3 Central Legislature/Parliament
    - 8.3.1 President
    - 8.3.2 Lok Sabha
    - 8.3.3 Rajya Sabha
    - 8.3.4 Committees
    - 8.3.5 The Opposition
  - 8.4 State Legislature
  - 8.5 Parliamentary Sovereignty
  - 8.6 Parliament Functioning: An Overview
  - 8.7 Summary
  - 8.8 Exercises
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## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Modern nation state seeks political power to govern by the process of legitimacy attributed to it by its citizens. This political power is an essential instrument of State, in a democracy, for maintaining order and reconciling conflicts in the civil society. It also concerns itself with guiding humanity from lower forms of civilisation to higher forms. The State embodies the political goal of a society, and its institutions express the proper array of principles and techniques that are used in efforts to accomplish that very avowed goal. The entire range, scope, style, purpose and control effectuated by the state needs to be analysed to understand democracy at work.

Modern State, therefore, has undergone structural differentiation in the form of Legislature, Executive and Judiciary as methods of control and guidance to society at large. Out of these three institutions, legislature is a body that represents the people in two distinct ways. One, the representatives can transmit the fears and hopes of their constituencies to the other members of the legislature and to the executive. And second, legislature can represent the cross section of the nation, a “mirror image” of their “multi-cultural” society.

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## **8.2 LEGISLATURE**

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Legislature is often used synonymously with the term parliament. Legislature is derived from the Latin word “Lex”, meaning legal rule through legislation, and “Parliament” from the French verb “to speak”. Legislatures in the classic scheme of government were the law making bodies. Today it is associated with a multitude of functions and has undergone phenomenal structural differentiation. For instance, to exercise control over executive, one of the important

functions it performs, various legislative committees and innovations in the interpellation procedure have sprung. Or, legislature is the site where most national “leadership” is trained in participatory democracy. Nevertheless, dialogical discourse in the form of contestations, deliberations and constitutive ethical laws remains at the core of the political process being situated in legislatures.

The post-colonial Indian legislature began its journey of democracy and political development since 1952, but the Indians were introduced to this novel institution of the legislature by the British. The chief means by which the British parliament usurped the monarch’s power of rule over subjects was “responsible government”. As early as 1833, during the colonial government, a conceptual distinction was made between the executive and legislative functions of the Governor-General Council. Further, with the introduction of the Indian Councils Act of 1861, there was both gradual expansion of the legislative tasks entrusted to the legislative councils, and a progressive incorporation of “natives” into the legislative machinery. Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 sought to enlarge the imperial legislative council and provincial legislative council by including elected non-official members. An element of election was also introduced in the imperial legislative council. The deliberative functions of the legislative council were also increased, and it provided for the first time, a separate electorate for the Muslim community.

The belief persisted, nonetheless, that parliamentary politics was unsuitable to Indian conditions. Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India, read in the House of Lords during the first reading on the Indian Council Bill on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1908, “If the bill were attempting to set up a Parliamentary system in India, or if it would be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily up to the establishment of a Parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing to do for it.”

However, the established British opinion had begun to change by the end of the First World War. The Montague-Chemnitz Reforms of 1919 introduced substantive changes into the existing system. It brought further legislative reforms in the form of responsible government in the provinces through Devolution Rules and dyarchy. Indian legislature was made representative and “bicameral” and elected majority was introduced in both the Houses. Despite the declared aim of gradually developing self-governing institutions leading to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India, the political structure still remained unitary and centralised, with the Governor-General in Council continuing to be responsible, as before, to the British Parliament through the Secretary of State. Nevertheless, the roots of parliamentary democracy in India may be traced with these reforms.

Another major reform took place by the introduction of the Government of India Act 1935 which provided, among others, federation and provincial autonomy, dyarchy at the Centre, distribution of legislative powers between the Centre and the provinces, and six provincial legislatures were made bicameral. However, the Central Council retained control over provinces, advised, as before, the Governor General, and was not made responsible to the legislature. The Crown and the Governor General retained the power to veto bills passed by the Central legislature. The Governor General had ordinance making powers, independent powers of legislation or permanent Acts. Provincial legislature also suffered from similar kind of limitations.

In December 1946, when a constituent assembly was convened to work on the principle of “constitutional autochthony” as K.C. Wheare puts it, and to provide the structural arrangements

of State power, it became quite evident that India would have its own legislature. The Government of India Act 1947 further made it clear, by abolition of the sovereignty and responsibility of British parliament, the crown no longer to be the source of authority and the constituent assembly to have dual function, constituent and legislative, till the framing of new constitution and the constitution of new legislatures, that India embarked on the process of democracy and development, with parliamentary government integral to its political system. The constituent assembly, therefore, framed the legislative provision of the constitution with the aim of creating a basis for the social and political unity of the country. Partition had made this task difficult.

### **8.2.1 Structure**

The legislature in India, functioning within the parliamentary system, is the totality of Central, State and local legislatures, their formal and informal arrangements, with interlinkages and their interaction with the other state bodies and environment. The central legislature, also referred to as Parliament, consists of the President and the two Houses – Lok Sabha (House of people and Lower House) and Rajya Sabha (council of states and Upper House). The State Legislature shall include Governor and two Houses (Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council) in some of the states or one house (Legislative Assembly) in the rest (Article 168). The local legislature – Gram Sabha and Municipality- is an institution of self government constituted by the Constitution. The 73rd and 74th Amendment are still in the process of acquiring substantive legislative power to be devolved by the concerned state.

For the purpose of legislation, the Constitution introduces a federal system as the basic structure of the government, wherein there is a threefold distribution of subjects between the Centre and the States enumerated in the Seventh Schedule, viz. Union List, State List and Concurrent List. There is also an effort to distribute the subjects between state and local bodies by incorporating the Eleventh Schedule into the Constitution by the 73rd and 74th Amendments. Such distribution of subjects is essential to make legislature at all levels responsible and accountable by following the ambit of items in the list. However, ambit is defined, in case of conflict, by the judiciary time and again.

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## **8.3 CENTRAL LEGISLATURE/ PARLIAMENT**

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### **8.3.1 President**

The President of India is an integral part of the Indian Parliament like the Crown of England and unlike the American President. However, the Indian President differs from the Crown of England in respect of his power and status, e.g. certain discretionary powers vis-a-vis legislation and administering of oath.

The Constitution vests the power of carrying on the business of government in the President, but the President exercises this power under the Constitutional limitations, e.g. Article 74(1) “the executive powers shall be exercised by the President of India ‘in accordance with the’ advice of his Council of Ministers, or Article 53(1) demands that the President must exercise his powers according to the Constitution.” The President represents the nation and is the symbol of unity and it is in this sense that (s)he is the “head of the state”. However, the post

of President has raised a few questions, such as, What exactly is a President supposed to do? How can he exercise the powers, formally or informally, vested in him by the Constitution? Is the President something more than “the first citizen” or a “rubber stamp”? S.S.Khera says that he can certainly have a “mind of his own, free of all political trammels and without any urge or ambition to take an active hand in governmental decision making, .... or towards changing the provisions of the existing constitution relating to his position and powers.”

However, a harmonious correlation between the President and various legislative institutions has led to a sort of successful working of parliamentary democracy. For instance, the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister is crucial in legislation. A sore relationship between the two indicates problematic in the legislative issues and therefore will catch attention of the opposition and civil society for a sustained debate. The relationship may have political ramifications, which perhaps may be echoed in the President’s speech inside as well as outside the Parliament.

### **8.3.2 Lok Sabha**

The Parliament of India is bicameral. The Lower House is the Lok Sabha, or House of the people. Its members are elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Every adult citizen (18 years and above) is entitled to vote, other than non-residents, the insane, criminals and those who have been convicted of corrupt electoral practices. In a reserved constituency, only members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes may run for office, but all adults within the constituency may vote. The two nominated seats are filled by the President with representatives of the Anglo-Indian community.

The system of voting is the single member constituency. The system has produced governments that have substantial majorities in the Parliament, yet lack endorsement from a majority of the voters. A proportional reservation system would have been fairer to opposition parties and more representative in a mathematically defined version of deliberative democracy. By and large, Parliament is fairly chosen with the help of the Constitutional body called the Election Commission. While individual seats may have been determined by musclemen or bribes, no general election in India has produced an overall result that was not a fair reflection of voter preferences.

The term of the Lok Sabha is for a maximum period of five years, although in an emergency this may be extended to one year at a time indefinitely. There is no minimum term of the parliament. While the parliament may be dissolved and fresh elections held because a government has lost the confidence of the house, the more common occurrence is for a prime-minister to time a call for fresh elections with the goal of maximising personal or party political gains.

The Lok Sabha is required by the Constitution to convene, twice a year, with a maximum allowable period of gap between the two sessions being six months. In practice the Lok Sabha has often met in three sessions per year. The language of parliamentary business is mostly Hindi or English, although a member may use any of the recognised official languages.

The process of legislation involves three stages corresponding to the familiar three readings of bills in the parliamentary systems: the introduction of a bill, its consideration and its enactment

into law. The first reading consists of the bill being introduced alongwith an explanation of its aim and purposes. After the second reading, a bill may be referred to select committee, circulated for public response or taken up for immediate consideration. The last course is rare and reserved for urgent and uncontroversial items. The second course is the most frequent. The select committee reports back either unanimously or with a majority recommendation and a minority note of dissent. The bill is then considered in the House clause by clause, with members being able to introduce amendments. Once all clauses have been dealt with, the bill has crossed the report stage, and is listed for its third and final reading, which is tidying-up amendments and then the bill is put to vote. If the speaker authenticates its passing, the bill is sent to the second house, where the entire procedure is repeated. When both Houses of Parliament have passed an identical version of a bill, it is presented to the President for formal assent, and becomes law on receiving his assent.

The sessional and daily business of the government is decided by the cabinet and its Parliamentary affairs committee under the chairmanship of the chief whip. Each session of the Lok Sabha is opened with a presidential address. The quorum for the Lok Sabha to be able to meet is one-tenth of its membership. The Lok-Sabha is of course fundamentally akin to other Legislative Assemblies in Parliamentary regimes, its context can, however, be quite different, reflecting its own unique socio-political environment. The conduct of the House is in the hands of the Speaker who recognises members, keeps order and does other things, which are required of presiding officers. The speaker may not vote on an issue before the Lok Sabha, but can exercise a casting vote in the event of a tie on any motion. The Speaker is selected by the governing party for formal election by the House but is expected to conduct Parliamentary business with fairness and impartiality.

Parliament is the central forum for amending the Constitution under article 368. The procedural powers are those which allow the parliament to make rules for the conduct of its business. The legislative powers pertain to the authority and role of Parliament in enacting laws for governing the country. Parliament is technically the legislature, the institution that enacts the law of the land and the authority of the people and the assent of the head of state. In reality the legislative agenda is controlled by the government and endorsed by the Parliament with the help of tightly maintained party discipline. The financial powers of Parliament are those empowering it to raise and spend money as it sees fit, including discussion and approval of the annual budget. Only the Parliament has the authority to levy taxes and spend money from the Consolidated Fund.

Parliament formally controls the reins of the government in the sense that the cabinet is required to have the confidence of the Lok Sabha and is collectively responsible to the Parliament. Under constitutive powers, finally, parliament can legislate to admit or create new states into the Union of India; to create a High Court for a Union Territory and to extend the jurisdiction of a High Court to or restrict it from a Union Territory; and to create or abolish a Legislative Council (an Upper House) for a state with the consent of the State's Assembly (Lower House).

### **8.3.3 Rajya Sabha**

Rajya Sabha or the Council of States is the Upper House of India's bicameral Parliament. Three sets of reasons guided the adoption of bicameral legislature for the Union of India. First,

Rajya Sabha as the name implies, was to be the chamber for representing and protecting the rights of the states in a federal polity. Rajya Sabha, therefore, has equal role and status to that of the Lok Sabha in the Electoral College for choosing the president. Members of state legislative assemblies elect Rajya Sabha representatives for their States on a proportional representation system. The Constitutional position of the Rajya Sabha is not comparable in power, functions or prestige to the US Senate when conceived of solely in terms of State rights. In the event of a deadlock between the two Houses of Parliament, for example, if reconsideration of a bill fails to achieve a mutually satisfactory resolution, then the president can convene a joint sitting of both the Houses. Its decisions are made by simple majority. Since Lok Sabha MPs outnumber their Rajya Sabha counterparts by more than 2:1, in a combined sitting, the Rajya Sabha can generally expect to be defeated.

The second purpose of establishing a bicameral legislature was to provide an institutional opportunity for second thoughts and a wiser counsel even after the passage of a bill by the Lok Sabha. This largely depends on the party composition in both the Houses. Rajya Sabha's role as critique seemed largely a chimera during the period of Congress party dominance.

The third function of Rajya Sabha in the Indian system of governance is to enable a bill to be introduced in the Parliament even when the Lok Sabha is not in session. Much of the Parliamentary debate and work on the bill can be completed by the time the Lok Sabha reconvenes.

In respect of certain specified federal features of the Constitution, the primary amending role has been given to the Rajya Sabha as the custodian of State rights. For example, the powers of Rajya Sabha itself can be altered only with the consent of a two-thirds majority in the Upper House. In theory, the House provides the means to bring in competent or skilled personnel who are not prepared to face the uncertain rigours of political campaigns. They can be appointed to the Rajya Sabha and be inducted into the cabinet without having to go through the formal process of elections.

### **8.3.4 Committees**

The Lok Sabha operates with the aid of Parliamentary Committees. The composition of the committees is determined by the Speaker and the chief whip with due regard to the respective party strengths in the house. To prevent undue Executive influence, no minister who is in charge of a bill being considered by the committee, is permitted to participate in the deliberations of that committee.

Parliamentary Committees help to expedite Parliamentary business and to scrutinise the government activities. They may be divided into four broad groups: those that are concerned with the organisation and powers of the House, for example the rules committee; those that assist the House in their legislative functions, for example select committee; those that assist the House in making government departments more accountable, for example various standing committees; and those that assist the House in their financial functions such as Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Estimates Committee (EC) etc.

Parliamentary committees act as watchdogs in the Parliament to ensure culture of accountability

and good governance. The financial committees, particularly, are regarded as the most important ones as they unearth ‘scams’ and the convention requires that their recommendations be implemented and to report to the Parliament on the follow-up-actions by the concerned minister.

### **8.3.5 The Opposition**

The opposition in a Parliamentary democracy is expected to play the role of an alternative government. This has not been the case for most of the independent Indian history due to the complete dominance of the Congress party. Because of the multiplicity of political parties in India, the status of the leader of the opposition can be conferred only on the leader of a party with at least fifty seats in the Lok Sabha.

Regardless of the capacity or numbers to form an alternative government, opposition parties do register and express the diversity of opinions in a country as large and varied as India. The opposition also serves to keep the government on its political toes. The opposition loses when it comes to tallying up the votes on any motion. But its statements in Parliament are heard in the country at large and often listened to within the ranks of the political parties. Opposition arrangements, therefore, often strike a resonance within the party and can shape public policy by this indirect means. The debate that is ostensibly between the government and the opposition can, in effect, serve to structure the internal debate within the ruling party. Jawaharlal Nehru himself was very sensitive to the range of opinion in the ranks of the opposition. This has been a distinctive feature of the Indian politics since independence.

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## **8.4 STATE LEGISLATURE**

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State legislatures, while in most respects, are similar to the Parliament of India, there are some important differences. The choice of unicameralism or bicameralism was left to the states, depending on how they weighed the functions of the second chamber compared to the costs involved in running it. Any Legislative Assembly may create or abolish a Legislative Council for itself by a special majority (a majority of the total membership that is not less than two-thirds of members present and voting), followed by an Act of Parliament (Article 169). The size of the Council must be no less than 40 and no more than one-third of the total membership of the Assembly (Article 171). Like the Rajya Sabha, one-third of a State Council’s members are elected biennially. Five-sixths of the Council Members (MLCs) are indirectly elected on a complicated formula involving graduates, educators and members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs); and one-sixth are nominated by the Governor. But a state council’s role is even more circumscribed than that of the Rajya Sabha: it is merely an advisory house that may delay the passage of a bill but cannot compel modifications or abandonment.

The Legislative Assemblies themselves vary in size from a minimum of 40 to no more than 500; their members are chosen for five-year terms by direct elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage. The State Assembly is subject to dissolution but not the Council. Because of the great difference in size between Parliamentary and State Legislative Constituencies, MLAs are far closer to the people than MPs. The MLAs are correspondingly the more significant political actors.

## **8.5 PARLIAMENTARY SOVEREIGNTY**

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As a theory of politics, sovereignty embodies the notion that in every system of government, there must be some absolute power of final decision. The person or body exercising such decision must be legally competent to decide and practically able to enforce the decision. The concept entails a prescriptive and a descriptive element. Contrary to the situation as it ought to be, in reality many states do not possess the unity, clarity and effectiveness of command implied in the concept of Sovereignty.

In India, governments have often come into conflict with Judiciary over the extent to which Parliament may amend the Constitution. In the Golakhnath case (1967) the court ruled by 6:5 majority that Parliament was not competent to amend Fundamental Rights as they are transcendental and immutable, though the power to amend the Constitution is a legislative power (Article 245), and hence the Constitutional Amendment Act is a ‘law’ within the purview of Article 13(2). However, in 1971, by the 24th Amendment Act, the Parliament sought to retain its sovereignty by making the Constitutional Amendment Act immune to judicial review on the ground that it takes away or affects Fundamental Rights. Also an amendment of the Constitution passed in accordance with Article 368 will not be ‘law’ within the meaning of Article 13. The 25th Constitutional Amendment Act which allowed the Parliament to encroach on Fundamental Rights if it was said to be done pursuant to giving effect to the Directive Principles of State Policy.

In April 1973, in the Kesavanand Bharti case, the Supreme Court ruled that while Parliament could amend even the Fundamental Rights ‘guaranteed’ by the Constitution, Parliament was not competent to alter the ‘basic structure’ or ‘framework’ of the Constitution. The 42nd Amendment Act (1976) unambiguously and unabashedly declared the Parliament to be competent to amend all provisions of the Constitution and the courts to be incompetent to question Parliamentary enactments.

The assertion of Parliamentary Sovereignty in the wake of conflict between the ‘due process of law’ and the ‘procedure established by law’ is due to its consideration as the repository of the *will of the people* as it is directly elected by and accountable to the people. In fact, Parliament elected by all adult citizens is more representative of the *general will* than a Constituent Assembly, which had been elected on a very restricted franchise. Moreover, the courts, over the years, had delivered contradictory decisions, and the inconsistency of judicial verdicts had produced Constitutional confusion. The Constitution is what its clauses said it to be, not what the judiciary interpreted it to be. The concept of the ‘basic structure’ in particular was nowhere to be found in the Constitution itself but was instead an invention of the judges. In 1980, in Minerva Mills case, the Judiciary tilted the balance of power towards its own side by declaring validity clauses (4) and (5) of Article 368 as ultra vires because they exclude Judicial Review which is the basic feature of the Constitution. However, to insist that the Constitution could be amended at will by the Parliament, free of Judicial oversight, would be to reduce the Constitution to a private preserve of the Prime Minister.

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## **8.6 PARLIAMENT FUNCTIONING: AN OVERVIEW**

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Parliament of the independent India technically began on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950, but democratically it came to life only in 1952. Lok Sabha was then highly elitist, drawing most of its members from urban and legal background. Legislation was adopted as the chief instrument of socio-economic engineering that occupied nearly fifty per cent of the total time of the sittings of the first Lok Sabha. The House was in its formative period, laying down healthy foundations for building the strong edifice of Parliamentary institutions and procedures.

The second Lok Sabha (1957-62) perhaps can be known in the history of the Indian Parliamentary democracy as the golden period. Parliament enacted a large number of legislative measures. Among the bills passed, four amended the Constitution (including the one incorporating Goa into the Indian Union). Two Private Member Bills were brought on the statute book, and a joint sitting of both Houses to resolve the deadlock on the Dowry Prohibition Bill. The importance of the ‘Question Hour’ for ensuring administrative accountability was highlighted in Mundhra scandal. Nehru remarked, “considering everything, we have done rather well and considering the state of the world today, when every other day we read about coup d’etats in various countries, it is surprising how we have carried on in our normal way.”

The third Lok Sabha (1962-67) saw agriculturists taking the position of lawyers who formed the largest group in the first and second Lok Sabha. With remarkable changes in the composition of the House, the opposition members generally were more active. Treasury benches fearlessly criticised, expressed genuine doubts, and sometimes even opposed government proposals. The number of women members also increased from 27 in the second, to 34 in the third Lok Sabha. An interesting development was that the law-making function no more remained as the major occupation of the House.

The most important developments on the political and parliamentary scene in India during the life of the fourth Lok Sabha (1967-70) were the phenomena of defections and party splits, of the Congress party losing its undisputed dominant position, and of non-Congressism emerging as a rallying point and programme for the opposition parties. The battle between Indira Gandhi and the Congress syndicate, her support to V.V.Giri and his election as President, the controversy of conscience vs discipline, the split within the Congress in the Gandhi centenary year (1969), the ouster of Morarji Desai from finance ministership and the nationalisation of major banks – all had their impact on the functioning of the Lok Sabha. The phenomenon of defection characterised this period.

The fifth Lok Sabha (1971-77) witnessed a plethora of legislative measures (482) and 19 Constitution Amendment Bills. The Shimla Agreement with Pakistan, integration of Sikkim with the Union of India, enactment of MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act), proclamation of emergency and the adoption of far reaching 42<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Amendment were some of the major flashpoints.

However, a non-Congress, Janata government came to power in the sixth Lok Sabha (1977-79), and tried to trace out and punish all those closely associated with Indira Gandhi and responsible for the ‘atrocities and excesses’ of the emergency period. The government remained in existence for nearly two and a half years.

The seventh Lok Sabha (1980-84) saw the Congress (I) leader Indira Gandhi back in the

saddle. The situation in Punjab dominated the proceedings of the House. Mandal Commission Report, which recommended 27 per cent reservation for the backward classes, was discussed in a marathon debate in the House. In 1984, due to the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the election held gave a landslide victory to Congress and Rajiv Gandhi became the youngest Prime Minister. During the eighth Lok Sabha (1985-89), as many as 13 Constitution Amendment Bills were passed out of which two most important were those providing for disqualification of members on the grounds of defection and reducing the voting age from 21 years to 18 years. However, Indian Post Office (Amendment) Bill, the Muslim Women (Protection of rights on divorce) Bill, BOFORS scandal, *en masse* resignation by the opposition members from the Lok Sabha and the system of departmental standing committees made the eighth Lok Sabha a historic House in the development of the Indian Parliamentary democracy.

In the ninth Lok Sabha, a minority government of Janata Dal was formed by V.P.Singh. The situation in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Assam largely dominated the proceedings. Mandal Commission Report was implemented amidst much resistance by the upper castes in and outside the House. Mandal triggered the Mandir issue and L.K.Advani with his troupe rallied for the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya. Following the withdrawal of support by the BJP and its allies in retaliation against the arrest of L.K.Advani, the government lost majority and in fact was defeated on the vote of confidence. The ninth Lok Sabha tenure was brief.

In the tenth Lok Sabha (1991-96), Congress (I) emerged as the largest party in the house but was short of absolute majority to form a stable government on its own. The Mandir issue led to the demolition of Babri Masjid and the country witnessed one of the most testing times for legislators. During this period, two very important decisions were taken-one, allotment of Rs. 1 crore yearly to each MP to be spent on the developmental work in his/her constituency; and two, setting up a full-fledged system of seventeen Departmental Standing Parliamentary Committees with the task of making an in-depth scrutiny of budget proposals and demands for grants, among others.

The eleventh and twelfth Lok Sabha saw the emergence of coalition governments where the primary focus of the legislators shifted to the maintenance and consolidation of the coalition. Diverse interests and intentions were accommodated. ‘Multicultural parliament’, in the form of coalition or otherwise, has the potentiality to creatively move towards the goals of development, modernisation and secularisation. However, much needs to be seen as to how the legislative oversight transforms the idea of development and change to fulfil the rising expectations of the masses. Perhaps, the answer lies in the perception of the ‘calculus of hope for success and fear of failure’ to achieve the cherished goals embedded in the Preamble of the Constitution.

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## 8.7 SUMMARY

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In a democracy, state plays a crucial role in maintaining order and reconciling conflicts in a civil society. Modern state, in the form of three important bodies - legislature, executive and judiciary - tries to accomplish the political goal of the society, thus endorsing the credentials of democracy. In this unit, the above mentioned institutions are dealt with in detail. Legislature not only represents the people but also assumes the role of law making body. It is an embodiment of participative democracy. The President, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, various

committees and opposition are an integral part of the legislature. State legislatures are important at the state level. The concept of sovereignty, which contains both the descriptive as well as prescriptive element, is essential to enforce the decisions of the legislature. An overall analysis of the functioning of the parliament in its sequence is necessary to understand the institutions and procedures. Thus, legislature contributes to achieving the goals embedded in the Preamble of the Constitution.

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## **8.8 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Write a brief note on the sources of the legislature functioning in India (in the Pre-1952 period).
- 2) Analyse the role of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha as the custodians of the Parliamentary functions.
- 3) What is Parliamentary Sovereignty? Is it immune to judicial review?
- 4) Write short notes on: (1) Role of the President in the legislature process. (2) State legislature.

# **UNIT 9 BUREAUCRACY, POLICE AND ARMY**

## **Structure**

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Police
  - 9.2.1 Reasons Behind the Expansion of Police
  - 9.2.2 Challenges Before the Police Force
  - 9.2.3 The Police Response
  - 9.2.4 Crime Records
  - 9.2.5 The Police Role in Government
  - 9.2.6 Relations with the Executive
  - 9.2.7 Relations with the Legislature
  - 9.2.8 Relations with the Judiciary
  - 9.2.9 Relations with the Public
- 9.3 Civil Service in Democracy
  - 9.3.1 Pre Independence Era
  - 9.3.2 Post Independence Era
  - 9.3.3 Civil Service and Legislature
  - 9.3.4 Constitution of India
  - 9.3.5 Reforms are Overdue
  - 9.3.6 Relations with Judiciary
  - 9.3.7 Decentralisation
  - 9.3.8 Civil Service/Political Environment
  - 9.3.9 Relations with Political Leadership
- 9.4 Military in Democracy
  - 9.4.1 Theories Behind Military Coups
  - 9.4.2 Military in Indian Politics
  - 9.4.3 Relations with Political Leaders
  - 9.4.4 Military Strength
  - 9.4.5 The Role of Military in the Decision Making Process
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 Exercises

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## **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Police, Civil Service and Military are a part of coercive apparatus of any state. Modern state is different from the medieval state in terms of making laws which can control the activities of these forces. A democratic state is a constitutional state. Constitutional laws guide the actions of each organ. To keep a check on the misuse of power by any organ of the state, there is a balance of powers. Executive, judiciary and legislature are three organs of the state which balance each other to bring unity of purpose. If any organ goes outside the laws of the state, it can come under the scrutiny of law by another organ. It regulates the relationship between each organ and citizen. If a citizen feels that he or she is discriminated by any organ

of the state, he can resort to judicial review of the state action. Check and counter check help to keep the functioning of the state within the rule of game. A democratic state has to respect the human rights of each citizen and social class and groups. The state has enough space for the movement of each social group. Each group is allowed to protest against the state actions in a peaceful manner. Laws of the state are supposed to protect the rights of a citizen and social group. Democratic state is a limited state vis a vis a citizen and social group. Each social group, be it dominant or subaltern, is protected by the state. A state is basically a limited state except in an unusual situation in a nation's life, such as emergency because of war or internal trouble. The state has laws to restrict the rights of a citizen. In such circumstances the police, civil servants and military have immense powers. These three forces are part of an Administrative State. Moreover they are a permanent part of the executive whereas the political executive is a temporary one. Though they are the subject of control by the political executive, the action of each force can come under scrutiny by the judiciary. In this unit, the relation of each of these forces with the judiciary and legislature, is being analysed.

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## **9.2 POLICE**

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Police is a part of the ancient Indian history. The Mauryan empire did have a police force. During the Moghul period, the Kotwali system monitored the activities of citizens. The British rule created a modern policy by creating a Police Act of 1861. The colonial state allowed the operation of police in a legal manner. They could investigate the criminal case as per the law of the time. The colonial state created a legal framework which limited the police action. Though they served the interests of the colonial masters, at the same time, the laws of the state gave them autonomy. Even the British citizens came under their control to some extent if they committed crimes which were listed by the Police Act. It is wrong to presume that the Police Act served the interests of colonial masters only. This Act is serving the needs of the Post Independent Indian State. Some of the provisions have been amended, but in essence, the Act has been kept intact. Though the National Police Commission (NPC) has suggested for a new police Act, the democratic government has not felt the necessity of scrapping the old Act.

### **9.2.1 Reasons Behind the Expansion of Police**

The activities of police have got expanded with the changes introduced by the modern society of India. The Indian society is no more an agricultural society though majority of people live in the villages. But in terms of contribution to the national income, the share of agriculture has declined drastically. The contributions of industry and service sector have increased. This transition to an industrial and modern society has brought certain changes in the society. A transitional society has some peculiar problems which need to be tackled by the police. The Indian society is getting urbanised at a faster rate which creates some problems for the police. The problems of the industrial and urban society are different in nature from the rural society. The rural society has changed because of the social changes introduced by the green revolution and political democracy. The caste hierarchy has undergone a radical change. Land reforms such as the abolition of Zamindari system has changed the face of the rural society by removing the hereditary social leaders. It has led to a sharp competition among various caste groups for sharing the social power. The changing balance of social forces in rural society gets reflected in politics.

The democratic politics has brought some changes in the society. Electoral system has strengthened the democratic character of the society. This has led to sharp competition for political power among the social groups and classes of people. The entry of political parties into rural politics has strengthened the competition after leading to violence. Police intervention is sought in such a political situation, for tackling the criminal elements and gangsterism.

### **9.2.2 Challenges Before the Police Force**

- 1) violent agitations by linguistic groups to redraw the political map of India, strengthening linguistic nationalism.
- 2) the tribal groups of the Central India and North Eastern India have organised themselves on ethnic lines.
- 3) movement for land distribution very often leads to violence between the rich and the poor in rural India.
- 4) agitations organised by the political parties to protest the displacement of people due to major environmental projects by the government or by a private party.
- 5) terrorism and militant movements.
- 6) growth of religious fundamentalism leading to violent conflicts.
- 7) caste clashes between the upper and the lower castes on such issues as access to common property or self respect movement.
- 8) violent conflicts between the rural rich and landless labour, on the issues of wages.
- 9) violent conflicts between the upper caste and lower caste in towns on the question of reservation of jobs on caste lines.
- 10) while social legislations are made by the state, the responsibility to execute those laws is given to the police. The tackling of crimes against children and women are a major responsibility of the present police.
- 11) introduction of IT has brought in cyber crimes which need to be tackled by the police.
- 12) the growth of underworld in metropolis has created problems for the police.

### **9.2.3 The Police Response**

India is a federal state and the powers are distributed between the Centre and the States. The police administration comes under the purview of the state government. The problems affecting the state need special attention of the police administration. Very often, unable to handle such a situation, they depend on the Central government for help to maintain the public order. The Central government has Central Reserve Police Force and Border Security Force to aid the state governments. These central forces have specific duties but at the same time, they aid the state governments in the case of law and order situation. There are three groups of states that need special central help: (i) states like Jammu & Kashmir which have terrorist problems, need the assistance of the central police force. (ii) The other group of states is infested with Naxalism which also demand the central help for tackling the situation. (iii) The third group of states where a large-scale communal problem can cause an alarming situation necessitating the intervention of central forces. The central government has created a Rapid Action Force

(RAF) within the Central Reserve Police Force. The RAF is an emergency force that is normally airlifted to trouble spots so that quick action can be initiated to contain an explosive situation. Often the central police help in maintaining order during the elections times to the State Assemblies and Parliament. The Election Commission has a close interaction with the Home Ministry to call for the central forces to conduct free and fair elections. As there are some areas which are declared as disturbed, the state police try to handle the situation with the cooperation of the central forces. In a competitive political system, there is a large number of political leaders whose life is threatened by the terrorists and need protection by the state. The State has created a Special Security Force drawing from both BSF and CRPF to take care of the VIP movement.

#### **9.2.4 Crime Records**

From 1860 onwards, the Police Commission has been keeping the records on the reported crimes. In 1953, the central government introduced an annual publication *Crime in India*, with comprehensive statistics on all crime reported to the police in all States and Union Territories. Tackling crime in India is now, the responsibility of the National Crime Records Bureau of the central government. The study assesses crime rate i.e., offences per 100,000 people. The post independent state has recorded more crimes against women; infact rapes have doubled between 1985-1995. There is a manifold increase in the number of crimes.

#### **9.2.5 The Police Role in Government**

The use of police in India has been frequent and extensive. Very often their non partisan behaviour is questioned. The police is used by a political party or a coalition of parties against their political opponents. Often the police is accused of showing their communal bias while controlling the riot. Majority of them allegedly have caste and class bias and this has led to a negative public perception of the police administration. Various surveys conducted by some independent organisations found that the public do not consider the police as a friendly organ of the state. This perception affects the investigation of crimes. Criticism of the police by the executive, legislature and citizens is very common.

#### **9.2.6 Relations with the Executive**

During the emergency it has been observed by the Shah Commission that the executive, for its political ends, has used the police. This has led to the constituting of a National Police Commission under the chairmanship of Dharma Vira. The Commission has suggested measures seeking an autonomous status of the police. Two recommendations made in this connection - a fixed tenure of four years for the police chief and the constitution of a state security commission headed by the state minister in charge of the police also remain to be implemented. The political executive has to formulate public policy regarding the law and order situation. The transfer of the police officials must be decided by the state security council. This helps in reducing the day-to-day interference in the police administration and checking unfair practices at the time of transfer and posting. A level of transparency should be maintained in the above mentioned process.

### **9.2.7 Relations with the Legislature**

The legislature is the supreme authority in a democratic system. It is endowed with certain privileges and facilities which need to be respected by the police force, without which the legislative committee of privileges can question and punish the latter. The police need to show due respect and honour to the MLAs and MPs during their visits to the Police Stations. The police administration's perception of undue demands from the legislative members, affects their reputation in the eyes of public. The countrywide police agitation in 1979 was triggered by a trivial altercation between a Haryana traffic policeman and a legislator. The relationship between the police and MLAs and MPs is extremely delicate, calling for great restraint on both sides.

### **9.2.8 Relations with the Judiciary**

The police has a tenuous relation with the judiciary. The police feels that the courts lack faith in them. For example, the Indian Evidence Act lays down that no confession made to a police officer shall be admissible in evidence. This is a major source of discontent for police officers at all levels. There are many restrictions imposed by the judiciary on the police. No person can be arrested without a warrant and shall be held in police custody for longer than twenty four hours: he has to be produced before the concerned magistrate within this stipulated time. The Supreme Court and High Courts have imposed many restrictions on the power of the arrest vested in police officers. In *Joginder Singh v. State of UP* (1994), the Supreme Court stated that an arrest should be made merely because it was lawful to do so. The officer concerned should actually be able to justify such action. The judiciary is very much sensitive to the complaints of the human rights violations by the police. The formation of National Human Rights Commission headed by a former Chief Justice of India is in the process of making the police more sensitive to the human rights violations. The NHRC takes a very proactive position with regard to human rights violation by the police.

### **9.2.9 Relations with the Public**

Democracy demands that the police needs to respect the citizens. They have to be helpful to them whenever they come to the police station for filing any complaint. This is the age of citizen friendly police administration. But there are many complaints against the police that an ordinary citizen may not be able to file FIR without offering a bribe to the police officer at the Police Station. The investigating officers use the force in dealing with crime suspects. The public often view the police with suspicion. To quote David Bayley, "the survey results demonstrate forcefully what many close observers of police-public relations in India have long thought namely that the Indian public is deeply suspicious of the activities of the police. A considerable proportion except the police to be rude, brutal, corrupt, sometimes in collusion with criminals and very frequently dealing unevenly with their clients." (*The Police and Political Development in India*, p. 203) This opinion is supported by the NPC report that the Commission expressed its anxiety over the poor state of police- public relations. (Vol. 5, p. 48) The police administration needs to be citizen friendly for bringing back its credibility before the public. In a democracy, the public evaluates the performance of each service. The police administration needs to reform its organisation by which the police officer are aware of the citizen's charter

and they provide quick and honest services to them. Credibility in democracy will be the biggest asset of the police.

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## **9.3 CIVIL SERVICE IN DEMOCRACY**

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### **9.3.1 Pre Independence Era**

The civil service in India has a long history. There was an organised administration during the pre British rule. It is interesting to note that the civil service for the public works started during the middle of 19th century. This was the time when the colonial state went for a permanent civil service based on merit. The modern education system, introduced by the colonial state, enabled the educated people to compete for various jobs of the state.

The Government of India Act of 1858 provided for a multi-tier bureaucratic authority which continued to exist upto 1947. These were:

- 1) the secretary of the state assisted by India office;
- 2) the viceroy and his executive council which constituted central government assisted by the central secretariat.
- 3) The Governor and his Council at the provincial level assisted by the Provincial Secretariat and
- 4) The District Collector assisted by other district officers.

Services were divided into three levels- the superior services (All India and Central Services), the provincial services, and the subordinate services. All India services were recruited by the Secretary of State to work in any part of India; as a rule, officers were assigned a particular province. By the Government of India Act 1919, other services were abolished but the India Civil Service and the Indian Police Service remained. These services were monopolised by the Britishers and gradually got Indianised. In 1923, the Government of India established Public Service Commission for the recruitment of persons with appropriate qualification. The Government of India Act of 1935 undertook some modifications.

### **9.3.2 Post Independence Era**

There were several debates in the Constituent Assembly regarding the retention of the civil service. The Constitution has made specific provisions regarding the responsibilities of the civil servants. In a democratic system the political executive is the highest body assisted by the civil servants.

### **9.3.3 Civil Service and Legislature**

The Distinctive Features of the Administrative Framework of the Country are:

- 1) The supremacy of the parliament over the executive and the right of Parliament to seek, receive and apprise information about governmental actions with a view to reviewing the

working of the administrative machinery.

- 2) The pre-eminence of the position of the Prime Minister in the Council of Ministers and in administration.
- 3) The collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers to the Parliament
- 4) The individual responsibility of each minister holding a portfolio to formulate the departmental policies. It is his or her responsibility of supervising the administration of these policies and other departmental works.
- 5) The obligation on the part of ministers and civil servants to uphold the Constitution and rule of law.
- 6) The obligation of every public servant to implement faithfully all policies and decisions of the Ministers even if these are contrary to the advice tendered by them.
- 7) The right of public servants to express themselves frankly in tendering advice to their superiors including the ministers.
- 8) The observance by public servants of the principles of political neutrality and impartiality and anonymity. (Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC), Report on Machinery of Government of India, p. 3).

Most of the posts below the level of Ministers in the Secretariat and in the field organisation are manned by the civil servants. Their work consists of assisting the political executive in policy formulation, programme implementation and administration of the laws of the land. They did contribute in policy making process actively as they are taken as the professionals who are competent to provide the inputs in the policy making process. The final touches are supposed to be given by the minister followed by the Council of Ministers. It is wrong to presume that the policy making is done by the political masters and the implementing agency is the civil service. They are responsible for implementing the policies. At the same time, they are not accountable to the Parliament. It is the ministers who are accountable to the Parliament and answer the questions related to the issues regarding the implementation of policies.

#### **9.3.4 Constitution of India**

The provisions of the Constitution have made it clear that they cannot be removed by the politicians. They retain their independence in the democratic system. Art 311 says that they cannot be removed from the job without a proper enquiry duly constituted by the President of India. This explains the peculiar position of the civil servants in our democracy. The reasons are given by some of the scholars that at the time of Independence there were violent conflicts between the Hindus and Muslims on one side and between the landlords and peasants on the other. The framers of the constitution realised the need for the independence of the civil servants from these social groups and made specific provisions for the civil service. The Constitutional Review Committee has suggested the removal of the provision. They can be controlled and managed by the Civil Service Commission like the French system. Art 309 gives powers to the central government to regulate the service conditions and recruitment

through an Act made by the appropriate authority. They are regulated by the Central Civil Service Conduct Rules, 1964. The Official Secrecy Act, 1923 provides for stringent action for unauthorised disclosure of information prejudicial to the interests of the State. They have been provided adequate security as they handle some of the important works of the government. If they shirk responsibilities they can be persecuted by the state under the various Acts of a State.

Often there is a complaint that they are prone to corruption and abuse of power and it is not easy to bring them under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947, as one needs the permission of higher authority for filing charges against the civil servants at the joint secretaries level and above.

### **9.3.5 Reforms are Overdue**

The civil servants are assigned responsibilities in a particular state where the government of the state cannot persecute them. Often, they function as the representatives of the central government which goes against the spirit of federalism. A professional outlook, knowledge and management skills are required. The Administrative Reforms Committee (ARC) suggests that those departments in which technical qualifications are required, the IAS may not be posted there. Most of these suggestions have remained on the paper. Modern state and economy demand knowledge managers. With the introduction of IT, there is a demand for e-governance. This is the demand raised by Kurien who has managed successfully a biggest cooperative dairy development project.

The Alagh Committee suggests that the method of recruitment needs to be changed with an emphasis on knowledge.

### **9.3.6 Relations with Judiciary**

The relations between the Judiciary and civil service have not been cordial. Some of the senior civil servants including the Chief Secretaries have already faced contempt of court cases and duly punished. They have to upgrade their knowledge of law and Constitution by which they can be friendly to Judiciary. They have to be sensitive to various issues and conduct themselves accordingly. They have to be citizen friendly and responsive to the needs of the public. The right to information has been passed by the state governments and the civil servants have to deliver the services in a quick and effective manner by which they are accountable to the public. With the introduction of management of Public Services, the Civil Service is accountable to both Public and Parliament.

### **9.3.7 Decentralisation**

With the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments the Panchayati Raj system has been strengthened. The government has accepted a three-tier administrative system. At every level there are public representatives who can help in making the public policies and supervise the administration of these policies. They have the powers of the District Collectors. They are known as the chief executive to the District Development Councils. This has changed the face of the District Collectors (DCs) and District Magistrates (DMs). In a democracy, the civil service has to modify its behaviour and style of functioning to complement the needs of

democracy.

As P.K. Mattoo says, “the establishment of the Panchayati Raj institutions on a country-wide basis and the transfer of some of the traditional functions of the civil service system to these newly established institutions constitute a new policy trend in the civil service system. The Government, as a rule, is committed to the principles of democratic decentralisation. Consequently, considerable stress is now being given to the introduction of a rural bias in administration” (p. 112).

### **9.3.8 Civil Service/Political Environment**

The civil service system gets its nourishment from its political environment. It is not independent of the political executive. Their performance depends on the quality of the political executive. With a decline in the quality of political leadership, the democracy has suffered. The performance of civil service had declined. A reform in civil service is a continuous process. Evaluation of their performance needs to be measured both by the political executive and civil society. The public is recognising good and competent officers. This recognition motivates them to work better. They are also accountable to the political leadership. They have to perform in a neutral and objective manner. In an era of coalition politics, their non partisan role is going to strengthen democracy. They are getting pressurised by some vested interests in the name of politics. This nexus between the politicians and criminals and civil servants has been studied by the Vohra committee. This is a warning for both the democratic leadership and civil service. There is a demand by the civil service association for scrapping the Official Secrecy Act which can help them to be bold and fearless. With the introduction of citizen's charter, there is a demand that their notings should be made to the public where their work can be evaluated in terms of value addition. These changes can help them to perform better in a democracy.

### **9.3.9 Relations with Political Leadership**

Civil service and political leadership has a definite relationship in a democracy as they play an active role in the making of public policy. They give a clear direction to the civil administration for implementing the public policy and also make them accountable to the failures in implementing the policy. In the Indian democracy, one can find a high quality of leadership during Nehru and Indira Gandhi's period, except during the emergency. During Nehru's period India entered into a path of planned development. Any planned development demands that civil service has to fulfill the target fixed by each plan. This was possible because of the energetic leadership of Nehru and a high intellectual content in each plan which is based on ground reality. Mrs. Gandhi took the initiative to implement the policy of green revolution with the help of civil servants and scientists. She succeeded in making India a food surplus state. These are some examples which show the quality of leadership who can motivate the civil service to work with a passion and desire to serve the nation. The equation between the political leadership and the civil service has changed subsequently. Civil service is virtually dominating in these relationships. This does not augur well for the Indian democracy. In an era of globalisation, it has been found that the civil service is much more prone to implementing World Bank policies than follow the political leaders. It seems that in first decade of liberalisation from 1991 to 2000, the civil servants in some of the ministries who had a close association with the World Bank, have played a key role in making public policies. It affects the sovereignty

of a nation.

## **9.4 MILITARY IN DEMOCRACY**

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In the post colonial world, the Military is playing a decisive role in politics. Between 1960 and 1980 three quarters of the Latin American states, one third of Asian states and over a half of the African states experienced coups. The 1980s saw the trend continue strongly. It is a moot point of history that there has been a coup or an attempted coup in some parts of the world. From a World Bank study, one finds that since 1948 there has been at least one coup attempt per developing country every five years. (World Bank, 1991, p. 128).

### **9.4.1 Theories Behind Military Coups**

The role of military in politics has been a subject of debate among the social scientists, especially the political scientists. Their classical theory says that military has no role in democratic politics. They maintain a distance from the civilian leadership. They do not directly take interest in politics. This is a medieval phenomenon. During the feudal period weak kings have been replaced by their Military Commanders. This does not happen in modern politics. Military has a constitutional role in a democracy. They are supposed to obey the civilian political leader. Facts disapprove the above hypothesis. There are various political theories in support of the Military taking over political power. The theory of modernisation says that in a traditional society, the military is a modernising force. They are educated people with a modern outlook. They know how to modernise a traditional society. This helps them to come to political power. Furthermore, they are organised people who have control over the weapons and military trained personnel. They got motivated to capture power against the civilian leaders. The civilian leaders do not always have the required modern organising skills nor do they have modern educated youths with them to compete for power. A group of political economists float a theory that a developing country, due to its meagre sources, cannot waste such precious resources in instituting political democracy. For them political democracy is a luxury for the poor. The poor is more interested in bread and not freedom. The third group of social scientists provide a cultural theory that most of the third world countries do not have the cultural tradition of democracy. They have an authoritarian approach to life. Their family is authoritarian in structure which supports the military rule. Very often a single religious group who is dominating a nation uses cultural nationalism to rule over a nation. The military represents the cultural nationalism of a dominant community. Further some of the political scientists feel that when a country experiences too much political instability because of fragmentation of political parties, this leads to intervention of military in the name of political stability. These societies feel that social and political order is more important than the political stability. Constitutional niceties such as parliamentary procedures, popular consent or political representation are ignored, because elected assembly is dissolved soon after the take over of power by the military. Elections get suspended and political parties get banned.

### **9.4.2 Military in Indian Politics**

India being a third world country is having a stable political democracy. "Civil-military relations in post colonial India have been something of a model for the third world in that military capacity has been greatly increased without a major threat to civilian rule. The 50 years of postcolonial history reveal considerable tension between civil and military authority and policy debates during this period display a variety of conflicting views on the appropriate role for the

military in Indian life.” (Glynn L. Wood and Daniel Vaagenes, “Indian Defense Policy: A New Phase’ Asian Survey, vol. Xxiv, no. 7, July, 1984).

#### **9.4.3 Relations with Political Leaders**

Civil-military relations developed during Nehru’s Prime Ministership. He gave more priority to economic and human resource development of a society. He maintained India’s relationship with most of the foreign countries through an effective foreign policy strategy. His defence Minister VK Krishna Menon was able to handle the affairs in a competent manner. Menon became the “symbol of civilian control of the military during the Nehru years and a symbol of political intrusion into the military’s professional business.” (Wood and Vaagenes).

The Sino-Indian War of 1962 was clearly the watershed for the Indian military. The India Government of has started the modernisation of the Indian military, both in terms of the supply of arms and ammunition and training of the personnel. India has established its defense relations with both the USA and Soviet Russia. Its military process came to the fore at the time of the creation of Bangladesh when Mrs. Gandhi was the Prime Minister. The Indian military has played a decisive role in framing the defense policy. India has entered into the nuclear club as the sixth member with the testing of a nuclear device in 1974. India is pursuing its autonomous policy in nuclear development and has developed its own nuclear weapon.

#### **9.4.4 Military Strength**

The Indian Army is the fourth largest in the world after China, Russia and the US. The Air Force has acquired some of the sophisticated fighter planes. The Army and Air Force appear to have an integrated plan for India’s defence. During 1980s and 1990s, the Indian Navy also tread the path of modernisation alongwith its counterparts. The Indian Navy has got more than 100 ships, 150 air craft and thousands of highly trained man-power. Indian defence budget has increased since 1971, and touched almost 3 percent of its GDP. India’s strategic objectives and its inter-service ratio for defence expenditures have been relatively stable.

#### **9.4.5 The Role of Military in the Decision Making Process**

India is a regional power in Asia and is aspiring to be a permanent member in the UN Security Council. The Heads of the Army, Air Force and Navy have been playing an active role in formulating an effective defence policy. They are represented, in the cabinet meeting, by the Defence Minister. A concise policy draft is prepared by them with the help of the defence Secretary who is usually an IAS officer. They are members of the National Security Council. The Indian military is rarely used in internal politics except at the time of a large scale communal riot or ethnic conflict. They are not allowed to play an active role in the democratic politics. They are performing their constitutional role which is strengthening the Indian democracy.

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### **9.5 SUMMARY**

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The coercive apparatus of the state is a part of ancient Indian History. In the modern state, constitutional laws guide the actions of each and every institution/organ, for an effective functioning of the state. Police, civil service and military constitute the core of the coercive apparatus. In this unit, these three organs are studied in detail. In the contemporary era, the state is infested with many a problem and the police force is faced with a number of challenges. Its relations with the legislature, executive, judiciary and public are studied in detail.

The civil service in India has a distinct record right from the pre-British era. Their work consists of assisting the political executive in policy formulation, programme implementation and administration thus contributing actively to the policy making process. Nevertheless, reforms are overdue with regard to this administrative machinery. Military, in the post colonial world, has been playing a decisive role. They have control over the weapons and military trained personnel. They are instrumental in formulating an effective defence policy. The above three have been playing an important role in strengthening the Indian democracy.

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## **9.6 EXERCISES**

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- 1) What are the challenges the police face in balancing the social changes?
- 2) Summarise the role of police in its relations with the legislature, executive and judiciary.
- 3) What are the constitutional provisions enumerated for the civil services? What, in your opinion, will be the impact of reforms on this administrative system?
- 4) ‘The classical theory says that military has no role in democratic politics’. Analyse briefly.
- 5) How does the coercive apparatus of the state ensure democracy?

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# **UNIT 10 LEGAL SYSTEM AND JUDICIARY**

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## **Structure**

- 10.1 Introduction
  - 10.2 Genesis of Judiciary in India
    - 10.2.1 Modern Judiciary in India
    - 10.2.2 Constituent Assembly: the Background
  - 10.3 Structure of Judiciary
    - 10.3.1 The Supreme Court
      - 10.3.1.1 Composition and Appointments
      - 10.3.1.2 Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court
    - 10.3.2 High Courts
      - 10.3.2.1 Jurisdiction of High Courts
    - 10.3.3 Subordinate Courts
  - 10.4 Judicial Review and Public Interest Litigation (PIL)
  - 10.5 Judicial Reforms-Agenda
  - 10.6 Summary
  - 10.7 Exercises
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## **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Modern nation-state functions through a set of institutions. Parliament, the judiciary, executive apparatus such as bureaucracy and the police, and the formal structures of union -state relations as well as the electoral system are the set of institutions constituted by the idea of constitutionalism. Their arrangements, dependencies and inter-dependencies are directly shaped by the meta politico-legal document- i.e., Constitution.

The legal system derives its authority from the Constitution and is deeply embedded in the political system; the presence of judiciary substantiates the theory of separation of power wherein the other two organs, viz. legislature and executive stand relatively apart from it. Parliamentary democracy works on the principle of ‘fusion of power,’ and in the making of law, there is direct participation of the legislature and the executive, it is the judiciary that remains independent and strong safeguarding the interests of the citizens by not allowing the other organs to go beyond the Constitution. It acts, therefore, as a check on the arbitrariness and unconstitutionality of the legislature and the executive. Judiciary is the final arbiter in interpreting constitutional arrangements. It is in fact the guardian and conscience keeper of the normative values that are ‘authoritatively allocated by the state.’ The nature of the democracy and development depends much on how the legal system conducts itself to sustain the overall socio-economic and political environment.

## **10.2 GENESIS OF JUDICIARY IN INDIA**

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Indian judiciary is a single integrated system of courts for the union as well as the states, which administers both the union and state laws, and at the head of the entire system stands the Supreme Court of India. The development of the judicial system can be traced to the growth

of modern-nation states and constitutionalism.

During ancient times, the concept of justice was inextricably linked with religion and was embedded in the ascriptive norms of socially stratified caste groups. Caste panchayats performed the role of judiciary at the local level, which was tied up with the religious laws made by the monarchs. Most of the Kings' courts dispensed justice according to 'dharma', a set of eternal laws rested upon the individual duty to be performed in four stages of life (*ashrama*) and status of the individual according to his status (*varna*). The King's power to make laws depended on the religious texts and the King had virtually no power to legislate 'on his own initiative and pleasure'. Ancient state laws were largely customary laws and any deviation from it or contradiction from *dharma* was rejected by the community.

In medieval times, the dictum 'King can do no wrong' was applied and the King arrogated to himself an important role in administering justice. He became the apostle of justice and so the highest judge in the kingdom. Perhaps, the theory of institutionalism guided justice, manifesting gross arbitrariness and authoritarianism.

### **10.2.1 Modern Judiciary in India**

With the advent of the British colonial administration, India witnessed a judicial system introduced on the basis of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence. The Royal Charter of Charles II of the year 1661 gave the Governor and Council the power to adjudicate both civil and criminal cases according to the laws of England. However, the Regulating Act of 1773 established for the first time the Supreme Court of India in Calcutta, consisting of the Chief Justice and three judges (later reduced to two) appointed by the Crown acting as King's court and not East India Company's court. Later, Supreme Courts were established in Madras and Bombay. The Court held jurisdiction over "His Majesty's subjects". In this period the judicial system had two distinct systems of courts, the English system of Royal Courts, which followed the English law and procedure in the presidencies and the Indian system of Adalat/Sadr courts, which followed the Regulation laws and Personal laws in the provinces. Under the High Court Act of 1861, these two systems were merged, replacing the Supreme Courts and the native courts (Sadr Dewani Adalat and Sadr Nizamat Adalat) in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras with High Courts. However, the highest court of appeal was the judicial committee of the Privy Council. British efforts were made to develop the Indian legal system as a unified court system. Indians had neither laws nor courts of their own, and both the courts and laws had been designed to meet the needs of the colonial power.

The Government of India Act of 1935 (section 200) set up the Federal Court of India to act as an intermediate appellant between High courts and the Privy Council in regard to matters involving the interpretation of the Indian Constitution. It was not to 'pronounce any judgement other than a declaratory judgement' which meant that it could declare what the law was but did not have authority to exact compliance with its decisions. The Federal Court's power of 'judicial review' was largely a paper work and therefore a body with very limited power. Despite the restrictions placed on it, the Federal Court continued to function till 26th January 1950, when independent India's Constitution came into force. In the meantime, the Constituent Assembly became busy drafting the basic framework of the legal system and judiciary.

## **10.2.2 Constituent Assembly: the Background**

The members of the Constituent Assembly envisaged the judiciary as the bastion of rights and justice. They wanted to insulate the courts from attempted coercion from forces within and outside the government. Sapru Committee Report on judiciary and the Constituent Assembly's ad hoc committee on the Supreme Court report formed the bulk of the guidelines for judiciary. A.K.Ayyar, K.Santhanam, M.A.Ayyangar, Tej Bahadur Sapru, B.N.Rau, K.M. Munshi, Saadulla and B.R.Ambedkar played important roles in shaping the judicial system of India. The unitary judicial system seems to have been accepted with the least questioning. The Supreme Court was to have a special, countrywide responsibility for the protection of individual rights. Ambedkar was perhaps the greatest apostle in the Assembly of what he described as 'one single integrated judiciary having jurisdiction and providing remedies in all cases arising under the Constitutional law, the Civil, or the criminal law, essential to maintain the unity of the country'.

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## **10.3 STRUCTURE OF JUDICIARY**

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Under our Constitution there is a single integrated system of courts for the Union as well as the States, which administer both union and state laws, and at the head of the system stands the Supreme Court of India. Below the Supreme Court are the High Courts of different states and under each high court there are 'subordinate courts', i.e., courts subordinate to and under the control of the High Courts.

### **10.3.1 The Supreme Court**

The Supreme Court is the highest court of law in India. It has appellate jurisdiction over the high courts and is the highest tribunal of the land. The law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all small courts within the territory of India. It has the final authority to interpret the Constitution. Thus, independence and integrity, the powers and functions and judicial review are the issues of utmost importance concerned with the Supreme Court.

#### **10.3.1.1 Composition and Appointments**

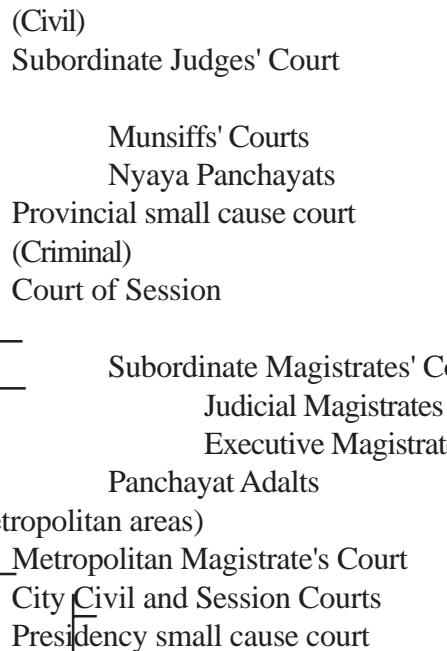
The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice of India and not more than twenty-five other judges. There can be ad hoc judges for a temporary period due to lack of quorum of the permanent judges. However, Parliament has the power to make laws regulating the constitution, organisation, jurisdiction and powers of the Supreme Court. The Constitution makes it clear that the President shall appoint the Chief Justice of India after consultation with such judges of the Supreme Court and of High Courts as he may deem necessary. And in the case of the appointment of other judges of the Supreme Court, consultation with the Chief Justice, in addition to judges is obligatory.

### **THE JUDICIARY**

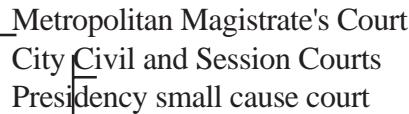
Supreme Court of India

High Court  
(in each of the states)

(In Districts)  
District & Session Judges' Court



(In Metropolitan areas)



A person shall not be qualified for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court unless he is:

- a) a citizen of India, and
- b) either
  - i) a distinguished jurist; or
  - ii) has been a High Court judge for at least 5 years, or
  - iii) has been an Advocate of a High Court for at least 10 years.

Once appointed, a judge holds office until he attains 65 years of age. He may resign his office by writing addressed to the President or he may be removed by the President upon an address to that effect being passed by a special majority of each House of the Parliament on grounds of 'proved misbehaviour' and 'incapacity'. The salaries and allowances of the judges are fixed high in order to secure their independence, efficiency and impartiality. The Constitution also provides that the salaries of the judges cannot be changed to their disadvantage, except in times of a financial emergency. The administrative expenses of the Supreme Court, the salaries, allowances, etc, of the judges are charged on the Consolidated Fund of India.

In order to shield the judges from political controversies, the Constitution empowers the court to initiate contempt proceedings against those who impute motives to the judge in the discharge of their official duties. Even the Parliament cannot discuss the conduct of a judge except when a resolution for his removal is before it.

#### 10.3.1.2 Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has vast jurisdiction and its position is strengthened by the fact that it acts as a court of appeal, as a guardian of the Constitution and as a reviewer of its own judgements. Article 141 declares that the law laid down by the Supreme Court shall be binding on all courts within the territory of India. Its jurisdiction is divided into four categories:

a) Original Jurisdiction and Writ Jurisdiction

Article 131 gives the Supreme Court exclusive and original jurisdiction in a dispute between the Union and a State, or between one State and another, or between group of states and others. It acts, therefore, as a Federal Court, i.e., the parties to the dispute should be units of a federation. No other court in India has the power to entertain such disputes.

Supreme Court is the guardian of Fundamental Rights and thus has non-exclusive original jurisdiction as the protector of Fundamental Rights. It has the power to issue writs, such as *Habeas Corpus*, *Quo Warranto*, *Prohibition*, *Certiorari* and *Mandamus*. In addition to issuing these writs, the Supreme Court is empowered to issue appropriate directions and orders to the executive. Article 32 of the Constitution gives citizens the right to move to the Supreme Court directly for the enforcement of any of the Fundamental Rights enumerated in part III of the Constitution.

b) Advisory Jurisdiction

Article 143 of the Constitution vests the President the power to seek advice regarding any question of law or fact of public importance, or cases belonging to the disputes arising out of pre-constitution treaties and agreements which are excluded from its original jurisdiction. This jurisdiction does not involve a *lis*, the advisory opinion is not binding on the government, it is not executable as a judgement of the court and the court may reserve its opinion in controversial political cases as in the Babri Masjid case.

c) Appellate Jurisdiction

The Supreme Court is the highest court of appeal from all courts. Its appellate jurisdiction may be divided into

- i) cases involving interpretation of the Constitution - civil, criminal or otherwise
- ii) civil cases, irrespective of any Constitutional question, and
- iii) Criminal cases, irrespective of any Constitutional question.

Article 132 provides for an appeal to the Supreme Court by the High Court certification, the Supreme Court may grant special leave to the appeal. Article 133 provides for an appeal in civil cases, and article 134 provides the Supreme Court with appellate jurisdiction in criminal matters. However, the Supreme Court has the special appellate jurisdiction to grant, in its discretion, special leave appeal from any judgement, decree sentence or order in any case or matter passed or made by any court or tribunal.

d) Review Jurisdiction

The Supreme Court has the power to review any judgement pronounced or order made by it. Article 137 provides for review of judgement or orders by the Supreme Court wherein,

subject to the provisions of any law made by the Parliament or any rules made under Article 145, the Supreme Court shall have the power to review any judgement pronounced or made by it.

However, the Supreme Court jurisdiction may be enlarged with respect to any of the matters in the Union List as Parliament may by law confer. Parliament may, by law, also enlarge or can impose limitations on the powers and functions exercised by the Supreme Court. Since Parliament and the Judiciary are created by the Constitution, such aforesaid acts must lead to harmonious relationship between the two, and must not lead to altering the basic structure of the Constitution. Moreover, all these powers can also be suspended or superceded whenever there is a declaration of emergency in the country.

### **10.3.2 High Courts**

There shall be High Court for each state (Article 214), and every High Court shall be a court of record and shall have all the powers of such a court including the power to punish for contempt of itself (Article 215). However, Parliament may, by law, establish a common High Court for two or more states and a Union Territory (Article 231). Every High Court shall consist of a Chief Justice and such other judges as the President may from time to time deem it necessary to appoint. Provisions for additional judges and acting judges being appointed by the President are also given in the Constitution. The President, while appointing the judges shall consult the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State and also the Chief Justice of that High Court in the matter of appointment of a judge other than the Chief Justice. A judge of a High Court shall hold office until the age of 62 years. A judge can vacate the seat by resigning, by being appointed a judge of the Supreme Court or by being transferred to any other High Court by the President. A judge can be removed by the President on grounds of misbehaviour or incapacity in the same manner in which a judge of the Supreme Court is removed.

#### **10.3.2.1 Jurisdiction of High Courts**

The jurisdiction of the High Court of a state is co-terminus with the territorial limits of that state. The original jurisdiction of High court includes the enforcement of the Fundamental Rights, settlement of disputes relating to the election to the Union and State legislatures and jurisdiction over revenue matters. Its appellate jurisdiction extends to both civil and criminal matters. On the civil side, an appeal to the High Court is either a first appeal or second appeal. The criminal appellate jurisdiction consists of appeals from the decisions of:

- a) a session judge, or an additional session judge where the sentence is of imprisonment exceeding 7 years
- b) an assistant session judge, metropolitan Magistrate or other judicial Magistrate in certain certified cases other than ‘petty’ cases.

The writ jurisdiction of High Court means issuance of writs/orders for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights and also in cases of ordinary legal rights. High Court also has the power to superintend all other courts and tribunals, except those dealing with armed forces. It can also frame rules and issue instructions for guidance from time to time with directions for speedier and effective judicial remedy. High Court also has the power to transfer cases to itself from subordinate courts concerning the interpretation of the Constitution. However, the

Parliament, by law, may extend the jurisdiction of a High Court to, or exclude the jurisdiction of a High Court from, any Union Territory. High Courts' power of original and appellate jurisdiction is also circumscribed by the creation of Central Administrative Tribunals, with respect to services under the Union and it has no power to invalidate a Central Act, rule, notification or order made by any administrative authority of the Union.

### 10.3.3 Subordinate Courts

The hierarchy of courts that lie subordinate to High Courts are referred to as subordinate courts. It is for the state governments to enact for the creation of subordinate courts. The nomenclature of these subordinate courts differs from state to state but broadly there is uniformity in terms of the organisational structure.

Below the High Courts, there are District Courts for each district, and has appellate jurisdiction in the district. Under the district courts, there are the lower courts such as the Additional District Court, Sub Court, Munsiff Magistrate Court, Court of Special Judicial Magistrate of II class, Court of Special Judicial Magistrate of I class, Court of Special Munsiff Magistrate for Factories Act and labour laws, etc. Below the subordinate courts, at the grass root level are the Panchayat Courts (Nyaya Panchayat, Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Adalat, etc.). These are, however, not considered as courts under the purview of the criminal courts jurisdiction.

District Courts can take cognisance of original matters under special status. The Governor, in consultation with the High Court, makes appointments pertaining to the district courts. Appointment of persons other than the District Judges to the judicial service of a state is made by the Governor in accordance with the rules made by him in that behalf after consultation with the High Court and the State Public Service Commission.

The High Court exercises administrative control over the district courts and the courts subordinate to them, in matters as posting, promotions and granting of leave to all persons belonging to the state judicial service.

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## 10.4 JUDICIAL REVIEW AND PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION (PIL)

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Judicial Review means the power of the judiciary to pronounce upon the Constitutional validity of the acts of public authorities, both executive and legislature. In any democratic society, judicial review is the soul of the system because without it democracy and the rule of law cannot be maintained. Judicial review in India is an integral part of the Constitution and constitutes the 'basic structure' of the Constitution. The whole law of judicial review has been developed by judges on a case to case basis. Consequently, the right of seeking judicial review depends on the facts of each individual case; however, there cannot be a review of an abstract proposition of law.

Though 'judicial review' does not find mention in our Constitution, this power has been derived by the judiciary from various provisions. Firstly, judiciary power to interpret the constitution and especially the limits on Fundamental Rights vis-à-vis Article 13(2) that suggests

that any law contravening the Fundamental Rights would be declared void. It is the duty of the Supreme Court to safeguard and protect the Fundamental Rights of people and thus it is invested with the power of judicial review under Article 32 and to interpret the Constitution.

The Supreme Court's power of judicial review extends to Constitutional Amendments. However, Constitutional Amendment review by judiciary in relation to Fundamental Rights and its legal validity has been a contentious political issue. Parliament can amend the Constitution under Article 368 but such amendments should not take away or violate Fundamental Rights and any law made in contravention with this rule shall be void. (Article 13)

Before Golakhnath case (1967) the courts held that a Constitutional Amendment is not law within the meaning of Article 13 and hence, would not be held void if it violated any fundamental right. In Golakhnath case it was settled that

- i) all amendments be law [13(3)]
- ii) Fundamental Rights are transcendental and immutable, so cannot be amended, nonetheless to amend Fundamental Rights a new Constituent Assembly needs to be convened, and
- iii) Constitutional Amendment is an ordinary legislative power.

In 1971, Parliament, by the 24<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, reversed the Golakhnath judgements by declaring Constitutional Amendments made under Article 368, not to be as 'law' within the meaning of Article 13 and the validity of the Constitutional Amendment Act shall not be open to question on the ground that it takes away or affects Fundamental Rights [Art.368 (3)].

In 1972, the Parliament passed the 25<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act allowing the legislature to encroach on Fundamental Rights if it was said to be done pursuant to giving effect to the Directive Principles of State Policy. The 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act ended the recognition granted to former rulers of Indian states and their privy purses were abolished.

In the famous Keshavnanda Bharati case, 1973, the court held that the Parliament could amend even the Fundamental Rights, but it was not competent to alter the 'basic structure' or 'framework' of the Constitution. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Act (1976) declared that Article 368 was not subject to judicial review by inserting clause (4) and (5) in Article 368. However, in 1980 in Minerva Mills case, court struck down clause (4) and (5) from Article 368 and maintained that 'judicial review' is the basic feature of the Indian Constitutional system which cannot be taken away even by amending the constitution. The Supreme Court, since then, has been defining the 'basic structure' case by case.

Public Interest Litigation (PIL) is a socio-economic movement generated by the judiciary to reach justice specially to the weaker sections of the society. The idea came from '*atio popularis*' of the Roman jurisprudence, which allowed court access to every citizen in matters of public wrongs. The purpose of PIL is not the enforcement of the right of one person against the other but to reach justice to the deprived sections of the society. The court is not exercising any extra-constitutional jurisdiction and is now firmly rooted in Article 14, i.e., protection against all arbitrariness and lawlessness in administrative actions, and Article 21 that provides for protection of *life* embodying everything that goes for a dignified living, including rightful concern for others and Directive Principles applying to weaker sections.

The granting of the right to PIL has led to plethora of litigations in the courts, indicative of the development of democratic rights by the judiciary. S.P.Sathe has suggested that the Supreme Court has been working under these patterns:

- i) interpretational thrusts with a view to extending judicial control over other organs of the state to ensure liberty, dignity, equality and justice to the individual and greater accountability of the governing institutions.
- ii) Interpretational strategies with a view to facilitate social change, which would promote greater protection of the minorities, weaker sections of the society and political and religious dissenters.
- iii) Innovating new methods for increasing access to justice (like PIL and Lok Adalats)

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## **10.5 JUDICIAL REFORMS - AGENDA**

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The judiciary must find ways and means to clear burgeoning pending cases. In this judiciary, as an organisation, needs specialisation and differentiation in order to solve the cases. Lok Adalats and tribunals must be made more effective. Judiciary must appoint judges on merit basis and all adhocism must go. As the Tenth Law Commission has suggested, Constitutional Courts and the zonal courts of appeals may be constituted. A working democracy requires an independent judiciary well co-ordinated by an effective executive and a responsible legislature.

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## **10.6 SUMMARY**

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In a democracy, the legal system and the judiciary are important constituents within the larger political milieu. The modern judiciary in India derives its sources from the Constitution, and acts as a check on the arbitrary decisions of the legislature and the executive. The Constituent Assembly foresaw the significance of Judiciary as a guardian of rights and justice. While the Supreme Court is the highest court of law in India, whose decisions are equally binding on all, the High Courts and the Subordinate Courts ensure justice at the state and district levels respectively. The provision for judicial review and public interest litigation ensure that the rule of law is maintained, thereby providing for a dignified living and rightful concern for all. Thus, the unit broadly analyses the structure, process, behaviour and interaction of the judiciary within a broad framework to achieve the goals of development and democracy.

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## **10.7 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Briefly explain the origin and evolution of judiciary in India.
- 2) Why is the Supreme Court considered as the highest court of law in India? Explain its purview of jurisdiction.
- 3) Write short notes on:
  - a) Jurisdiction of High Courts
  - b) Subordinate Courts

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# **UNIT 11 FEDERALISM**

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## **Structure**

- 11.1 Introduction
  - 11.2 Characterising Indian Federalism: The Essence of a Federal Union
  - 11.3 Salient Features of Indian Federalism
  - 11.4 Meaning and Implication of the Word ‘Union’
  - 11.5 Inter-state Coordination
  - 11.6 Distribution of Competence
  - 11.7 Working of Federal System
  - 11.8 Deconcentration Initiative Taken by the Union
  - 11.9 Concluding Remarks
  - 11.10 Summary
  - 11.11 Exercises
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## **11.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Federalism is a dynamic theory of nation and state building. It is primarily a theory about institutionalised political cooperation and collective co-existence. In other words, federalism is a grand design of ‘living together’ in the matrix arrangement of, what Daniel Elazar conceptually terms as ‘self rule plus shared rule’. Its hallmark is, to cite Rasheeduddin Khan, ‘unity of polity and plurality of society’. As a theory of nation- building, federalism seeks to define state-society relationships in such a manner as to allow autonomy of identity of social groups to flourish in the constitutionally secured and mandated institutional and political space. The federal constitution recognises the special cultural rights of the people, especially the minorities. In this sense, it is very close to the theory of multiculturalism, yet different because the niceties of federalism lie in its fundamental stress on institutionalisation of diversities and facilitating sociopolitical cooperation between two sets of identities through various structural mechanisms of ‘shared rule’.

As a state-building theory, federalism has three essential components: (i) formation of states and territorialisation of federal-local administration in such a manner as to promote closer contact between people and government; (ii) distribution of federal powers on a noncentralised basis; and (iii) creation of the institutions of shared rule. The first component essentially means creation of the institutions of ‘self rule’. The institutions of self-rule at the macro level means creation of states, and at micro level, it refers to the institutions of local self-governance. States or regional units of administration are usually formed on the basis of relative continuity or discontinuity of spatial interaction pattern between people, culture and territory. This, in other words, means formation of states on the principle of “homogeneity with viability”. The state system may include several substate arrangements like regional councils or district councils to cater to the specific cultural and administrative requirements of the people living in geo-ethnic enclaves. The second component refers to the division of federal powers and functions on a relatively autonomous basis, where each unit has sufficient legislative competence, executive

authority and financial resources to perform its function in the allotted domain efficiently and effectively.

In recent years, the notion of competence division and distribution has come into being. Competence refers to the functionally elaborated and constitutionally protected capacity of the various units of federal-regional administration. Fernandez Segado, following the Spanish example, has classified different kinds of competences into the following five categories:

- (a) *Integral Competences*: those in which a single authority—usually the state—has attributed all kinds of public functions regarding a particular matter; (b) *Exclusive but limited Competences*: those in which one authority enjoys full competence, but only to a certain extent in a particular matter. Hence, it is not the function, but the matter that is fragmented; (c) *Shared Competences*: those in which both the state and autonomous community [council] are entitled to exercise complementary parts of the same function over the same matter. This would be the case - rather frequently in matters in which the state has reserved for itself basic legislation, and the autonomous community has taken up legislative development; (d) *Concurring Competences*: those in which the competences of the state and those of the autonomous community are distinct, but converge on the same physical object; (e) *Indistinct Competences*: those awarded both to the state and to the autonomous community without any sort of distinction, and which enable them to deal with a matter in different ways.

What follows from above is the fact that competence distribution is a manifold exercise of identification and distribution of subjects on the basis of territorial import and community significance of the subject either for exclusive or shared control of policy making and its execution. In the arena of shared competence, contents of the policy over a subject are divided and distributed. This, in other words, means jurisdictional partitioning of the subject. In the realm of allotted capacity each unit enjoys almost complete autonomy of decision and execution. One may here like to mention the fact that federalism has, over the years, evolved as *policy science*, where basic objectives of the discipline seem to be efficiency and achievement of targeted goals and policies. This is a step further growth of federal theory where it draws its critical resources from the disciplines of Public Administration and Management.

As a devolutionary theory of administration and governance, federalism and federal system may follow either one or combination of the following arrangements like *noncentralisation*, *decentralisation* and *deconcentration*. Noncentralisation refers to a non-hierarchical allocation of competence. Decentralisation means conditional-hierarchical distribution of competence from one federal structure to other subordinate authority and structures. And deconcentration means a partial ‘off-loading’ of, usually executive authority and functions, from one authority to subordinate authority. An essential attribute of federalism is the creation of a federal political culture in which differences are sorted out through mutual negotiation, and consensus is built on matters of common concern and national importance.

The third component relates to the institutions of shared rule. This takes out federalism from being only a system of self-governance to collective governance on matters of translocal importance and mutual concern. Shared rule institutions may take variety of institutional shapes like zonal council, ministerial council, inter-state council, independent constitutional authorities

like boards, commissions, planning and other regulatory bodies. The institutions of shared rule has important objective of laying down the policy norms, and developing uniformity of outlook on matters of interregional and national significance and resolving inter state disputes.

Interestingly, there is not any exclusive and universal model of federalism. Two federal polities share some characteristics in common, but differ widely in the structure and process of governance. Federal polity builds its exclusive ‘federal union’ and ‘federal nation’ according to its own distinct social composition, cultural differentiation among the social groups, regional or subregional variation of identity and development, and desired objectives and specifications of its constitutionalism and nationalism. It is precisely the reason that each federal polity constitutes a distinct class of federalism, so is the case with Indian federalism.

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## 11.2 CHARACTERISING INDIAN FEDERALISM: THE ESSENCE OF A FEDERAL UNION

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Traditional-legal scholarship has characterised Indian federalism as ‘*quasi-federal*’—”a unitary state with subsidiary federal principles rather than a federal state with subsidiary unitary principles” (K.C. Wheare). Such characterisation probably fails to take into account a totalistic perspective of Indian federalism, its formation, growth and evolution. It is true that Indian federalism has an in-built tendency to centralise under certain circumstances, this nonetheless makes it *quasi-federal*. Within the allotted domain, the state is as sovereign as the union. In this regard, B.R. Ambedkar’s speeches in the Constituent Assembly are worth recalling. During a discussion on the Emergency Provisions on 3 August 1949, he said:

I think it is agreed that our constitution, notwithstanding the many provisions which are contained in it whereby the centre has been given powers to override the provinces, nonetheless is a federal constitution and when we say that the constitution is a federal constitution it means this, that the provinces are as sovereign in their field which is left to them by the constitution as the centre is in the field which is assigned to it. In other words, barring the provisions, which permit the centre to override any legislation that may be passed by the provinces, the *provinces have a plenary authority to make any law for the peace, order and good government of that province*. Now, when once the Constitution makes the provinces sovereign and gives them plenary powers... the intervention of the centre or any other authority must be deemed to be barred, because that would be an invasion of the sovereign authority of the province. That is a fundamental proposition, which ... we must accept that we have a federal constitution. (emphasis added)

Refuting the charge of centralism as essential and only feature of Indian Constitution, Ambedkar in the Assembly on 25 November 1949 said:

The basic principle of federalism is that the legislative and executive authority is partitioned between the centre and states not by any law to be made by the centre, but by the constitution itself. This is what constitution does. The states under our constitution are in no way dependent upon the centre for their legislative or executive authority. The centre and the states are co-equal in this matter. It is difficult to see

how such a constitution can be called centralism. It may be that the constitution assigns to the centre too large field for the operation of its legislative and executive authority than is to be found in any other federal constitution. It may be that the residuary powers are given to the centre and not to the states. But these features do not form the essence of federalism. The chief mark of federalism lies...in the partition of the legislative and executive authority between the centre and the units by the constitution. This is the principle embodied in our constitution. There can be no mistake about it. It is therefore, wrong to say that the states have been placed under the centre. Centre cannot by its own will alter the boundary of that position. Nor can the Judiciary.

The principle on which the founding fathers divided powers between the centre and the states was that the division of powers must be in consonance with the distribution of responsibilities. The centre has been assigned the important roles of: (i) nation-building and nation preserving; (ii) maintaining and protecting national unity and integrity; and (iii) maintaining constitutional political order throughout the union of India. The states have been assigned only those subjects which are purely local in nature. Besides, having autonomy of legislation, regulation and execution of the subjects assigned to it, the states are expected to coordinate, cooperate and execute the policies of union specially with regard to those belonging to the nation-building aspect.

Federal union as envisaged by the framers of the constitution, would essentially have following three components: (i) At the societal level, it seeks to build a social union, permitting pluralism (of group life) to flourish within the broader framework of secularism. A social union has to function through the instrumentality of local self-government. (ii) At the national-political level, it seeks to establish a political union, functioning through a synthesised construct of parliamentary democracy and federalism. The emerging model is that of the parliamentary federalism seeking to achieve the three basic objectives of federal nation building namely, accountability, autonomy and integration. (iii) The federal union also seeks to establish an economic union through planned national economic development. The national economy is expected to remove graded inequality among the regions and the classes through various measures of capacity building and prevention of polar accumulation of wealth, resources, industry and technology. The economic union is expected to provide a minimum level playing field to each unit of the federation.

In this context, it may be mentioned that the founding fathers had specifically perceived federalism as instrument of nation-building, therefore made the political system adequately resilient and adaptable to the vagaries of national development. It is in accordance with the imperatives of national development and the maintenance of national unity and integrity that the degree of federalism may vary from time to time. Indian federalism is complex enough to defy any singular generalisation and characterisation. At best, one can characterise it as *Union type federal polity*. Such a polity usually combines the features of a dual federalism (i.e., divided sovereignty); cooperative-collaborative federalism (a model of collectivism, where union and states collectively resolve and take decision on the issues of common concern); and the interdependent federalism (a model of reciprocal dependence, if states depend heavily on union government for fiscal help, so the union government on the states for execution of its policies and programmes).

### **11.3 SALIENT FEATURES OF INDIAN FEDERALISM**

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The union type federal polity presupposes the essential balancing of two inherent tendencies namely, *unionisation and regionalisation*. The unionisation process allows Indian federalism to assume unitarian features (popularly referred to as centralised federalism) when there is a perceived threat (internal or external) to the maintenance of national unity, integrity and territorial sovereignty of India on the one hand, and the maintenance of constitutional-political order in the states on the other. However, union's prerogative of perception and definition of 'threat' is not absolute. This is subject to review by the Apex Court. This has become evidently clear from the Supreme Court's ruling in the S.R. Bommai case. It is only in the abnormal times (as the spirit of the Emergency Provision suggests) that the Indian federalism assumes the characteristics of a unitarian polity. However, more than this, the unionisation process constitutionally bestows upon the union government with added responsibility of securing balanced economic growth and social change across the regions and social segments through means and measures of mixed economy and state regulated welfare planning. In this endeavour, the constitution envisages the role of the states as coordinating partners to the union government. Beyond this, the unionisation process has no more political meaning and relevance.

Alongwith the unionisation principles, the constitution of India also recognises 'regionalism and regionalisation' as valid principles of nation-building and state formation. A close scrutiny of the constitutional provisions reveals that the constitution of India acknowledges and recommends the formation of a multilevel or multilayered federation with multiple modes of power distribution. The multilayered federation may consist of a union, the states, the substate institutional arrangements like regional development/autonomous councils, and the units of local self-government at the lower levels. While the union and the state constitute the federal superstructure, the remaining two constitutes the federal substructure. Each level has constitutionally specified federal functions, which they perform almost independently of each other. However, the superstructure exercises certain fiscal and political control over the substructures. Developmental funds to the substructure are released by the two superstructures. Many of the decisions of the regional councils are subjected to the approval by the concerned states.

As a matter of fact, the constitution of India promotes both the symmetrical and asymmetrical distribution of competence. This variegated system first lays down the general principle of power distribution, having symmetrical application to all states of the union. Then, there is provision for special distribution of competence and power sharing arrangements between the union and the select states. There are many provisions like Article 370, 371, 371A-H, fifth and sixth schedules which allow for a special type of union-state relations. To put succinctly, these provisions restrict the application of many union laws; delimit the territorial extent of the application of the parliamentary acts having bearing upon the law making power of parliament and the concerned state legislatures; and, bestows upon the office of Governor with special powers and responsibility in some states like Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra and Gujarat. If we closely examine the above mentioned constitutional provisions, it appears that the federalism in India has been fine tuned to accommodate ethnic diversity and ethnic demands like application of customary law in the administration of civil and criminal justice etc. It is for reasons of accommodating ethnic features in the formation of polities that the constitution permits for the ethnic self governance

through specially created institutions like autonomous regional or district councils. A few dozen such councils exist in the northeast regions and other parts of India. These councils seek to protect and promote the indigenous identity and development.

At the fourth level exist the units of local self-governance. With the passage of 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, the constitution of India further federalises its powers and authority at the village and municipal levels. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are mainly developmental in functioning. Constituted through direct election, the Panchayats and Municipal bodies are expected to: (i) build infrastructure of development like road, transport etc.; (ii) build and maintain community assets; (iii) promote agricultural development through management and control of minor irrigation and water management; soil conservation and land improvement; (iii) promote social forestry and animal husbandry, dairy and poultry; (iv) promote the development of village industry; and (v) manage and control of education and health at the local level. In nutshell, the PRIs are institutions of empowering people for self-government. From the federal point of view, the relationship between PRIs, the state and the centre exist on the *one-to-one* basis. While many of the developmental schemes of the centre are implemented by the Panchayats without any interference by the state, the state government allocates a certain percentage of its development plans and budget to the Panchayats.

What has been shown above is the fact that Union type federalism of India essentially functions on the basis of territorial decentralisation, which combines both the centre-periphery and noncentralisation models of federalism. If federalism in India deviates from the classical reference to American federalism, it is only for the purpose of accommodating diversity and to serve its national interests. But in no way it alters the participatory features of federal governance. It is because of its being multilayered that one finds both the symmetrical and asymmetrical systems of power distribution.

## **11.4 THE MEANING AND IMPLICATION OF THE WORD ‘UNION’**

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The Article 1 of the Indian Constitution declares India as the Union of States, thereby implying the indestructibleness of the union and the unity of India. By implication, no unit possesses the right to secede. It is the sole prerogative of the union to form the states by way of division, merger and alteration of the existing internal boundaries of India. The union also possesses the right to admit any new territory in the union of India. Today India consists of 28 states and seven union territories. By and large, the union of India has reorganised its units on the four structural principles of state formation. These principles, as laid down by the States Reorganisation Commission (1955) include: (i) preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India; (ii) linguistic and cultural homogeneity; (iii) financial, economic and administrative considerations; and (iv) successful working of the national plan. As far as possible, the Union of India has attempted to reorganise its units on the relative congruence of ‘identity boundary’ and ‘administrative boundary’. Language, culture and ecology have decisive impact on the ongoing process of reorganisation. Though union has sole prerogative of state formation, it does so only on the basis of resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly of the affected states.

Another implication of the word ‘Union’ is that Indian federalism is not a compacted federalism

between two preexisting sovereign entities. The union has come out in existence only through the unified will of the people of India, nourished during the national movement. This is probably the reason that the Upper Chamber (Rajya Sabha), expected to represent the interests of the units of federation, does not have symmetrical (equal) representation. It is composed on the basis of proportionality of population size. According to the population size each state has been allocated respective number of seats in the Rajya Sabha. Thus, while Uttar Pradesh has got 31 seats, the smaller states like Manipur, Goa, etc., have been allocated only one seat.

As a logical consequence of the word ‘Union’, the union and its constituent units are governed by single constitution. Each unit draws its authority from the same constitution.

Interestingly, the union and the states do not have the constitutive authority to amend the essential or basic features of the constitution. The legislative authority of the union and states are expected to mend the ways for the achievement of constitutional goals and to facilitate the harmonious administrative functioning of the union and the states. Though Union has power to amend the Constitution, the same cannot be exercised unilaterally. There are many provisions like revision of the entries in the three lists of the seventh schedule; representation of states in Parliament; the amendment provision and procedure as laid down in the Article 368; the provision related to Union Judiciary and the High Courts in the states, legislative relations between the union and states; election to the President and Vice President; extent of the executive power of the union and the states; provisions related to the High Courts for union territories, which cannot be amended by the union Parliament without ratification and approval by not less than half of the states of the federation. This places the states on equal federal footing with the union.

An integral federal union creates a federal nation based on the principle of equality of status and opportunity. Therefore, one does not find double citizenship in the Indian constitution. Culturally people of India may be plural and diverse, but politically they constitute one nation—a civic-political nation. Such a nation has one common all India framework of administration and Justice. This does not mean that constituent units cannot have its own administrative setup. The all India services are common to the union and state. Their basic function is to secure the interests of the union as a whole across the regions of India. Article 312 of the constitution provides “if the Council of States has declared by resolution supported by not less than two thirds of the members present and voting that it is necessary or expedient in the national interest to do so, Parliament may by law provide for the creation of one or more all India services common to the Union and the states”. These are some of the general features of union type federalism.

In Indian federalism, we find two broad types of centralisation of federal powers—*circumstantial* and *consensual*. As mentioned above, the constitution entrusts centre with important powers of protecting the Union from ‘internal disturbances’ and ‘external threat’ such as war and aggression. The internal disturbances include physical breakdown in case of natural calamities, political and constitutional breakdown, and financial-economic crisis. The articles from 352 to 360 deal with certain emergency situations and its impact on the working of the federal system. The constitution, here subscribes to the theory of ‘safety valve’, whose objectives include:

- i) *To protect the units of the federation* from external aggression, internal aggression, subversive terrorist activities and armed rebellion against the state.
- ii) *To maintain the Constitution:* By virtue of this, the constitutional political order is restored, which otherwise gets disturbed because of the mal-administration, ministerial crisis (emerging in the event of unclear electoral verdict or hung assembly or governmental instability caused by the frequent defection and breakdown of party system) natural calamities and other such physical and political disorder.
- iii) *To protect the unity and integrity of the federal nation:* The union can assume to itself the power of the state government when a particular state government itself goes against the territorial integrity of India or subverts the constitutional process in the state.
- iv) *To take out the union and the provinces from financial crises and economic disorder:* The essence of the financial emergency lies in the “realization of one supreme fact that the economic structure of the country is one and indivisible. If a province breaks financially, it will affect the finances of the centre; if the centre suffers, all the provinces will break. Therefore, the interdependence of the provinces and the centre is so great that the whole financial integrity of the country is one and a time might arise when unitary control may be absolutely necessary”, said K.M. Munshi in the Constituent Assembly on 16 October 1949.

Circumstantial centralisation has another dimension too. On a resolution of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), the union Parliament can make laws with respect to any matter enumerated in the state list and as specified in the resolution for the whole or any part of the territory of India (Art. 249).

Another feature of Indian federalism is the *centralisation by consent or consensual centralisation* which Article 252 provides. “If it appears to the Legislatures of two or more states to be desirable that any of the matters with respect to which Parliament has no powers to make laws for the states except as provided in articles 249 and 250 should be regulated in such states by Parliament by law, and if resolutions to that effect are passed by all the Houses of the Legislatures of those states, it shall be lawful for Parliament to pass an Act for regulating that matter accordingly...” This provision has intended objective of regulating issues of common concern between two states, which otherwise is not possible due to diversity of law and diverse perception of the issues. Consensual centralisation allows centre to arbitrate and frame common policy approach to those subjects in the state list, which have assumed national or translocal importance. This enabling provision provides for the better coordination of inter-state issues.

## **11.5 INTER-STATE COORDINATION**

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For coordinating inter-state and union-state relations and for consensual working of federal system, the constitution expressly provides for the constitution of inter-state council or other such subject and territory specific councils. The first ever inter-state council was constituted on 28 May 1990. Principally being a recommendatory body, the council is expected to perform the following duties.

- a) investigating and discussing such subjects, in which some or all of the state, or the state,

- or the union and one or more of the states have a common interest, as may be brought up before it;
- b) making recommendations upon any subject and in particular recommendations for the better coordination of policy and action with respect to that subject; and
  - c) deliberating upon such other matters of general interest to the states as may be referred by the chairman to council.

In this context one may like to reiterate the fact that constitutional provisions relating to federalism avoid exclusionary characteristics of dual federalism. The basic ethos of Indian federalism is coordinated and cooperative functioning of the union, where centre and states are equal partners in making the union a success. Even the overwhelmingness of centre to centralise federal powers and curtail states' autonomy is mostly circumstantial. The centre cannot exercise these powers arbitrarily. It has been sufficiently subjected to the principles of parliamentary accountability, scrutiny and approval and due process of law.

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## 11.6 DISTRIBUTION OF COMPETENCE

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Distribution of federal powers is essentially based on the notion of territoriality and specification of subjects accordingly. Thus, matters of local interests or those subjects which do not have transboundary implications have been put together under the state lists. The list comprises 62 items or entries over which the state legislature has exclusive competence of legislation and execution. The list includes such subjects like public order and police, local government, public health and sanitation, agriculture, forests, fisheries, sales tax and other duties. The union list enumerating 96 items empowers union Parliament to legislate on matters of foreign affairs, defence, currency, citizenship, communication, banking, union duties, taxes, etc.

However, there are subjects like industry, mines and minerals, which find place in both the lists. To find an explainable answer to this, one has to look into the types of competence available in the federal scheme of India. Broadly, there are three types of competence: one, on which the respective sets of government has *exclusive and distinct competence*. It is rarely that on item like defence, foreign affair etc., delegation of authority is made by the union government. Two, on items like industry, mines and minerals, the state government has *exclusive but limited competence*. On these subjects, its competence is subjected to the regulation by the union government in order to serve the larger public and national interests. Lastly, there are items of concurrent jurisdiction (List three) on which each unit of the federation enjoys *exclusive but concurring competence*. In the event of conflict, it is usually the union law that prevails over states' laws. On matters of nonenumerated item, the union government has been vested with residuary powers of legislation.

So far as the distribution of executive authority is concerned, it generally follows the scheme of distribution of the legislative powers. In other words, executive powers of the union and state governments are co-extensive with their respective legislative competence. In the case of state government, its executive authority over a legislative field has been subjected to the qualificatory restriction of 'doctrine of territorial nexus'. However, as D.D. Basu observes, it is in the concurrent sphere where some novelty has been introduced. "As regards matters included in the concurrent Legislative List (i.e. List III), the executive function shall *ordinarily* remain with the states, but subject to the provisions of the constitution or of any law of

Parliament conferring such function expressly upon the union". Thus, under the Land Acquisition Act 1894; and Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 [Provisio to Article 73], the centre has assigned to itself all the executive functions pertaining to these two acts. However, of importance are some of the exclusive executive powers of the union, defiance or noncognisance of the same by the states may attract plenary action as it amounts to the violation of the constitution. This includes union's powers to give directions to the state governments; ensuring due compliance with union laws; ensuring exercise of executive power of the state in such a manner as not to interfere with the union's executive power; "to ensure the construction and maintenance of the means of communication of national or military importance by the state; to ensure protection of railways within the state, to ensure drawing and execution of schemes specified in the directions to be essential for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the states, securing adequate provision by the state for instruction in mother tongue at the primary stage; ensuring development of Hindi language in the state, and above all, "to ensure that the government of a state is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution". Also, during emergency of any type, the union government may regulate through its power of issuing directions the manner in which the executive power of the state has to be exercised. In other words, the state has been assigned certain obligatory duties under the federal constitution of India.

The centre-state administrative relationship is based on the principle of division [Jurisdictional partitioning of control and execution of decisions over a subject matter], coordination and cooperation in policy and planning. In many areas, while centre retains its exclusive legislative competence, it, however, delegates powers of ancillary legislation and exclusive executive competence to take decisions independently to the states. The centre administers directly only on the matters pertaining to defence, foreign affairs including passports, communications (post and telegraphs, telephones), the union list taxes, and industrial regulation. On rest of the enumeration in the union lists, the administrative function is exercised by the states 'under statutory or executive delegation'. It has been rightly pointed out in one of the *commentaries* on Indian constitution that "there seems to be no element of subordination, although cooperation is occasionally made compulsory. The constitution details the essential features of the union-state administrative relations, and raises no walls of separation between them. There is no rigid pattern of allocation of responsibilities. The union Parliament may confer powers, and may impose duties under laws pertaining to the union list matters. The President may entrust functions to the state governments "in relation to any matter, to which the executive power of the Union extends... The state executive functions can, notwithstanding anything, be entrusted either conditionally or unconditionally" to the central government. In actual practice the states exercises a large measure of executive authority even within the administrative field of the union government...." (*Kagzi's The Constitution of India*, Vol. I, 2001).

The financial relation between the union and state is based on the principle of sharing and equitable distribution of resources. The constitution also makes "distinction between the legislative power to levy a tax and the power to appropriate the proceeds of a tax so levied". The centre and the states have been assigned certain items to impose and levy taxes. There is no concurrent power to either of the units of the federalism to impose and levy taxes. Provisions have also been made to extend financial help in the form of grants and loans to the states. The amount of grant-in-aid has to be decided by Parliament. Also, any development project initiated by the state with the prior approval of the centre for the purpose of promoting the

welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in that state or raising the level of administration of the scheduled areas has to be funded by the centre as grants-in-aid charged on the Consolidated fund of India.

In the distribution of financial competence, each unit has been granted exclusive taxes. The list of exclusive taxes to the union include custom, corporation tax, taxes on capital value of assets of individuals and companies, surcharge on income tax etc. Similarly exclusive taxes to the states include land revenue, stamp duty, succession and estate duty, income tax on agricultural land, sales tax [This is now being supplemented by a new system of Value Added Tax] etc. Given the fact that the volume of revenue raised from different tax sources by the state may not be adequate enough to meet its budgetary and plan proposals, the constitution provides for the sharing of proceeds of taxes earned by the union. The modalities of collection, appropriation and sharing vary from case to case. Thus while some duties such as stamp duties and duties of excise on medicinal and toilet preparations as are in the union list are levied by the union but collected and appropriated by the states (Article 268). Taxes on the sales or purchase of goods and taxes on the consignment of goods are levied and collected by the union, but the proceeds are then assigned by the union to those states within which they have been levied. Also certain taxes, such as taxes on non-agricultural income, duties of excise as are included in the union list, except the medicinal and toilet preparations are levied and collected by the union and they are then divided between union and states in certain proportion. Further, the union and the states have been assigned separately the non-tax revenues. The principal sources of non-tax revenues of the union are the receipts from Railways, Post and Telegraph, Industrial and Commercial undertakings at union such as Air India, Indian Airlines etc. Similarly the non-tax revenue of states include receipts from forests, irrigation and commercial enterprises like electricity, road transport and industrial undertakings such as soap, sandalwood, Iron and steel in Karnataka, Paper in Madhya Pradesh, Milk supply in Mumbai, Deep-sea fishing and Silk in West Bengal.

It is true that the tax base of the state is not adequate enough to meet all the expenses and developmental requirements of the state. This is so because of the overall nature of Indian economy. As stated above, federal union seeks to establish a closely integrated economic union, where union has been assigned the important responsibility of socio-economic reconstruction of the nation. Economy is national, where regional development is taken care of by the union. Federal finance is directed to achieve this objective. Usually, federal grant to state follows certain objective parameters laid down from time to time by an autonomous body known as Finance Commission of the India. However, adequate care is always being taken to remove economic imbalances across community, class and regions. Special care is also being taken up for the development of backward segments of the society through different special assistance programmes of the Union.

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## 11.7 WORKING OF FEDERAL SYSTEM

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During the first four decades of the working of the constitution, the federalism in India exhibited a strong centralising tendency wherein the union government accumulated powers beyond its constitutional competence. It is true that the constitution permits for the circumstantial concentration of federal powers in the union, but it nowhere means suspension of federal

autonomy and powers of the states even during normal times. How the centre has encroached upon the autonomy of states? The union government adopted several methods of encroachment: the foremost being its exclusive power of defining what is national and public interest. This prerogative has been used frequently to enlarge its legislative competence and to encroach upon legislative authority of the state on the matters of state lists. The seventh schedule makes entries of main subjects only. Over the years, the centre has evolved the practice of legislating upon the subsidiary matters/subjects either to give effect to main subjects, or to seek national uniformity on a particular item in the larger public interest. As a consequence, the centre has encroached even upon the subjects, originally assigned to the states. To illustrate, “Acts passed by Parliament by virtue of entries 52 [Industries] and 54 [Regulation of mines and mineral development] of the union List are typical examples. Under entry 52, Parliament has passed the (Industries Development and Regulation) Act, 1951. As a result, the union now controls a very large number of industries mentioned in schedule 1 of the Act. The constitutional effect is that to the extent of the control taken over by the union by virtue of this act, the power of the state Legislatures with respect to the subject of ‘Industries’ under entry 24 of the state list has been curtailed. This Act also brings under central regulation agricultural products such as tea, coffee, etc. Similarly, Parliament has, by making the requisite declaration of public interest under entry 54 of the union list, enacted the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957. The legal effect is that to the extent covered by this Act, “the legislative powers of the state legislatures under 23 [Regulation of Mines and Mineral Development] of the state list have been ousted,” observes *Sarkaria Commission on Centre State Relations*. As a consequence, approximately about 93 percent of the organised industries fall directly under the control of the union.

By way of omission, addition and transfer, the union government through different amendment acts has brought changes in the distribution of competences, as under seventh schedule of the constitution, between centre and states. Thus forty-second amendment act omitted entries 11 (education), 19(forest), 20 (protection of wild life), 29 (weights and measures), and seventh amendment act omitted entry 36 (acquisition or requisitioning of property) from the state list. As a result, the state list now contains only 61 subjects, instead of 66 subjects as originally provided. On the other hand, forty-second amendment act by way of transfer added four new entries in the concurrent list. They include 11A (administration of justice), 17A (forest), 17B (Protection of wild animals and birds), 20A (population control and family planning), and 33A (weights and measures), besides important substitution made in the entries 25 (education) and 33 (trade and commerce). As a result, we have 51 entries in the concurrent list. In the union list, we find three important inclusions: 2A (deployment of armed forces), 92A (taxes on sale or purchase of goods in the course of inter state trade or commerce), and 92B (taxes on the consignment of goods).

Besides, through substitution method, the centre has enhanced the ambit of its ‘eminent domain’. Along with it, “centralized planning through the Planning Commission is a conspicuous example of how, through an executive process, the role of the union has extended into areas, such as agriculture, fisheries, soil and water conservation, minor irrigation, area development, rural construction and housing etc. which lie within the exclusive state field.” It has been rightly pointed out by D. D. Basu that the activities of the Planning Commission ‘have gradually been extended over the entire sphere of the administration excluding only defence and foreign affairs, so much so, that a critic has described it as “the economic cabinet of the country as

a whole....” In spite of being an advisory body, its political and bureaucratic clout has gone to the extent of verticalising the nature of federal grants to the states. It now appears more as a regulatory body attenuating the politicisation of transfer of resources at the command of the union to the states.

Contrary to the wisdom of founding fathers, Article 356 has been used, abused, misused and overused for more than 100 times. On an objective estimation, it has been used for about 30 times to ‘maintain the constitution’, and rest of the times abused to settle political score, usually dictated by the ruling party at the centre. The most detrimental aspect of its abuse is that in most of the cases it has negated the basic premises of parliamentary democracy and federalism. This article requires a thorough laying down of norms as to prevent its misuse. Besides Sarkaria Commission’s recommendation in this regard, Judicial pronouncements (of Supreme Court) in the famous case, *S.R. Bommai vs. Union of India (1994)* are here worth mentioning. The Court held that the Presidents satisfaction, though subjective in nature, is the essence of this article. However, the President’s satisfaction must be based on some relevant and objective material. President’s power is conditional, and not absolute in nature. If Court strikes down the Presidential proclamation, ‘it has power to restore the dismissed government to office and to revive and reactivate the Legislative Assembly. Till the proclamation is approved by both the Houses of Parliament, the Legislative Assembly should not be dissolved, but be kept under suspended animation. On parliamentary disapproval of the proclamation, the dismissed government should be revived in the state. However, of far reaching significance is the Court’s observation about the secularity of the state. The Court held: “secularism is one of the basic features of the constitution. While freedom of religion is guaranteed to all persons in India, from the point of view of state, the religion, faith or belief of a person is immaterial. To the state, all are equal and are entitled to be treated equally. In matters of states, religion cannot be mixed. Any state government which pursues unsecular policies or unsecular course of action acts contrary to the constitutional mandate and renders itself amenable to action under Article 356.” What is required in order to prevent its abuse is a two-fold exercise of: (i) ensuring, by rule and convention, the maximum objectivity and transparency in the exercise of this power by the President and Governor, and; (ii) to codify the stipulated grounds on which this article can be invoked. While ensuring its restrictive use, the basic object under this article should be to restore the constitutional order in the state.

There are many other critical areas, such as reservation of state bills by the Governor, financial allocation of resources between union and state, growing politicisation and subjectivity of the institution of Governor, directives from union, deployment of para military forces etc., which have affected the smooth working of union-state relations. The net affect has been the excessive concentration of power in the union. Thus, what is now required is the ‘off loading’ and ‘deconcentration or devolution’ of powers from centre to states; and from states to the panchayats and municipal bodies. In fact, what is required is the redistribution of competences among three schedules—7, 11 and 12 of the constitution. The federal restructuring, without disturbing the basic scheme of the constitution, is required to make the principle of autonomy a reality. In the changing context of state-society relationship, redistribution of competences would, in all probability, facilitate the attainment of three basic objectives of the constitution: unity, social revolution and democracy. Being mutually dependent, ‘inattention to or over attention to’, as Granville Austin warns, any one of them will disturb the stability of the *Indian Nation*. And exercise for stability should not be the sole prerogative of the centre. It is a

collective exercise of union, state and the people.

## **11.8 DECONCENTRATION INITIATIVE TAKEN BY THE UNION**

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As of today, the *Report of the Sarkaria Commission* is considered as piecemeal effort to provide resilience to the successful working of federal system. The Commission, by and large, has found the union type federal polity, not only suitable but essential to build the federal nation of India. However, it recommended for the ‘off loading’ of some of the union’s function to the states, and it further underlined the need for evolving transparent procedural norms in implementing some of the controversial federal provisions such as Article 356 etc. It also stressed the need for evolving the cooperative-collaborative federal culture in which both the union and the states would work as equal partner in building an integral federal union. Altogether, the commission made 230 specific recommendations. In a further development, the Government of India constituted Inter- State Council in 1990. The Council has been entrusted with the task of examining the reports of the Sarkaria Commission in the first instance, and to evolve consensus on the possible change in the structure and process of inter state relationship. Out of the 230 recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission on which Council took decision, altogether 108 recommendations have so far been implemented, 35 have been rejected and 87 are under implementation. The remaining 17 recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission pertaining to Article 356, deployment of paramilitary forces in the states, compliance with union’s directions and laws made by Parliament (Article 256 and 257), and effect of the failure to comply with, or to give effect to, directions given by the union government etc. have been considered by the subcommittee of the Council. The Council has rejected six recommendations pertaining to the role of Governor and 18 on All India Services. Out of 44 recommendations on financial relations the Council has accepted 40 and rejected the remaining 4. So is the case with ‘Reservation of Bills’. There seems to be no disagreement between the centre and states on 33 recommendations belonging to the head ‘Economic and Social Planning’. Divergence of views still prevail on issues like role of Governor, industries, mines and minerals etc.

Some of the consensus decisions of the Council include: (i) residuary powers of legislation should be transferred from union list (entry 97) to concurrent list; (ii) as a matter of convention, states must be actively consulted by the centre while legislating on concurrent list. “This is because laws enacted by the Union, particularly those relating to matters in the concurrent list, are enforced through the machinery of the states and consultation is essential to secure uniformity”, (iii) consultation with states by the centre should be made obligatory in the matters of appointment and selection of the Governor. To give effect to, the constitution may be suitably amended. To ensure impartiality and neutrality of the office of Governor, the person so appointed should not be intimately connected with the active politics. “Persons belonging to the minority communities should also be considered for gubernatorial posts”. Also, the Governor, as a matter of convention, should not “return to active partisan politics after relinquishing office, even though he or she would be eligible for a second term or for election to the office of Vice President or President of India. This was [is] necessary to ensure the functioning of a Governor in an independent and impartial manner”. Further, the special powers given to the Governor in some states have to be exercised by him in his discretion. When a no-confidence motion is pending against a Chief Minister, the Governor may not

concede his request for proroguing the House, rather the Governor may summon the Assembly on his own. Instead of head rolling at the Governor's place (Raj Bhawan), the majority must be tested on the floor of the House; (iv) time bound clearance of state bills referred to the President by the Governor. The state bills should not generally be reserved for presidential consideration, except for the constitutional specification and for the purposes referred to by the Sarkaria Commission in its report; (v) approved the alternative scheme of devolution of share in central taxes to the states and the transfer of taxation from the union list to the concurrent list; (vi) amending Article 356 [proclamation of emergency in a state on the grounds of breakdown of constitutional machinery] as to provide the material grounds on which this provision may be proclaimed; (vii) delegation of powers to the state governments for diversion of forest land for developmental use; (viii) revision of royalty rates under Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act every two years, instead of four years; (ix) formulation of a uniform policy on the creation or abolition of the Legislative Council in the states; (x) formulation of a comprehensive central legislation on taxes imposed by the local bodies of the states on the commercial operation of central undertakings, etc. Much of these decisions of the Council are in the form of laying down the political-executive norms of federal practice. This does not require a major revision of the constitution.

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## 11.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

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Over the years, the Indian federalism has shown enough resilience to adapt and to accommodate structurally and politically the various pressures of federal state formation. It has accommodated the various identity-linked demands for statehood. It has also, as mentioned above, attended to the institutionalisation of societal autonomy as it gets reflected in the northeastern regions of India. The federal democracy has decentralised itself to the level of village self-governance. As a matter of fact, federalism in India is publicly perceived, as an instrument of people's empowerment, and to that extent federal democracy seems to be working successfully. Similarly, in the arena of union-state relationships one finds almost total unanimity among political parties and the units of federation to follow the recommendations of Sarkaria Commission in building a cooperative-collaborative model of Indian federalism. It is precisely the reason that today one does not find such demands of yesteryears like scrapping of Art 356 etc. The growing salience of regional parties in the national decision making process in the present era of coalition governance show the participatory strength of Indian federalism.

Another interesting development that one witnesses is the growth of competitive federalism among the states. In the present liberalised market economy of India, the centre is withdrawing itself from many crucial sectors of socio-economic development. The state is allowed [of course, under the rules and regulations framed by the centre] to negotiate for foreign direct investment. This does not mean that states have treaty making power. The competitive federalism has another dimension too. The developed or developing and performing states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, etc, are demanding greater shares in the financial allocation made by the centre. They argue that central allocation should be linked to the performance level of the state. Thus rule for minimum level playing field should be relaxed. This nonetheless may have adverse impact of the underdeveloped states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, etc. We should never forget that the basic objective of an economic union is to maintain minimum regional balance in term of growth and development. Here the role of centre assumes critical federal significance.

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# **UNIT 12 DEVOLUTION OF POWERS AND LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT**

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## **Structure**

- 12.1 Introduction
  - 12.2 Panchayati Raj System
  - 12.3 Reconstitution of Panchayat System
  - 12.4 Decentralisation
  - 12.5 Constitutional Amendments
    - 12.5.1 The 73rd Amendment
    - 12.5.2 The 74th Amendment
    - 12.5.3 Limitations of the Amendments
  - 12.6 Summary
  - 12.7 Exercises
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## **12.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The idea of local self-government had existed in India even in ancient times. Even if we accept its beginning as an organisational concept with the Ripon's resolution it is more than a century and two decades old. In its tumultuous career it has seen many ups and downs. In spite of a formal inauguration by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1959, after the Balvant Rai Mehta committee recommendation in 1957, these institutions could not take proper roots in the country. Some of the scholars even declared that Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) were like failed God. The Janata Government appointed the Ashok Mehta committee to rejuvenate the PRIs. But the 73rd and 74th amendment, which were passed in 1992 and came into force in April 1994, have virtually revolutionised the idea of local self-government - both rural and urban - by bestowing constitutional status on them. These amendments were passed in the light of the experience of the Local-Self Governing Institutions in India. They have made a sincere attempt to overcome the limitations faced by these institutions.

The beginning of the idea of decentralisation in India as an organisational concept can be traced to Ripon's Resolution in 1882 which aimed at involving the 'intelligent class of public -spirited men in the management of rural areas under the British rule. In the years to come district boards and taluka boards were set up with nominated members to look after health, roads and education. But this effort did not succeed in making villages as basic unit of local self-government. A resolution of 1918 restated that the objective of self-government is to train people in the management of their own local affairs. The District Board Act of 1922 led to the reconstitution of the Boards. They were entrusted with the responsibilities of road maintenance, tree planting, hospitals, schools and drainage etc.

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## **12.2 PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM**

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Panchayat Act of 1920 was conceived as local courts and was completely judicial in character. As there was hardly any devolution of finances and responsibilities, its role as the local unit of administration, development and rural upliftment remained non-functional.

Among the Indian leaders, Mahatma Gandhi made very strong plea for village republics. Articles 40 under the Directive Principles of State Policy included in the part IV of the constitution, advised the government to take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority which would enable them to function as units of self-government. State governments were supposed to enact appropriate legislation for this purpose.

The Indian planners and policy makers launched a multipurpose Community Development Programme (CDPs) with the objective of improving the conditions of the rural masses. This programme aimed at training and sending development personnel Block Development Officers (BDO), Extension Officers and Village Level Workers (VLWs) into villages. This group of officers were supposed to act as agents of change. They were expected to galvanise rural masses by encouragement, demonstration and offer of material assistance. The CDPs failed to achieve the desired objectives. The Planning Commission requested a committee under the chairmanship of Balvant Rai Mehta to develop the ideas for a system of democratic decentralisation which would anchor the rural developmental efforts. The Balvant Rai Mehta Committee Report came up with a number of recommendations that were incorporated in the panchayat legislation of the various states in the following years. This committee recommended democratic decentralisation with a provision of a three- tier structure [village-block- district]. It also recommended for transfer of resources and responsibilities and channelisation of funds for various developmental programmes through the three- tier system. This report generated opportunity for launching block planning in states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and district planning in others like Maharashtra and Gujarat.

In the 1960s Panchayati Raj Institutions were portrayed as a God that failed. One of the main reasons of failure was the sabotage by state politicians who were not enthusiastic about devolving powers to the district level or below. They were apprehensive that Panchayati Raj Institutions with real powers may pose a threat to their power and influence. Towards the end of the 1960s when Indira Gandhi was donning a progressive garb and wished to implement land reforms, it was argued that Panchayati Raj Institutions could not be involved as they were dominated by the upper caste and landed elements. The 1960s also witnessed the advent of the Green Revolution that necessitated centralised planning and came in conflict with the ideals of decentralisation on which PRIs were based. Since rural areas in many parts of the country were still under the hands of feudal landed interest, government sponsored inputs for ushering the Green Revolution could have been monopolised by them. Both central and state government had started bypassing and thus undermining the authority and significance of the PRIs during this period. Central government created its own administrative machinery for implementing many of Indira Government programmes such as Small Farmers' Development Agency, Drought Prone Area Programme, Integrated Rural Development Programme and National Rural Employment Programme, aiming at economic justice. The lack of resources, absence of coordination, dependence on district development staff, lack of delegation of effective authority, domination by the higher castes and better off sections of society had rendered the PRIs ineffective and purposeless as institutions of decentralisation and development. By the middle of 1970s governments both at the center and in the states had become indifferent to the PRIs. They had become defunct; elections to these institutions were not being held and at most of the places the sitting councils were either dissolved or suspended.

## **12.3 RECONSTITUTION OF PANCHAYAT SYSTEM**

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The process of rejuvenation started with the reconstitution of the Panchayats in West Bengal and by the appointment of the Ashok Mehta committee by the Janta Party government in the late 1970s. The mid-seventies also marked a discernible shift of opinion in favour of conceding larger political space to local communities in the governing process. Local self-governing institutions were supposed to play an important role in reordering societal power equations. As the Janata Party Government had pledged its commitment to the Gandhian philosophy, the overall atmosphere seemed to be conducive for the resurgence of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Another plausible reason seems to be the fact that by the late 1970s the Green Revolution had become a decade old and it had given birth to rich peasant class that had benefited from the Green Revolution. The rich and middle peasants were fully aware of the importance of the direct access to decentralised government machinery more particularly its delivery system. Capturing village councils was very much in tune with the newly acquired economic power of this class and their motivation to count politically. The central place of the Panchayati Raj Institutions was restored.

The Ashok Mehta Committee Report mentioned rooting of developmental programme through official bureaucracy, inelastic finance, dominance of local institutions by economically and socially privileged sections of society as reasons for the failure of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Ashok Mehta Committee report refused to accept the view that Panchayati Raj was a failed God. In fact he credited these institutions for starting the process of democratic seed drilling in the Indian soil and making the citizens more consciousness of their rights than before. Among other positive fallouts was the bridging of gap between bureaucratic elite and the people. It also gave birth to a young dynamic leadership with a modernistic vision and social change oriented outlook. Mehta also averred that it helped rural people to develop a development psyche.

The Ashok Mehta Committee was innovative in many ways. The participation of political parties in Panchayati Raj election was pleaded to make them more accountable and link them with the political process at the higher level. Mehta hoped that elections would translate into political powers in the hands of poor because of their numerical strength and organisation. It also made a powerful plea for women's participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. This report had also proposed reservation of seats for both women and weaker sections of society. The decline of the Janta government created a hostile climate for the implementation of the Mehta report. In spite of this, the non-Congress state governments of Karnataka, Andhra and West Bengal took concrete measures to reactivate the PRIs. In Karnataka the PRIs that came into existence incorporated most of the recommendations made by the Mehta report. While non-Congress state governments were busy implementing the recommendations of the Ashok Mehta committee, the new congress government at the center appointed other commissions. C.H. Hanumantharao's working group of 1983 and GVK Rao Committee report of 1985 emphasised the need of integration of the panchayati raj system with development programmes and administration. The concept paper on Panchayati Raj prepared by the L. M. Singhvi Committee Report of 1986 suggested that Panchayati Raj institutions should be closely involved in the planning and implementation of the rural development programmes. Both Singhvi and Ashok Mehta Committees recommended democratic decentralisation on constitutional basis.

The Sarkaria Commission constituted to go into dynamics of center state relations, made a mention of the dysfunctional PR institutions and suggested legal provisions for the regular elections and sessions of Zilla Parishads and Municipal Corporations for their resurgence. The P.K. Thungon Committee set up in 1988 to suggest the type of political and administrative structure in district for district planning, advocated constitutional status for panchayati raj institutions. The Thungon Committee also favoured constitutional provisions to ensure timely and regular elections to the PRIs. According to this committee, Zilla Parishad should be the only development agency in a district.

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## 12.4 DECENTRALISATION

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Devolution is a form of decentralization which seeks to create independent level of authority of government with functions and responsibilities. It is an arrangement for central or state governments to relinquish some of its functions to the new units of government that are outside its control. This can be achieved by providing for it in the Constitution itself or by ordinary law of the land. One of the major reasons for the failure of the local self-government institutions in India has been half-hearted devolution of powers to them. The 73rd and 74th amendments also contained provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities to rural (Panchayati Raj Institutions) and urban (Nagarpalikas) local self- government institutions. These amendments respectively provided that the panchayats at village, block and district levels would have 29 subjects of rural importance as listed in the 11th schedule and municipalities would have 18 subjects of urban importance as listed in the 12th schedule. These amendments bestowed upon the local self- government bodies - both rural and urban - the responsibility to prepare and implement a number of development plans based on the needs of local people. They operationalise the concepts of spatial planning and micro level planning to facilitate decentralised socio economic development in India. With the help of these powers the local self government institutions are supposed to promote agricultural, industrial, infrastructural and ecological development, poverty alleviation and development of women, children, scheduled and backward castes. These development functions are in addition to the obligatory functions such as ensuring the supply of drinking water, street lighting, maintenance of schools and hospitals etc.

There seem to be plethora of debates involving the concept, utility and effectiveness of the local self- government institutions. In early village councils an arrangement of government by consent and an active sense of community prevailed over caste divisions. Since beginning, these features of the PRIs have been used to legitimise them. According to Lieten and Srivastava, the village panchayats were established as units of local self- government and focal points of development in country at large more often than not captured by autocratic and invariably corrupt leaders from among the male elite. As argued by some other scholars, the institutions were used by the rural powerful for their benefits. Paul Brass was of the view that PRIs were made to fail because of the reluctance of state politicians to devolve much powers to the district level or below because they feared that if such local institutions acquired real powers they would become alternative source of influence and patronage. Rajani Kothari argued that village councils were nothing but catchy slogans and false that promises had enabled the rulers to contain the forces of revolt and resistance and prevent public discontent from getting organised. Ashok Mehta who headed the second Committee on Panchayati Raj refused to be pessimistic about the PRIs. He thought that the process of democratic seed

drilling in the Indian soil made people conscious of their rights and also cultivated in them a developmental psyche. He was of the opinion that these institutions had failed because development programmes were channelised through official state bureaucracy, finance had been inelastic and these institutions were dominated by privileged sections of society. Noorjahan Baba argues that centralised planning and administration were considered necessary to guide and control the economy and to integrate and unify new nations emerging from long periods of colonial rules. This might have been possible because as Lieten and Srivastava think, the Indian state was reputed to have an enlightened vision and a developmental mission. According to Baba in the 1960s there was great disillusionment with centralised planning because it failed to achieve equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth among regions and groups within developing countries. Henry Maddic is of the view that there exists a triangular relationship between democracy, decentralisation and development.

The experience of the PRIs in different states of the country has not been the same. The formal beginning was made when Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated PRIs at in Nagaur in Rajasthan October 1959. The Rajasthan model of PRIs revolved around the three tier, village panchayat, panchayat samiti and zilla parishad. The panchayat samiti at the block level was the kingpin of the Rajasthan model. In contrast to the executive role of the panchayat samiti, the zilla parishads were advisory bodies. Maharashtra and Gujarat followed a model in which zilla parishads were nodal point of action as main units of planning, development and administration. In Maharashtra, the zilla parishad executed not only the schemes under Community Development Programme but also a large portion of programmes of various government departments. In Karnataka, after the introduction of panchayat reform act of 1985, all functions and functionaries of development departments were transferred to panchayati raj institutions. The District Rural Development Agencies were merged with the Panchayati Raj Institutions. To give substance to the idea of decentralisation, the state budget of Karnataka was split into two providing a separate budget for PRIs. The plans and budgets prepared by Mandal Panchayats could not be altered by Zilla Parishad or state government in Karnataka. Similarly district plans of the zilla parishad could not be touched by the state government. In Andhra Pradesh, the Zilla Parishads endowed with limited functions have shown encouraging results in the field of education. Even in Tamil Nadu PRIs have done a commendable job in the fields of education, water supply, roads and nutrition.

The PRIs had been functioning in West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh with varying degree of success. But the experience in the field of local self-governing institutions is qualitatively different after the 73rd and 74th amendments became acts because they made parliamentary democracy in our country participatory in the real sense. These amendments gave substance and meaning to the local self-governing institutions. These amendments removed the bottlenecks from the paths of empowerment of the weaker sections of society like the dalits, tribals and the women. Consequent upon the enactment of the act almost all the states and union territories have enacted their legislation. Election to the PRIs have been held all over the country. The elections to PRIs in different parts of the country have brought out some encouraging facts. Karnataka sends maximum number of women to the PRIs followed by Kerala and Manipur. Uttar Pradesh ranks the lowest in this regard. Empowerment of women has not been a very smooth affair. There are instances of women members being accompanied by their husbands or a male member of the family. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have earned the distinction of electing all women panchayats. The

provision of reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has ensured greater representation to people from these sections.

In many of the states local level functionaries of government departments have been placed under the control of panchayats. The governments of Gujarat, Karnataka and Kerala have passed orders to this effect. In Madhya Pradesh recruitment of school teachers have started at the block level and the powers of evaluating their performance and confirmation have been transferred to the PRIs at the block level. Rajasthan and Haryana witnessed strikes by the staffs of veterinary and education departments against the move of the state governments to transfer their services under the control and supervision of panchayats. The Apex district level development agency District Rural Development Agency [DRDA] is in the stage of its merger with the PRIs in Orissa, MP and Maharashtra. In Karnataka the merger was achieved way back in 1987. The government of Rajasthan has not been in favour of the merger. Instead it aims at securing effective coordination between DRDA and Zilla Parishad.

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## 12.5 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

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Towards the end of his tenure as Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi evinced keen interest in the panchayati raj institutions. The Congress had lost elections in some of the states. The whole idea of conferring power on people through PRIs was more a slogan to influence the people before the election. He held five workshops on responsive administration in which he interacted with district magistrate and collectors of all the districts in the country. These workshops unambiguously favoured constitutional provision and mandatory regular elections to the PRIs. The Rajiv Gandhi government introduced the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill in 1989. The main problem with this amendment was that it sought to establish direct links with PRIs bypassing states. As local government was a state subject, it was seen as a threat to federalism because this bill proposed to take panchayati raj from state list and include it in the concurrent list. Similarly the idea of holding elections to the PRIs under the supervision of the Central Election Commission and also the idea of providing finance to these institutions by the Central Finance Commission aroused misgivings about the intentions of the Rajiv Gandhi government. The 73rd and 74th amendments in many ways, appeared to be a modified version of the proposals of Ashok Mehta Report. These amendments bestowed constitutional status on Panchayati Raj and Nagarpalika institutions. They added part IX and part IXA to the constitution while part IX containing articles 243 to 243O relates to the panchayats while part IXA containing articles 243P to 243ZG relates to the municipalities. They provided for 33% reservation for women in both panchayat and nagarpalika institutions as well as for the position of chairpersons of these bodies. Provisions were also made for reservation of seats in these bodies for SCs and STs according to their proportion in population in that panchayat. One third of the total seats reserved for SCs and STs shall be reserved for women belonging to SCs and STs. Article 243K provides for State Election Commission. The Governor of the concerned state has powers to appoint the State Election Commissioner and assign the responsibility of preparing the electoral rolls and conducting the elections to the panchayats. Sufficient care has been taken to ensure the impartiality of the Election Commission. Once appointed, the Election Commissioner cannot be removed from the office except in like manners and on like grounds as a High Court Judge. The terms and conditions of his office cannot be changed to his advantage after his appointment. Regular elections to the local

bodies after the completion of five years term and within six months of their dissolution is the responsibility of the State Election Commission. Article 243-I of Constitution provides for state level Finance Commission to review the finances. The constitution also requires the Central Finance Commission to recommend measures to augment Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the panchayats.

### **12.5.1 The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment**

The 73rd Amendment Act provides for a three-tier Panchayati Raj system at the village, intermediate (block or taluka) and district levels. Small states with population below twenty lakh have been given the option of not constituting panchayat at the intermediate level. This Act acknowledged the role of Gram Sabha (the assembly of people) in the empowerment of the rural people and provided for the strengthening of the Gram Sabhas for the successful functioning of the PRIs. The Act intended to make it a powerful body, the ultimate source of democratic power and an epitome of people's power at the gram panchayat level. The Gram Sabha consists of all the residents of a village, and those above 18 years of age are on the electoral rolls of a village. Almost all the State Acts mention the functions of the Gram Sabha. These functions of Gram Sabha include discussion on the annual statement of accounts, administration, reports selection of beneficiaries of anti poverty programmes. The State Acts of Haryana, Punjab and Tamil Nadu give power of approval of budget to the Gram Sabha. A Gram Pradhan is elected by the Gram Sabha. It also elects other members of the Gram Panchayat. The number of members varies from state to state, and some of them have been reserved for SCs and STs according to their population and one third of the total seats have been reserved for the women. The obligatory functions of the Gram Panchayat include provision of safe drinking water, maintenance of public wells, ponds, dispensaries, primary and secondary schools, etc. Now the Gram Panchayats have been assigned developmental functions like minor irrigation schemes, rural electrification, cottage and small industries and poverty alleviation programmes also. The Block level PRI institution is known by different names in different parts of the country. In Gujarat they are called Taluka Panchayat, in UP Kshetra Samiti and in MP they are known as Janapada Panchayat. They include (1) the Sarpanchas of the Panchayats (2) the MPs, MLAs and MLCs from that area (3) the elected members of the Zilla Parishad (4) the Chairman of the town area committee of that area. The powers of the Panchayat Samiti include provision of improved variety of seeds and fertilizers, maintenance of schools, hospitals, roads, implementing anti- poverty programmes and supervising the functioning of the Gram Panchayats. The Zilla Parishad is the Apex body of the PRIs. It coordinates the activities of the Panchayat Samitis. It includes the Pradhans of the Panchayat Samitis of the district, MPs and MLAs from the district, one representative each from the cooperative societies of the district, and also chairmen of the municipalities of the district. The Zilla Parishad approves the budgets of the Panchayat Samitis. It maintains educational institutions, irrigation schemes, and undertakes programmes for the weaker sections.

### **12.5.2 The 74th Amendment**

The 74th Amendments Act provides for the constitution of three types of local self- governing institutions in the urban areas. It provides for Municipal Corporations for major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Allahabad, Lucknow, Patna etc. Middle rung cities have Municipal Councils and smaller towns have Nagar Panchayats. Every Municipal Corporation

has a General Council. It has members elected by the adult citizens of the city. These members are called Councillors. Apart from the elected members, the Council also has eldersmen elected by the elected Councillors. The MPs and MLAs are also the members. The Mayor is elected by the members from among themselves. Some of the states provide for direct election of the Mayor. He is known as the first citizen of the city. The Municipal Commissioner is the chief executive officer of the Corporation. The Mayor may ask the Municipal commissioner to prepare and present report on any matter. The compulsory functions of a Municipal Corporation includes maintenance of hospitals, supplying safe drinking water, electricity, running schools and keeping an account of births and deaths. The developmental functions of the Municipal Corporations include launching of poverty alleviation programmes for the weaker sections. A Municipality is composed of Councillors elected by the local population. Seats have been reserved for SCs and STs according to their proportion in the population of the town and one third of the seats have been reserved for women. The Presiding officer of a Municipal Board is called the Chairman who is elected by the voters of the town. In some states the Chairman of the Municipal Board has powers to appoint teachers of primary schools and even lower level staffs. An executive officer looks after the day to day administration of the Municipality. Among the compulsory functions are supplying electricity, drinking water, health facilities, schools and maintaining roads and keeping records of weaker sections of the society. The small towns have Nagar Panchayats. Its members are elected by adult citizens of the town. As in the case of other local self governing institutions, seats are reserved for SC/ST and women. Their functions include provision of drinking water, maintenance of primary schools and registration of births and deaths.

### **12.5.3 Limitations of the Amendments**

Inspite of the revolutionary changes brought about by the 73rd Amendment it suffers from some serious limitations. Ambiguity about the functional jurisdiction of panchayats is one of its serious limitations. In the absence of properly defined jurisdiction, it is dependent upon the discretion of state legislatures for being assigned the functions. This act does not mention the powers and functions of the Gram Sabha. This amendment mentions that the Gram Sabha will perform the functions which may be assigned to it by the State legislature. The provision relating to Gram Sabha in the laws enacted by most of the states reduce the Gram Sabha to a powerless body which will routinely rubber stamp the decisions taken up by the Gram Panchayat. The Chief Ministers' Conference held in August 1997 at New Delhi ruled that it would be necessary to vest in Gram Sabha the powers to sanction and disburse benefits in open meetings, to decide location of drinking water hand pumps etc without having to refer the matter to officials or other authorities. This conference also held that it is necessary to vest the ownership of natural resources in Gram Panchayats and also the decision - making powers concerning the management of and income from such resources in the Gram Sabha. Another important limitation of the PRIs, after the amendment is that they still function in the grip of the state bureaucracy. The village Pradhan has to contact several times in a month the block office for technical and financial sanctions. Yet another omission of the act is that there is no mention of the employees of the panchayat and their administrative autonomy. Panchayats in the past failed to deliver because they had inadequate control over people working to implement the programmes. Even when responsibilities in the field of health and primary education have been transferred, PRIs have no control over the staff and budget of these departments. The

# **UNIT 13 POLITICAL PARTIES AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

## **Structure**

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 The concept of Political Participation
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## **13.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Participation is both an activity and an attitude. As an activity it is a social activity. Someone taking a morning walk is not participating in anything. Someone taking part in a 100-meter race does. Someone staying in a neighborhood for a long time without knowing any of one's neighbors is not having a participant attitude. What then is political participation? Of course, we mean a kind of political activity and a kind of political attitude. Since the 50's however it has attracted widespread attention and there seems to be a general agreement among the Political Scientists on the value and necessity of further political participation. But this apparent agreement conceals major disputes both at the levels of political theory and practical politics. Before we explore these we should begin with the concept of political participation itself.

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## **13.2 THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

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The concept of political participation has been popularised in Political Science by the Behaviouralists. Of course arguments in favor of greater political participation had been advanced by republican and democratic theorists from Rousseau onwards and are still in use by contemporary political theorists. The behaviouralist paradigm rides on a liberal view of politics. Classically, such a view draws a distinction between state and individual on the one hand and public and private on the other; it also leans on the side of the latter categories. Accordingly, when participation is seen as an attitude, it is taken as an individual's favourable orientation to the state or government. That was the basis on which Americans were seen as having a 'participant political culture'. The systematic use of culture and political culture as social science concepts dates only from 1950s. Here the political culture is seen as a shorthand

expression to denote the set of values within which a political system operates. It is something between the state of public opinion and an individual's personality characteristics. According to Gabriel Almond, it is the 'particular pattern of orientations' to political objects in which a political system is embedded. Orientations are predisposition to political action and are determined by such factors as tradition, historical memories, motives, norms, emotions and symbols; the culture, therefore, represents a set of propensities. These orientations may be broken down into cognitive orientations (knowledge and awareness of the political effects), affective orientations (emotions and feelings about the objects) and evaluative orientations (judgment about them). Almond (with Verba) later developed a typology of ideal political cultures or citizen types .Where most people are oriented to the input processes and see themselves as able to make demands and help to shape policies, the political culture is participant; the British, American and Scandinavian political systems best represent this ideal. Similarly, government as the point of reference of individual's activity becomes the feature of political participation as an activity. Thus writes Birch : ' political participation is participation in the process of government, and the case for political participation is essentially a case for substantial number of private citizens (as distinct from public officials or elected politicians) to play a part in the process by which leaders are chosen and /or government policies are shaped and implemented.'

The Communitarians find problem with this Liberal concept of participation because of its 'individualism' and government as the locus of participation .They argue that more important than participation in the process of government through the 'politics of right' is participation at community level for 'politics of common good'. They argue that more important than participation in the process of government is exercise of autonomy which can be developed and exercised in a certain kind of social environment, an autonomy-supporting community, not a government. Thus, Political participation can, then be seen broadly as participation in the political life of the community or civil society with different agents and levels of participation such as running a community health club by a religious group or participating in a N.G.O.-sponsored campaign for literacy. Following the same logic political participation may be for serving political obligation of a democratic citizen to lead a participatory social life and just not for the civil obligation to the government on the question of law and order. Wider political participation must include some degree of democratic control either over or within large-scale economic enterprises, decentralisation of government to smaller units, such as region or locality, considerable use of referenda etc.

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### **13.3 FORMS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

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The concept of political participation accommodates the following main forms of political participation:

- 1) voting in local or national elections;
- 2) voting in referendums;
- 3) canvassing or otherwise campaigning in elections;
- 4) active membership of a political party;
- 5) active membership of a pressure group;

- 6) taking part in political demonstrations, industrial strikes with political objectives, rent strikes in public housing, and similar activities aimed at changing public policy;
- 7) various forms of civil disobedience, such as refusing to pay taxes or obey a conscription order;
- 8) membership of government advisory committees;
- 9) membership of consumers' councils for publicly owned industries;
- 10) client involvement in the implementation of social policies;
- 11) various forms of community action, such as those concerned with housing or environmental issues in the locality.

If we take into account the broad concept of political participation, we can probably increase the list by adding such forms as:

- 1) Performing social duties such as jury service and military duties;
- 2) Town/ village meetings and public debate on controversial issues;
- 3) Various forms of codetermination, such as student-faculty committees in the universities and government advisory committees;
- 4) Shared project management involving full-scale partnership, delegation or empowerment such as benefit-sharing arrangements or developmental projects;
- 5) New social movements seeking and promoting personal and collective identity, such as women's movement and movements for ethno-cultural identities.

On the whole there are several levels and forms at which and through which people may participate politically, as involved objects of a process of economic and political transformation set in motion by someone else, as expected beneficiaries of a programme with pre-set parameters, as politically co-opted legitimisers of a policy or as people trying to determine their own choices and direction independent of the state.

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### **13.4 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, DEMOCRACY, AND POLITICAL PARTY**

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Howsoever the forms of political participation are conceived, political participation represents a political action and naturally involves many social agents that act within definite structural parameters. The structures may be conceived as embedded structures, relational structures and institutional structures. Political party is only one of so many social agents associated with or responsible for political participation. There are other agents such as voluntary organisations, institutional groups and socio-cultural communities. The roles of these agents for political participation are influenced by the nature of variations in the structural arrangements. The relative significance of political party as an agent in relation to other agents is also influenced by such structural arrangements, as is the nature of political participation through the agency of political party. That historically embedded structures affect the form and nature of political participation is obvious. For instance, the emergence of such parties as Jan Sangh or Muslim League in modern India could easily be linked with the concretisation of fuzzy communal consciousness during the British colonial rule, which, for the first time, introduced census and

mapping in India. As examples of the influence of relational structures on political parties one may refer to the caste conflict in Indian society or agrarian relations, the former explaining rise of caste based parties like Justice party or B.S.P. and the latter, party like the Lok Dal. From this angle the political parties ensure participation of different structurally articulated interests and ideologies. How the political parties ensure political participation also depends on the nature of the institutional structure. The nature of participation through political parties, for example, varies according to the nature of the political system. In a few modern dictatorships, such as Hitler's Germany, mass membership in a ruling party was encouraged as a way of mobilising support for government policies. Again, the institutional arrangements such as the electoral systems in a democracy influence the participating role of political parties. The world of electoral systems has been divided into three main families; Plurality-majority systems, Proportional representation (PR) systems, and semi-PR systems. First- Past- the –post (FPTP) system under which candidates are chosen from single member districts, tends to handicap third parties, and by doing this it helps to produce two-party system. It tends to do this if the support of the winning party spreads evenly across the electoral districts. For example a party with 52 percent of votes may win 60 percent of the seats. Naturally in such a situation, the political parties become limited agents of political participation. The usual outcome of PR is a multi-party system and therefore offers the voters greater freedom of choice but tends to make the government less effective as the majority coalitions, in the absence of amplified majority of FPTP become highly unstable. However it would be wrong to suppose that the nature of the party-system is rigidly determined by the nature of the electoral systems. The embedded structures and relational structures have significant effect on the institutional structure in general. Take the case of India. Here we have had regular elections every five years both at national and state levels. If we want to judge the level and nature of political participation in purely institutional terms, we would count number of parties, voters' turnout, election results, number of candidates and so on with the idea that more the number, greater is the participation. However we would miss out the massive level of political participation by party workers and non-voters to the extent we fail to recognise that elections in India is a political festival where participation is more a peaceful demonstration of public will than an exercise of individual's rational calculation that involves every stage of election: getting a ticket, the campaign, and marking the ballot. Here we have a FPTP system. But there have been wide social and regional variations in India. When the support for the Indian National Congress evenly spread across the country, the Party got the benefit of amplified seats. But whenever the social and regional variations were mobilised by new parties, inter-district variations in electoral support reduced that benefit and made way for a somewhat multi-party system. The federal structure with its system of state level elections aided that process. We would discuss the significance of this change for political participation in subsequent section. But before that it may be of interest to have some idea about the value of political participation in a democracy.

### **13.4.1 Theoretical Debate and Practical Variations**

In theory participation is not only a behavioural concept but also a normative concept. Most people think that participation is a good thing but many actually differ regarding the levels of participation desired or relative importance of this or that form of political participation. Participation is often justified in terms of the functional requirements of the political system as leading to better communication or greater compliance on the part of the citizens. Participation

is often considered beneficial for the individual while the benefits may be perceived as profit minus cost, non-material rewards or meeting the psychological needs. Some consider participation itself as valuable, participation in one sphere enhancing participation in other spheres. Most of those who are in favour of restricted participation in democracy tend to adopt a conservative position and doubt the ability of the average citizen but some express reservation against it because participation provides the authorities the opportunity to legitimise their decisions. Some doubt the efficacy of political participation in the area of electoral democracy and favour participation through various forms of community self-government. In practice also we note wide variations about the nature, levels and forms of political participation. In some countries like Australia, Belgium and Italy voting has been made compulsory. The sanctions or penal measures are very mild. But in these cases voter turnout in national elections is very high, involving almost over 90 per cent of the electorate. By contrast the turnout figures for national elections in the United States are very low. However the low voter turnout in the United States is also accompanied by an increase in the number and vitality of single-issue pressure groups. Organisationally, many European parties have developed mass memberships with branches in every town and intensive programmes of local meetings and social activities. Examples of this type of parties may be the British Conservative Party and the German Social Democratic party. The American parties are Lilliputs by comparison. In terms of activity also, the American parties are pale shadows of many of their European counterparts. For instance both the British Conservative party and the Labour Party are heavily into publishing business, have discussion groups, and youth movements.

Both in the United States and Europe however there has been a marked rise in the use of referendums. In the former the campaign for the initiative and referendum began in the Populist Movement of the 1880's and the 1890's. In 1978 the most dramatic change in state laws occurred through the adoption in California of proposition 13, a proposal to cut property tax by more than half. This tendency proved widespread and between 1970 and 1986 there were 158 statewide initiatives passed by voters in 22 states and the District of Columbia. In Switzerland, the voters have decided that their country should join the IMF and the World Bank but not the UN and the European Union. In 1992, Denmark and France held referendums on whether they should ratify the Maastricht Treaty. If we take into account the broad view of political participation, then we may note some recent forms of non-party oriented political participation both in Europe and the United States. In Britain, client-participation has developed many forms like local community health councils, 'patients' participation groups association of tenants, parents and pupils in school's governing bodies. In the USA, the anti-nuclear groups have been very active, while in Germany, it is the environmental groups.

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### **13.5 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA**

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The above discussion cannot provide an immediate basis of a comparative understanding of the nature and extent of political participation in India or the role of political parties in that regard. For that we must note the specificity of Indian politics and party politics in India. Indian politics are distinctive among contemporary developing societies in having had democratic durability for about fifty years— excepting the brief emergency period—with many paradoxical features like high voter turnout amid high rate of illiteracy and agrarian population, multilevel

electoral process with many electoral areas not yet fully dominated and controlled by organised political parties, coexistence of various organised interest associations with intermediaries between people and bureaucracy, non-party movements, specifically Indian types of interest associations, including religious and caste groups. The Indian party system is also distinctive, showing major differences with its European and American counterparts. Paul Brass writes: ‘Party politics in India display numerous paradoxical features, which reveal the blending of Western and modern forms of bureaucratic organisation and participatory politics with indigenous practices and institutions. India’s leading political party, the Indian National Congress, is one of the oldest in the world, yet it has not succeeded in providing the nucleus for an institutionalised party system which can be fitted easily into any one of the conventional categories of party system in the west. The social heterogeneity of India has added to the complexity of the Indian party system. This has increasingly made it impossible for a single set of parties to emerge across the country. Major transformations have taken place since Independence in India’s party system. At the center of change in the party system is the rise of the BJP. Irrespective of the nature of changes in the party system, parties have continued to remain in the centre of Indian politics. Opinion polls in India have repeatedly shown that people generally vote more for the party than for the candidate. In some cases parties have been solid, creating deep loyalties that continue from generations to generations, giving election symbols of parties tremendous psychological significance. After the 73rd and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments, parties have found a new level of operation in the Panchayat and Nagarpalika institutions. This has widened the reach of election machinery and made political parties even more significant as agents of political participation. Keeping these points in mind let us now note the role of the Indian political parties as agents of political participation.

### **13.5.1 Political participation through an increasingly competitive party system**

Any observer of Indian political scene would not miss the tremendous growth of political parties in power. This growth has taken place both at the national and state levels. This growth has been fuelled by fragmentation of existing parties in terms of vote share, seat share and evolution of electoral alliances at both the national and state levels; the emergence of new political parties like BJP, BSP etc. and new coalitions of parties like NDA.

A long range overview of the Congress Party reveals an increasingly narrowing scope of political participation at within-party level as well as widening political participation outside. Before the transfer of power, the Congress was synonymous with the nationalist movement and represented a mass wave by including within its fold different political groups such as the Communists and the Socialists. This ensured a truly broad based political participation by the Indian masses because the objective of the nationalist movement was an abstract one of Independence. Some restriction of the participatory role of the Congress party took place between 1946-1950 when the party changed from the earlier one that fought for independence. With the knowledge that after the Second World War, independence was forthcoming certain realignments started taking place within Congress. Several secessions took place from the congress involving the Communists, Muslim separatists and the socialists as a result of which within-party participation got somewhat restricted. The most influential account of congress organisation after independence was given by Rajni Kothari in his *Politics in India* (1970). He presented it as a differentiated system in which the different levels of party organisation

were linked with the parallel structure of government, allowing for the dominance of a political centre as well as dissent from the peripheries, with opposition functioning as dissident congress groups. Kothari gave it the simple name ‘Congress system’. This ensured political participations mainly through factional conflicts. On this, Brass writes:

Factions contested for control of the important committees at each level through formal elections preceded by membership drives in which competing faction leaders attempted to enroll, even if only on paper, as many member-supporters as possible. Although the factional conflicts which developed often became intense and bitter and were accompanied by frequent charges of “bogus enrolments,” they also served to keep the party organisation alive and to compel party leaders to build support in the districts and localities throughout the country.

The 1967 elections marked the trend of political fragmentation sharply. The Congress vote was dropped by almost 5 per cent. It had managed to win only 54 per cent of the seats. Earlier in the previous parliament it had 74 per cent of the seats. In many states it failed to win a majority. In as many as nine states—Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Madras and Kerala—there came non-Congress governments. Within the party also conflict grew between the Syndicate and Indira Gandhi leading to a split in 1969. The newly formed Congress derived its identity from its leader in real terms. Elections within the party were stopped. Chief Ministers were appointed by the central high command. The massive electoral victory of the party in 1971 further increased political centralization that culminated into the Emergency in 1975. The popular reaction against this was a landmark in terms of political participation. It brought for the first time a non-Congress coalition government, the Janata government, at the centre. The Congress took the opportunity of coming back to power in 1980 against a divided opposition. The eighth general election took place in December 1984 in the shadow of Indira Gandhi’s assassination and brought Rajeev Gandhi into power as the leader of the Congress (I). This did not alter the trend of political centralisation within the party. Growing political dissension in the country and controversies of Bofors kickback formed the background of 1989 general elections. The Congress (I) was defeated, securing only 197 seats in the Lok Sabha. The National Front, though it could not win a majority, formed the government with V. P. Singh as Prime Minister with the outside support of the BJP and the Left parties. That government lasted only a year and paved the way for the Chandrasekhar government with Congress-I support that was quickly withdrawn and the ninth Lok Sabha was dissolved less than a year and a half after its formation. Halfway through the general elections, Rajeev Gandhi was assassinated and Congress(I) recovered its position somewhat due to sympathetic and favourable electoral support. Even then it failed to win a majority and became the single largest party with 232 seats. P. V. Narasimha Rao, elected leader of the party was appointed Prime Minister. The Rao regime eventually secured majority by winning over the Ajit Singh faction of the Janata Dal. But the party failed to regain its organisational strength and was set in a path of steady decline which culminated in its removal from power after 1996 elections when BJP emerged as the single largest party but short of majority, and various regional parties like Telugu Desam Party, the DMK, the AGP and Janata Dal, the breakaway Congress group in Tamil Nadu, led by G. K. Moopanar and the left parties came together to form a bloc—NF-LF bloc, later called the United Front. However with President S. D. Sharma deciding to invite A. B. Vajpayee of the BJP to form government despite Congress (I) support to the United Front, he formed the government but only for seven days. H. D. Deve Gowda of the Janata Dal next formed the United Front government

with Congress(I) support where for the first time in history a left party—the CPI—joined a government at the centre. In 1996 itself BJP forged alliances with Shiv Sena. In 1998 it strengthened its alliances by a soft Hindutva image and became attractive as a partner for a regional or state based party opposed to the Congress or congress-allied regional rival (Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Haryana, Orissa) or to a Congress faction (Trinamool congress) versus major regional party (West Bengal). It managed to adopt a national agenda and win post election allies (Chautala's Haryana Lok Dal) and external supporters (TDP, NC) for coalition government at the centre. The Congress failed to return to power as the BJP managed to sustain and expand the same coalition, now formally called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) adding the TDP, Goa's MGP, and the Patel faction of the Karnataka Janata Dal, switching partners in Tamil Nadu and Haryana. The above trends showing the decline of the Congress and rise of new contenders for power at the central level make it clear that a pattern of fragmentation of the party system has been taking place together with electoral alliances, adding to competitiveness of the party system and participation of increasing number of parties in power, may be towards a loose bipolarity at the national level.

The above trend has not been limited to the national level only, but has also affected the states for the general elections between 1967-1989. The phenomena of consolidation of non-Congress vote (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh etc.), Congress-led alliances of state based minor parties (Kerala, Tripura), a left-front coalition versus Congress (West Bengal) and so on could be seen. The same could be seen for State Assembly elections. Here the Congress party's position eroded even more than for parliamentary elections, and the consolidation of principal challenger parties or alliances at the state level was marked. The process of alliance formation has been complex and multidimensional at state level but it could be noted that they were driven less by ideological considerations or social divisions and more by the imperative to aggregate votes. On the whole, it could be argued that as agents, political parties in India have not only multiplied, but also have also been participating more effectively in the sharing and management of power.

### **13.5.2 Increased Voter Turnout**

Relevant to the study of political participation in India is the fact that voter turnout in India has been steadily rising. In the first general election it was 47.5 and in the 1999 elections the turnout was 59.5 (Zoya Hasan, 2002, p.1). The table below illustrates the steady growth :

**Table 2: Election data, Indian Parliamentary Elections, 1952-91**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Electorate (in millions)</b>	<b>Polling Stations</b>	<b>Votes polled (in millions)</b>	<b>Turnout (percent)</b>
1952	173.2	132,560	80.7	45.7
1957	193.7	220,478	91.3	47.7
1962	217.7	238,355	119.9	55.4
1967	250.1	267,555	152.7	61.3
1971	274.1	342,944	151.5	55.3

1977	321.2	373,908	194.3	60.5
1980	355.6	434,442	202.3	56.9
1984	375.8	479,214	238.4	64.1
1989	498.9	579,810	309.1	62.0
1991	488.4	594,811	276.8	56.7

<b>Source:</b>	Paul Brass, 1997, P.104
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The same upward trend in voter turnout can be seen in the case of Assembly Elections also. In a study undertaken on sixteen states, Yogendra Yadav (1998) notes a new phase in democratic politics in India in terms of higher political participation and intensification of citizen's involvement in politics. For figures see Table 3 below:

**Table 3: Percentage Turnout in Assembly Elections 1984-1995.**

<b>States</b>	<b>1984-5</b>	<b>1989-90</b>	<b>1993-5</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Andhra Pradesh	66.7	67.6	71.1	3.5
Arunachal Pradesh	76.3	68.9	81.4	12.3
Bihar	55.1	62.2	61.8	-0.4
Delhi	55.6	54.3	61.8	-
Gujarat	47.7	51.1	64.7	13.6
Goa	71.9	68.7	71.7	3.0
Himachal Pradesh	69.6	66.7	71.7	5.0

Karnataka	66.3	63.8	68.8	5.0
Madhya Pradesh	48.6	52.8	59.0	6.2
Manipur	87.3	80.6	88.8	8.2
Maharashtra	58.3	61.1	72.0	10.9
Mizoram	70.6	80.4	80.8	0.4
Orissa	51.4	55.5	73.8	18.3

Rajasthan	54.0	56.5	60.6	4.1
Sikkim	62.6	69.5	81.0	11.5
Uttar Pradesh	44.8	48.5	57.1	8.6
Total	55.3	60.3	64.2	3.9

**Source:** Yogendra Yadav, 1998, p.18

Not only has the number of voters, number of candidates also risen dramatically in the 1990's. Yadav writes:

The number of candidates has risen more steadily over the decades, though here again there is a marked acceleration in the 1990's. Beginning with a flat decadal growth rate of about one candidate per constituency , reflecting a steady intensification of electoral contests, it starts jumping by leaps and bounds around the mid-1980's. The 1993-5 rounds have continued this upward trend in number of contestants, taking it past fourteen per seat, and a larger share of independents in it. If the 1960's were characterized by the first democratic upsurge, the 1990s are witnessing the second democratic upsurge in post-Independence India.

The intensification of the electoral process is further revealed by the following facts ; in 1952 the total number of candidates for parliamentary elections was 1874, in 1991 it rose to 8953, there were 132,560 polling stations in 1952, the number rose to 594,797 in 1991 (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 1993,p. 347).

### **13.5.3 Social Nature of the Party-led Political Participation**

In a sense the increasingly competitive party system is a product of the rise and assertion of regional and state based parties. However to overstretch this point would mean an uncritical acceptance of the social cleavage theory of party systems. In a study on Congress some alignments of party organisations were found to be associated with acute social divisions. Congress was found not to be a heterogeneous national party but a coalition of state (and ultimately local) groups whose political rationale are the divisions and conflicts of the state and community in question. However, equally important is the geographical specificity of inter group conflicts. The political significance of group conflicts varies from state to state, to the extent there is variation in the strength of the link between social groups and the parties. In different ways the characterisations of Indian democracy as 'consociational', and 'adversarial' admit that through political party competition, the social divisions of a deeply divided society get expressed. A case to the point is the political assertion of the historically disadvantaged castes in the 1990's. Almost together with the acceptance of the Mandal Commission's recommendations, recent years have witnessed the emergence of the Dalit-Bahujan castes, often trying to encompass the Muslim minority in its fold. The political parties representing these social groups are identified as the Bahujan Samaj Party(BSP) , the Samajwadi Party, and sections of the Janata Dal—a phenomenal increase in caste based parties since the old Justice Party, to the point that social pluralism in India gets increasingly reflected in the competitive party system which serves as the agent of political participation. That is to say, a given political party while acting as the agent of political participation often shows internal pluralism in its organisation. In a recent study of Dravidian parties, Narendra Subramanian demonstrates that the internal pluralism of parties, and not simply social pluralism, promotes greater representation and participation of emergent groups, the reconstruction of public culture and tolerance. This does not of course mean that in India all parties show equal amount of organisational or internal pluralism.

The social nature of the increased voter's turnout has not followed many clear patterns. The turnout among men has always been higher than women but the participation rate has improved faster among women than among men. Female turnout increased 20 percentage points from 38.8 per cent in 1975 to 57.3 per cent in 1989. However, its has been noted that the

involvement of women in politics is still largely separate from men. Both the number of women contestants and of representatives show a declining trend in parliamentary and assembly elections, though at local level, due to reservations, women's participation has increased. Since the 1980's there has been a proliferation of autonomous women's groups in most parts of the country and this has added a new social dimension to political participation in India. Voter turnout in urban areas was higher than in rural areas. The state-wise turnout figures broadly indicate that turnout tends to be higher in the southern states, Kerala, in particular, and West Bengal. Yadav, however, notes that one of the characteristics of the new democratic upsurge has been that practically everywhere rural constituencies report a higher turnout. While Muslim turnout in Muslim concentrated constituencies and turnout in reserved (SC) constituencies were not higher than the past, the reserved (ST) constituencies recorded higher than average turnout in Andhra, Gujarat and Maharashtra. So did some backward regions like Vidarbha and Marathwada in Maharashtra, east Delhi and Bundelkhand in UP. If the theory of new social constituency participating in Indian elections is not fully borne out at least there is hardly any doubt that such a constituency is now more intensively mobilised by political parties wherever possible.

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### **13.6 NON-PARTY INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

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It would certainly be wrong to completely detach such institutions as trade unions, peasant associations and the universities from the political parties. The latter had affiliations with these and have even today. But many have noted a growing inefficacy on the part of these institutions as agents of political participation and as controlling influences over the political parties. From the 1980s the change has become perceptible. One consequence of the Green revolution was to localise and disparate existing peasant movements. The globalising forces on the other hand have made the trade unions weak and this in turn reduced their influences on the party organisations, a fact reflected in the lack of importance attached by the parties, even left parties, in naming the trade union leaders among their sponsored candidates for election. The rise in the number of universities and their falling standards has also limited their influences as participating institutions in civil society. Of course several new actors, sometimes called NGOs, have emerged as agents of political participation mainly in regard to the implementation of official programmes or sponsored developmental projects. Their combined volume is not insignificant but it is still too early to assess their significance for popular participation.

There has however been somewhat rising political participation through what have come to be known as 'new social movements'—movements that have arisen as a response to, among other things, the violations of civil liberties and human rights, violence on or gender bias to women, the degradation of environment, destruction of tribal culture or way of life. Some have described these movements as 'counter hegemonic' and noted the following major categories: Women's Movements, Forest Struggles, Anti-Big-dam movements. Usually each of these movements develops independently of the other and keeps itself detached from traditional political parties. There have also been increasing cases of identity assertions and 'autonomy movements', some employing violent means, which represent non-party based channels of political participation in contemporary India.

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## **13.7 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND INDIAN DEMOCRACY**

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There has indeed been an upsurge in political participation in India with increasing competitiveness of the political parties, increased voter turnout, emergence of new forms of participation such as new social movements, institutions of grassroots politics, local level democracy and political assertions of the historically disadvantaged castes and ethno-regional groups. Apparently this represents a healthy trend towards further deepening of Indian democracy. Do we have a participant culture now in India? Though higher political mobilisation and higher electoral participation do not by themselves contribute to a participant culture, there has been a significant change of popular orientation from dependence on regular administration and traditional authority-symbols of society to people's representatives in everyday life, whether for certificates, aids or arbitration. But this upsurge in participation needs to be understood in the complexity of Indian process of democratisation. It is doubtful as to how much space has been created for a rational individual who exercises his/her sovereign power of citizenship in the electoral arena. This doubt arises not from the non-fulfillment of the basic requirements of procedural democracy like Universal Adult Franchise, rule of law and fundamental rights but from constraints on meaningful rational participation of the individual in democratic process. First, with numerous small parties that are not properly institutionalized and under total control of charismatic leaders, and some big parties showing no interest in promoting institutionalization, the individuals participate with severe constraints because parties are still in the centre of Indian democratic process. Second, several developments tend to constrain voters' right in recent years, such as the aborted attempt to make the qualifications and holdings of the election-candidates transparent, increasing use of electronic voting machines which make it impossible for a voter to 'waste' his or her vote and thereby express disapproval about the candidates. Third, instead of social cleavages being neutralised by political cleavages the latter tend to be grafted on the former in India due to unprincipled mobilisation leading to a 'crisis of governability'. This type of mobilisation and politicisation of masses by parties may have made Indian democracy not more deepening but 'more inclusive'. But the trouble with this inclusiveness is that the terms of inclusion are not always inclusive or modern but often exclusive and promote a step furthering the 'effective creolisation of the modern ideas, ideals and institutions of democratic politics in a non-European setting' (Yadav, 1998,p. 187). Finally, the institutional space for non-electoral modes of efficacious political activity has not grown to a degree found in European settings. On the whole however political parties have proved to be the most effective agents of political participation in India. Indian democratic experience has witnessed new forms of political participation in recent years and a rise in the quantity of political participation- though the exact nature and significance of that for Indian democracy can be disputed.

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## **13.8 SUMMARY**

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The concept of political participation has assumed a new significance in the Indian democratic process. The credit goes to the Behaviouralists for espousing this concept as an essential aspect for the democratic process. Various forms of political participation include voting in referendums, membership in political parties and pressure groups, government advisory committees, involvement in the implementation of social policies etc. The proliferation of

# **UNIT 14 WORKERS AND PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

## **Structure**

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Working Class Movements in India
  - 14.2.1 Emergence and Some Aspects of the Early and Contemporary Working Class in India
- 14.3 Peasant Movements in India
  - 14.3.1 The Congress, Communists and Peasant Movements in Colonial India
  - 14.3.2 The Movements of the Rural Poor in the Post-Colonial India
  - 14.3.3 The Movements of the Rural Rich: Farmers' Movements in Contemporary India
- 14.4 Summary
- 14.5 Exercises

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## **14.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In recent years there has been an enormous increase in the studies on social movements in India. The growth of interest is largely a result of the increasing number of movements surfacing in the post-colonial India. The movements are commonly and broadly classified as 'new' movements such as environmental movements, or 'old' movements such as the peasant or the working class movements. So far as approaches are concerned, these studies either follow the Marxian or the non-Marxian frameworks. The studies focus on the nature of the grievances that throw up the movements, the support base of the movements, the strategy the leaders of the movements adopt and the response of the authorities to the movements and related issues. In this unit, we shall briefly analyse two of the social movements, the peasant movements and the working class movements in the country.

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## **14.2 WORKING CLASS MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

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In this section of the Unit, we focus on the working class movement in the country. According to the labour historians, the span of working class activities in India is divided into four distinct phases. The first phase spans from 1850 to 1890; the second phase from 1890 to 1918; the third phase from 1918 to 1947 and finally the post-independence period. A treatment of the working class movement will follow a brief discussion of some of the essential aspects of the class in colonial and post-colonial India. We shall however restrict our discussion to the industrial working class in India since it is this class, which, to a large extent, is organised whereas workers engaged in the unorganised sector largely remain out of the fold of organised working class activity.

### **14.2.1 Emergence and Some Aspects of the Early and Contemporary Working Class in India**

The modern Indian working class arose in consequence to the development and growth of factory industries in India from the second half of the nineteenth century. It is however about the turn of the twentieth century, it took the shape of working class .An exact estimate of the total population of the working class is difficult to arrive at but N. M. Joshi, on the basis of the 1931 census, calculated ‘the labouring class at 50 million out of which roughly 10 percent were working in the organised industry’. So far as the major industries were concerned, the cotton textile industry in 1914 employed 2.6 lakh workers, the jute industry employed 2 lakh workers in 1912 the railways employed around 6 lakh workers. The number swell further and on the eve of World War II, in which, about 2 million were employed in manufacturing industry, 1.5 million in railways and 1.2 million in the British owned plantations.

The number increased significantly after independence and this was largely due to the expansion of the modern manufacturing industries in various sectors and also because of the growth of the public sector utilities, corporations and government offices. According to the 1981 census, the total number of workers in the modern manufacturing industries alone in India numbered around 2.5 million. In 1993 the average daily employment in factories was 8.95 million, in the mines it was 7.79 lakhs and in the plantations, it was 10.84 lakhs. Apart from this a large workforce was employed in the plantations, mining, construction, utilities, transportation etc. (GOI, Labour Bureau, 1997). In recent years owing to a number of reasons the rate in increase in employment has gone down and this had affected the employment potential and the condition of the working class proper.

A few interesting observations on the nature of the early and post independence working class may be made. Firstly, so far as the early working class is concerned it was divided into organised and unorganised sections and this distinction lies even today. Secondly, there was an insufficient class demarcation between a working class and a peasant. Labour historians have found that for a given period of time in a year the worker migrated to his village and worked as a peasant. Thirdly, the working class in the early years and to some extent even today is divided between class, caste, language, community, etc. Fourthly, today there is a distinction between the workers employed in the private sector and the public sector and within these sectors there are several categories like the workers in the MNCs and the domestic companies etc. Generally the workers employed in the public sector enjoy a better working condition than those who are employed in the private sector.

### **Working Class Movements in the Pre-Independence Period**

As already noted, the labour historians classify the movement of the workers in the country into four distinct phases. In this part of the section, we deal with the labour movement in the country till independence.

#### *The first phase :1850s till 1918*

The actions of the working class in the earliest stage were sporadic and unorganised in nature and hence were mostly ineffective. It is only from the late 19th century in Madras, and from the second decade of the twentieth century in Bombay that serious attempts were made for the formation of associations that could lead organised form of protests. Prior to that some

philanthropists in the 1880s sought to improve working conditions by urging the British authorities in India to introduce legislations for improving its condition. S. S. Bengalee in Bombay, Sasipada Banerjee in Bengal and Narayan Lokhandya in Maharashtra were prominent among them.

Nationalist historians often argue that the organised working class movement in the country was associated with the Indian national movement but this is only partially correct. Several movements took place even before the Congress took a serious note of the interests of the working class questions. Though the Congress was formed in 1885, it seriously thought of organising the working class only in the early 1920s. The Working class in the country was organising struggles against capital much before the 1920s. In the last decades of the 19th century, Lieten informs us, there occurred strikes at Bombay, Kurla, Surat, Wardha, Ahmedabad and in other places. According to official sources there were two strikes per year in every factory. The strikes however were only sporadic, spontaneous, localised and short-lived and were caused by factors such as reduction in wages, imposition of fines, dismissal or reprimand of the worker. These actions and militancy, which they showed, helped in the development of class solidarity and consciousness, which was missing earlier. The resistance was mediated by outsiders or outside leaders. Agitations grew and they were not on individual issues but on broader economic questions, thus leading to a gradual improvement later on.

### *The Second Phase: 1918 till Independence*

It was after World War I that the working class struggle in the country entered into a different phase. The unorganised movement of the workers took an organised form; trade unions were formed on modern lines. In several ways the decade of the 1920s is crucial in this regard. Firstly in the 1920s serious attempts were made by the Congress and the Communists to mobilise the working class and hence from then onwards the national movement established a connection with the working class. Secondly, it was in 1920 that the first attempt to form an all India organisation was made. Lokmanya Tilak, a Congressman from Bombay was instrumental in the formation of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) with Chaman Lal and others as office bearers of the organisation. Thirdly, in this decade, India witnessed a large number of strikes; the strikes were prolonged and well participated by the workers. The number of strikes and the number of workers involved in these strikes went on increasing in the subsequent decades. We shall return to this later after a brief discussion of the Congress and the Communist party's approach to labour.

The Indian National Congress started thinking of mobilising the working class from the 1920s. There were at least two reasons behind that: firstly, it felt that if it failed to bring the working class into their fold and control, India might face a people's revolution and secondly, because it realised that to launch an effective struggle against imperialism all the sections of the Indian society were to be mobilised. Though some Congressmen formed the AITUC in 1920 and resolutions were passed in 1920, 1922, 1924 and in 1930 in the all India conferences, the clearest policy of the Congress came only in 1936 when it appointed a committee to look after labour matters. Thus it was from the late 1930s that the Congress established deep links with the working class in the country. The Congress, however, believed in the Gandhian strategy of class harmony and as a result it did not lead any radical working class agitations. In fact two different strategies were to be found in operation, one was a radical one to be seen in

industries owned by foreign capital and the other, a mild one that was in operation in the Indian owned industries. All this was because the Congress, from the very beginning, attempted to become a political party of all the sections of the Indian society including the capitalists. Therefore, the Congress controlled and disciplined labour and was not seriously interested in radical working class movements.

The Communists who arrived in the 1920s seriously became interested in working class questions and therefore they sought to mobilise the working class through the Workers and Peasant Parties (WPPs) in which they were active throughout the country. It was because of the seriousness of the Communists, the WPPs were able to organise the working class considerably. The WPPs were most successful in Bombay where it organised a strike in 1928 than in other cities of India. In the period from 1930-35, the Communists however played no meaningful role in mobilising the workers but from the second half of the 1930s by following a policy of 'United National Front', it was able to secure a foothold among the working class.

Now let us turn once again to the organised working class movement in the country that is usually dated from the end of World War I. The twenties, in fact, was a decade when a large number of strikes took place. According to official sources there were 396 strikes in 1921 involving 600,000 workers. In the period between 1921-1925, on an average 400,000 workers in a year were involved in strikes. Similarly the year 1928 saw protracted strikes throughout the country. Apart from the strikes in Bombay there were strikes in the jute mills in Calcutta and in the Eastern Railways; in the latter, the strike continued for four months. On the whole, there was a radicalisation of working class activity by the end of the 1920s but what is also crucial is that there also grew differences between the Moderates and the Communists; as a result, the AITUC split and the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) was formed by the moderate leaders such as N.M. Joshi, V.V. Giri, B. Shivarao etc. Differences also cropped up among the Leftists due to which the extreme Leftists under the leadership of S.K. Deshpande and B.T. Ranadive broke away from the AITUC in 1930 and formed the All India Red Trade Union Congress (RTUC).

After a period of high activism, working class in the 1920s, there was a marked decline in the early 1930s between 1930-34, which were in fact the years of Great Depression. To Chamanlal Revri it was a period of setback to the entire trade union movement and that was due to the Meerut Conspiracy case in which many prominent Communist leaders were arrested and secondly, due to the successive splits that took place in the Trade Union Congress earlier. Though unions became weak, as a result of the depression and the effect, which it had on the living condition of the working class, workers continued their economic struggles in the years between 1931-1934. The number of industrial disputes increased from 141 in 1929 to 148 in 1930 and 166 in 1931, involving more than one lakh workers every year. Between 1931 and 1934, there were 589 disputes out of which around 52 percent of the disputes were in the cotton textile industry. Concerns regarding wage were the main questions that precipitated the disputes.

The Left led the unions that had become weaker in the early 1930s, but were able to reassert their influence by the year 1934. India was to witness a new strike wave and the issues that precipitated the strikes were the demand for the restoration of wage cuts, wage increases and the stopping of new forms of offensives against labour. In the year 1935 there were 135

disputes in which there was a heavy loss. In the following year 12 more disputes took place than that of 1935 but the number of workers involved during disputes was much higher than that of the previous year. The important strikes that took place were the strikes in cotton textile industry, jute industry and the strike in the railways. The number of registered trade unions also increased in these two years. In 1935 there were 213 registered unions in the country with a membership figure of 284,918. The number of unions increased to 241 by 1936.

The RTUC merged with the AITUC in 1935 and the NTUF affiliated itself with the AITUC in 1938. As a result of this, there was a growth of trade unions and trade union activity throughout the 1930s and the 1940s. The number of strikes went up by the end of the 1930s. During the period 1937-1939 the frequency of strikes and the number of strikes increased. In 1937 there were 379 strikes and in 1938 there were 399 strikes. In 1939, 406 disputes took place. The involvement of workers in these strikes was also higher. Two developments of critical importance in this period were: firstly, the strikes spread to several smaller industrial towns in the country and secondly, the working class during these struggles were not only defensive but were also offensive in the sense that they demanded among other things restoration of wage cuts, recognition of their union rights and resisted new forms of oppression of labour. It has also been found that an increasing number of women workers came to the forefront of the workers struggle.

The movement entered into a decisive phase in the 1940s and this phase coincided with the final phase of the National Movement, when the latter entered into its last phase beginning with the Quit India Movement of 1942. On the industrial front, from 1939 onwards the working condition of the workers was affected seriously. There was an increase in the working hours, multiple shift systems were introduced, wages were significantly reduced, and workers, on the whole, were subjected to great hardships. As a result, strikes erupted throughout the country and probably the most important demand of the workers was the demand for a Dearness Allowance against rising prices and cost of living. In 1942 there were 694 disputes, this increased to 820 in 1945. The number of workers involved in these disputes also increased to 7.47 lakhs in 1945. Between 1945-1947, after the end of the war, the working class confronted two distinct problems. First, was the problem of large- scale retrenchments and second, the problem of decline in earnings. As a result, the number of strikes reached a peak in 1947; there were 1811 strikes involving 1840 thousand workers.

### **Movements since Independence**

The transfer of power and Independence in 1947 meant a different atmosphere for the entire working class in the country. The movement entered into a different phase. In the initial years after independence between 1947-1960 due to the coming of several new industries whether in the private sector or in the public sector under the Five- year plans, the working class in the country as a whole was in a better condition; therefore organised action was not resorted to very frequently. As a result the number of conflicts including strikes declined between 1947 and 1960. The situation however changed in the 1960s and 1970s. The inflation years of the mid-1960s saw the real wages of the working class declining; as a result, disputes in the industrial front increased. In 1964 there were 2,151 disputes involving 1,002 thousand workers in which 7,725 man-days were lost. The number of man-days lost probably points out to the

severity of the movements.

One of the important features in the trade union front was the establishment of trade unions that were to be dominated by the parties. As a result of this, most of the unions that came up functioned as an organ (mass organisations) of their parent parties. It is because of this control of the parties over the unions, the latter lost all autonomy and the programmes and policies of the parties, in every important way, became the programmes and policies of the unions. The number of national unions in the country multiplied. By the end of World War II there were two all India organisations, the Indian Federation of Labour (IFL) and the largest union, the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). By 1949 there were four unions and all these unions were linked or affiliated to and controlled by political parties. The Communists dominated the AITUC, IFL was affiliated to the Radical Democratic Party of M.N.Roy, the Indian National Congress controlled the INTUC and the Socialist Party members dominated the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS). The HMS splitted further and the UTUC was formed. The AITUC also split in 1970 and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was born and affiliated to the CPI (M).

For the country as a whole, the period between the late 1960s to the imposition of the emergency was a period of political turmoil and this significantly affected and shaped the working class movement in the country. Indira Gandhi started centralising and concentrating power in her hands after the elections of 1971. Taking advantage the capitalist class resorted to new forms of offensives, lockouts being the main, due to which large number of man-days was lost. For example, in the period 1971-75 the average annual workdays lost through lockouts was as high as 60.23 thousand. The figure rose to 105.46 thousand in the period 1976-80. So far as the working class in the public sector undertakings were concerned, they were hit directly by the centralised bureaucratic state apparatus. As a result of this the working class in both the sectors responded with strikes due to which the number of disputes in the country increased significantly. Rudolph and Rudolph (1998) found that in the period between 1965 and 1975 the number of workdays lost (from strikes or lockouts) increased by almost 500 percent. The most important strike that took place was the Railway strike of 1974, which till date remains the most serious of all the direct working class actions in the country. The strike was important because it was the only strike that was able to challenge the might of the Indian state.

In the country as a whole, since the emergency, the working class had to face a number of offensives from the employers. Lockouts in the private sector increased as a result, of which a large percentage of workdays were lost. During the years 1980-1987, lockouts made up from 29 to 65 percent of workdays lost in industrial disputes. The loss of workdays in the 1980s went on increasing. To one estimate during 1985, 1987 and 1988, workdays lost in lockouts actually exceeded those lost in strikes by as much as 55, 52, and 71 percent respectively. This growth in lockouts has adversely affected the industrial working class in the country since it throws the working class to a condition of unemployment. Along with other kind of problems, industrial sickness also affected the working class in the 1980s. In 1976, 241 large industrial units were sick. In 1986, the figure had risen to 714. Among the medium scale industrial units, in 1986, 1,250 units were closed due to sickness. The number of sick small units also increased in the 1980s. For example, in 1988, 217,436 small units were lying sick. Thus the working class was hit hard in the 1980s by lockouts, closures and sickness.

The problem of Lockout continues even today and has assumed a serious proportion. In 1999, according to the Labour Bureau, there were 387 lockouts; in 2000, there were 345 and in the year 2001, there were 302 lockouts (GOI, Labour Bureau, 2002).

Since the late 1980s and 1990s, the working class is confronted with two different forms of offensives that it has not faced earlier. The first problem that it faces is the growth of *Hindutva* based political parties, namely the BJP and the Shiv Sena and the consequent growth of their labour organisations i.e., Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) and Bharatiya Kamgar Sena (BKS) respectively that has in turn fragmented the working class among communal lines. Secondly, with the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) since 1991 and the consequent globalisation of the Indian economy, labour in the country has been facing the might of capital in a different form. The first problem is divisive in nature since it had divided the working class in the country among communal lines whereas the second development has affected the working class significantly and has thrown challenges to the organised working class movement in the country. The second problem is much more severe at this juncture and it is to this we now turn.

The introduction of the New Economic Policy since 1991 had severely affected the working class in the country. There are different components of this New Economic Policy but the core emphasis is on Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation. Liberalisation has meant reduction of government control over the private sector; as a result, the bargaining position of the workers vis-a-vis capital has declined. The policies of privatisation under which several important public sector units in the country is being sold to private companies had opened up new challenges for the workers and the trade unions in the country. As a result of the overall policies, the likely problem will be, there will be no statutory minimum wages for labour, no obstructions to retrenchment giving the employers the complete right to hire and fire. The developments in the Indian economy in the last one decade or more have created fundamental problems for the working class and the unions are finding it difficult to resist the encroachment of capital on the rights of the workers.

Before we conclude this section, it will be useful for us to note some of the weaknesses of the movement. Firstly, within the working class in the country a large section of the workforce, the unorganised ones even today remain outside the fold of trade unions. On the whole, the unions in this country have neglected the problems of the unorganised sector and Rudolph and Rudolph are correct when they conclude that almost all the unions including the Left led unions has taken the ‘relatively easy path of organising and pressing demands on behalf of those who are easily organised and whose employer-government-responds readily. In absolute terms the unorganised workers are poor and vulnerable to exploitation than the workers in the organised sector.

The second major problem, which confronts the working class movement, is the multiplicity of trade unions. We have noted earlier that after independence trade unions representing workers in the country have multiplied. By the end of the Second World War there were only two All India organisations, by 1949 there were four all India organisations and today there are more than ten national level organisations affiliated to the major parties in the country.

Ideological problems are often cited as the reason for this state of affairs though in actual practice unions are less ideological and are striving for organising the workers principally on economic issues. Multiplicity of political parties may be accepted as a norm in a democracy but multiplicity of Unions in a capitalist system keeps the working class fragmented and vulnerable to all forms of pressures.

Trade unions in the country, as a whole, have not been responsive to the problems of the working class in the country. Unions lie fragmented from the factory to the national level that has produced bitter rivalry among unions and hence very often they have failed to respond to the issues of the working class. Due to the reasons cited above and also because of the fact that political parties control Unions, the latter have failed to become militant for addressing the grievances of the workers. The growing number of closures, suspensions of work and other forms of offensives in the country in recent years after the introduction of the New Economic Policy indicates the weakness of the movement. Various studies have also found that the industrial working class in the country has not ‘allied with the peasants and other sections of the society in collective direct action on political issues’. This reflects the low level of political consciousness of the working class.

To sum up, the movement of the organised workers in the country dates back to the period when industrialisation started and the first working class in the country appeared. The movements however took an organised form after the First World War with the emergence of trade unions. Movement of the workers, since then, continues to surface even today but the organised movements in the country face a number of problems. The most important of all the problems include fragmentation of unions, affiliation of the unions with political parties, lack of militancy by the established unions and a general apathy towards organising workers employed in the unorganised sector of the economy. All these problems have affected the working class movement in the country adversely.

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### **14.3 PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

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Agrarian movements in contemporary India may be broadly classified into two main categories. The first type of movements is those of the poor, the marginal or small peasants. These movements voice the demands related to their economic condition, for example, demand of the agricultural labourers for higher wages and better working condition. The second type of movements is of the more prosperous peasants, those who produce a considerable surplus within the rural economy. These movements are often in social science literature referred to as ‘Farmers’ Movement’ or ‘New Agrarianism’ or ‘New Peasant Movements’.

The first category of movements date back to the colonial period. Kathleen Gough in 1974 found that in India 77 peasant uprisings took place since the British period (Gough 1974). In the initial years the sporadic movements were directed against the extraction of the Zamindars and other forms of intermediaries. We shall see later that these movements were and are around the grievances of the rural poor and in the pre independence years they developed in close connection with the national movement. The second category of movement has arisen in recent years in the Green revolution areas such as in western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana,

Punjab or south-western Maharashtra or in the far south such as Karnataka or Tamil Nadu and it is the rich and the middle peasants, the prosperous within the rural economy that organise and lead it. These movements have become much more prominent in recent years. The movements target the state, the bureaucratic apparatus and demand among other things concessions from the state like, rise in the remunerative prices for crops, decrease in the prices of agricultural inputs, providing electricity at a cheap rate etc. By focussing on the decline in the terms of trade over the years they also have created and highlighted a distinction between the ‘town’ and the ‘country’ and some of the leaders (for example, Sharad Joshi of the Shetkari Sangathan) emphasises that ‘Bharat’ is being exploited by ‘India’.

In this section of the Unit, we concentrate on the origins and the nature of the movement of different kinds, the demands raised, issues involved and the problems with the movements. In the first part of this section, we look at the nature of agrarian mobilisation and the peasant movements in the colonial period by focussing on the mobilisation and movements led by the Congress and the others led by the Communist Party of India. We shall focus on the relation of the peasant movement with that of the national movement and also the two most prominent movements, Tebhaga and Telengana that were led by the Communists. In the second part we look at the agrarian mobilisation and movements after independence. In the last part of our discussion we look briefly at the ‘Farmers’ movements that had acquired prominence in contemporary India.

#### **14.3.1 The Congress, Communists and Peasant Movements in Colonial India**

The peasants had been the worst sufferers of the British Raj in colonial India. Even before the Congress decided to mobilise the peasants, the latter had already developed their organisations and were in fact protesting against the local Zamindars who, to them, were the main enemies. Thus there has been much peasant unrest and occasional uprisings in the pre-nationalist era. The two most important uprisings in the pre-nationalist period were the movement of the Indigo planters of 1860 and the Moplah uprising of 1921 in Malabar.

In the initial years the Congress ignored the urgency of improving the agrarian situation. It was only in the 1920s that Gandhi sought to convert the Congress organisation into a mass organisation and hence thought of bringing the peasants into the fold of the Congress. Two important developments were in fact responsible for the establishment of contact between the peasants and the Congress in the late 1920s. The first was the constant banging of the Congress doors by the peasants on the one hand and second was the need by the Congress to enlist peasant support for the national movement.

Despite the fact that the Congress took a late initiative in reaching the peasants in the countryside, it became a strong force to reckon with very soon. Since the Congress wanted to become a political party of all the classes in the Indian society, it attracted even the landed rich to enter the organisation and once the latter entered, it is the latter who in fact dominated the organisation and decided the rural strategies of the party and hence the Congress could not pursue any radical peasant agitation. The Congress was more interested in enlisting the support of the bulk of the peasants for the purpose of national agitation but never went for and encouraged class

war with the upper strata in rural society. In a nutshell, it can be said that because of Gandhi's and Congress' emphasis on class harmony and because of its primary emphasis on socio-cultural revival of the rural community that the Congress could never launch serious agitations in the countryside, though it was able to draw the support of a part of the rural community during its anti imperialist agitations.

Apart from the Congress, the Communists were the other major force that mobilised the peasants. Though the CPI was formed in 1920, (to some in 1925), its serious engagement with the peasantry started with the formation of the All India Kisan Congress later renamed as the Kisan Sabha and the primary purpose of the Sabha was to mobilise the peasants. It is after this pursuing broadly a tactics of 'United Front' in cooperation with the national movement the CPI increased its membership in the peasant front and set the stage for the most revolutionary struggles in the countryside, though most of the struggles, as we shall see later, were local in their spread.

The tactics that the Communists adopted were to work at the grass root level and this tactics paid them rich dividends. In the countryside they worked through the Kisan Sabhas. In the beginning it was not a class based organisation, it represented even the well to do peasants, though, in this period, the Communists ensured that the Kisan Sabha would take up at least some of the issues of the rural poor. The rural rich were well represented in the Sabha because of the Congress Socialists' emphasis on a multi- class organisation. It was only in the years 1941-43 that the AIKS passed into the hands of the Communists and it Swami Shajanand who tried to build the Kisan Sabha as an organisation of the rural poor and this alienated the rich and the middle peasants. The control of the CPI over the Kisan Sabha was complete by the year 1944-45. The membership of the Kisan Sabha kept on increasing and by 1944 it increased to 553,427 (Dhanagare, 1980). After completely capturing it the CPI and the Kisan Sabha could in fact make the Sabha an organisation of the poor peasants, tenants-at will, sharecroppers and landless agricultural labourers. It is with this base that it could, in the later years, launch and lead agrarian struggles, in the pre-independence period. The Tebhaga movement in Bengal (1946-47) and the Telengana movement (1946-51) in the former Hyderabad state were led by the Communists and it is these movements that we now turn to.

### **The Tebhaga Movement**

The Tebhaga movement is one of the two great movements, which arose in India in the mid-forties immediately after World War II. The movement arose in North Bengal and included the districts of Dinajpur and Rangpur in East Bengal and Jalpaiguri and Malda in West Bengal. The movement was for the reduction in the share of the produce from one-half to one-third, that is the rent, which they used to pay to the *jotedars* who possessed superior rights on land. It was revolutionary in character in terms of the demands raised and was consciously organised by the Kisan Sabha. Hence it marked a departure from the pattern of movements noticed in the country under the leadership of the Congress and influenced by the Gandhian ideology.

In Bengal where the revolt took place the permanent settlement had been introduced in 1793 and this had inaugurated a new arrangement in the pattern of landholding in the region. Between the *Zamindars* and the direct peasant producers there came into being a number

of intermediaries such as the *Jotedars*. These *Jotedars* in turn used to sublet their land to the *bargadars* or the share-croppers who cultivated the land and used to pay a part (one half) of the produce known as *adhi* or *bhag* to the *jotedars*. The rights of the *Bargadars* in the piece of land, which they cultivated, were only temporary and existed only for a fixed period usually for a period of five years. The *Jotedars* were not the only exploiters in the rural economy but there also existed the *Mahajans* or moneylenders (often the landlords themselves) who used to provide credit to the *Bargadars*. Thus the exploitation of the *Bargadars* by the *Jotedars* and the *Mahajans* was complete. There were a few peasant owners (middle peasants) who owned and cultivated on their pieces of land but were always under pressure and very often lost their land and joined the category of landless peasants and turned *Bargadars* often on their own pieces of land.

Though the *Bargadars* constituted around one fifth and quarter of the rural population, the movement encompassed the entire rural population. The condition of the rural landless and the peasants became horrible with the Bengal Famine of 1943, when, according to conservative estimates, 3.5 million peasants perished in the Great Bengal Famine. The movement began as a movement of the middle peasants on their own behalf but later on drew on the sharecroppers or the *Bargadars*. Bhowani Sen points out that the history of the Tebhaga movement can be traced back to 1939 when small peasants revolted against the *Jotedars*. Officially, however, it started in 1946 though it gathered momentum in the years since 1945.

It was only in 1946, when the Communist Party of India threw its weight behind the movement, it took a revolutionary turn. The main struggles were fought during the time of the harvest season when the sharecroppers refused to provide the amount of paddy to the *Jotedars*. Refusing to pay to the *Jotedars*, the *Bargadars* took away the paddy to their houses or *Khamars* (threshing place) and that precipitated the struggles in the countryside. The *Jotedars* got the support of the police to protect their interests. It was the peasant committees, which became a power in the villages and led the peasants. These committees carried out the administration of the villages. The Muslim League and the Congress supported the *Jotedars* and eventually were successful in suppressing the movement. The movement eventually collapsed and was officially called off in the summer of 1947. Though the movement failed, it had important implications for the entire history of agrarian struggles in India.

### **The Telengana Peasant Uprising**

The Telengana peasant movement started in mid-1946 and continued till the October of 1951. The movement engulfed the whole of the Telengana region of the Hyderabad state and the adjoining districts of the Andhra delta. It has been regarded as the most revolutionary of all the movements in India, in its character and political objectives. The CPI through its peasant wing, the Kisan Sabha, launched the movement. It appears that the CPI could launch the movement after it eschewed the strategy of 'United Front' and adopted a strategy of initiating insurrectionary struggles.

In the whole of Hyderabad state to which the Telengana region belonged, there were two main types of land tenure. The first was the *Khalsa* or *Diwani* tenure, which was similar to the *raiyatwari* system that is the peasant-proprietary system. Under this system the landowners were not called actual owners but were called *pattadars* (registered occupants) and under

this system lay around 60 percent of the land of Hyderabad. The actual occupants were the *shikmidars*, who had full rights of occupancy but were not registered. When the pressure on land grew the *shikmidars* also leased out their land to the tenants but the later were not the real owners, neither had they any protection against eviction. The second kind of tenure, which existed, was under the *jagirdari* system. *Sarf-e-khas* was the special land assigned to the Nizam himself. These were the crown lands and the Nizam's noblemen, who were granted land in return of military services during emergency administered these lands. The peasants, under the *jagirdari* system, were the most oppressed. In the whole of Hyderabd state, the peasantry in the Telengana region suffered the most oppressive system of exploitation.

The movement led by the Communists began in Nalgonda district in 1946 and then spread to the neighbouring Warangal and Bidar districts and finally engulfed the whole of the Telengana region. The objective of the movement, from the very beginning, was a broad one and was concerned with the whole of the peasantry against illegal and excessive extraction by the rural feudal aristocracy. The most powerful demand was that all peasant debt should be written off. The second stage of the movement began when in order to counter the oppression let loose by the aristocracy the peasantry launched the armed struggle. Thus, with this, the movement entered into its revolutionary phase.

It entered the revolutionary phase when over 2,000 villages set up their own 'Peoples Committees'; these 'Committees' took over land, maintained their own army and own administration (Mehta, 1979). This rule of the peasants in a large part of the region and the armed resistance continued until 1950 and was finally crushed by the Indian army. It was ultimately called off in 1951. It was an agrarian struggle in which many peasants were killed by the army of the landed gentry and later by the Indian army after the takeover of the Hyderabad state by the Indian army. The demands raised were broad ones and the nature of the struggle itself makes this movement one of the most revolutionary agrarian struggles of India unmatched so far in the Indian history.

#### **14.3.2 The Movements of the Rural Poor in the Post-Colonial India**

In Independent India it has been the Left, parliamentary as well as non-parliamentary who have been the main organisers of the peasants. Mobilisation has taken place on different issues like increase in agricultural wages, land to the tiller, etc. and the principal target has been the rural rich on whose mercy the landless labourers and the marginal peasants depend. Since the established Communists accepted the parliamentary form of struggle and almost eschewed armed revolt as a form of struggle, the Independent India has not witnessed any major armed uprising in the countryside except in Naxalbari. The CPI, in the initial years, pinned its hope on the Congress government for bringing about radical programmes to alter the landholding pattern in the countryside. As the Congress governments adopted land reforms in various states, the CPI focussed its attention on the implementation part of the programme.

The CPI diluted its programme and moved further away from its radical strategy when, in its Congress in 1958 at Amritsar, it officially adopted a programme of peaceful transition to socialism. It split in 1964 on the primary question of strategy to be adopted but the CPI (M), that was formed as a result of the split, in the future years accepted and adopted almost a

similar strategy. Therefore, it is due to this, the two mainstream Communist parties have not taken recourse to non-parliamentary method for the purpose of addressing the agrarian question in the Indian countryside. Direct struggles in the countryside have been eschewed by the mainstream Left that has accepted parliamentary form of mobilisation and movements through its mass organisations. The parties have been organising and mobilising the peasants and the agricultural workers on different issues but its areas of strength lies in only a few regions of the country.

Both the mainstream Communist parties, the CPI and the CPI (M) have formed peasant organisations like the Kisan Sabhas and organisation of agricultural labourers for mobilising the concerned sections and have achieved limited success in Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura and in some other states. Similarly the CPI (M-L) is active in Bihar and has formed its peasant front, the Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS) which is active in many of the districts of Bihar including those districts which are now in the new state of Jharkhand, organising the rural poor and also the middle peasants by taking up issues which affect them. The non-parliamentary Left, for example the Marxist Coordination Committee (MCC) or the Peoples War Group (PWG), has been mobilising the rural poor in states like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and Punjab and using violence as a strategy to address the question of the rural poor. Hence the Communists in the country had met with limited success in the countryside. In the next part of the section, we turn to the Naxalbari peasant uprising led by a faction of the CPI (M) that took place in the country after Independence.

### **The Naxalbari Peasant Uprising**

The Naxalbari peasant uprising that occurred in the northern part of West Bengal is the last of the major uprisings India has witnessed. It took place in post-colonial India and was led by a faction of the CPI (M). The two most prominent leaders of the CPI (M) who disagreed with the official position of the party and led the movement were Kanu Sanyal and Charu Mazumdar. It erupted in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas in West Bengal, in a place called Naxalbari falling within the subdivision of Siliguri in Darjeeling district. It is in Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa, the three police station areas where the movement took a militant turn. The region is different from that of the whole of West Bengal because within it, there exists numerous tea plantations and a large proportion of tribal population. Tea plantations have developed along the lines of a plantation economy whereas the tribal population in this region include the Santhals, Rajbansis, Oraons, Mundas and a small number of Terrai Gurkhas. It is because of the combination of these two factors that the whole region has a history of land disputes in West Bengal. The landless peasants in this region had since long claimed that their land were being encroached by the tea estates and also by the rich peasants. Thus it is because of this peculiarity, the Naxalbari area had witnessed a number of peasant disputes led mainly by an indigenous peasant leadership and not by the outside middle class leaders.

The agrarian revolt arose in the month of April 1967 after the formation of the new government in West Bengal in which the CPI (M) was a major partner. The movement continued till June in full swing in the whole Siliguri subdivision. Kanu Sanyal, the leader of the movement specified ten great tasks, which included *inter alia*, land which was not owned and tilled by peasant themselves was to be redistributed, peasants were to burn all legal deeds and documents, unequal agreements between the moneylenders and the peasants were to be

declared null and void, hoarded rice were to be confiscated by the peasants and distributed among the peasants, all *jotedars* to be tried and sentenced to death etc. He urged the peasants to arm themselves with traditional weapons.

The high point of the movement was reached in the month of May. Forceful occupations by the peasants took place and according to government sources there were around 60 cases of forcible occupations, looting of rice and paddy and intimidation and assaults. The leaders of the movement claimed that around 90 percent of the peasants in the Siliguri subdivision supported the movement. The movement came to a halt, when, under central government pressure, the West Bengal police entered the region and swept the area. Cases of killing of landlords were carried on later as a part of the annihilation strategy. The movement spread to other areas of the state and elsewhere in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh later in the form of the Naxalite movement. Thus, the Naxalbari peasant uprising had far reaching consequences in the Independent India.

#### **14.3.3 The Movements of the Rural Rich: Farmers' Movements in Contemporary India**

In this part of the section, we shall focus on two of the prominent movements of the rural rich, one led by the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) in western Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and the Shetkari Sangathan (SS) which represents primarily the interests of the sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, grape and onion growers in south-west Maharashtra though it also has its base in Gujarat. There are other organisations and movements in the country as well like the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha movement led by Nanjundaswamy in Karnataka and Vivasayigal Sangam movement led by Narayanswamy Naidu in Tamil Nadu, the Khedut movement in south of Gujarat; but in recent years, the BKU movement led by Mahendra Singh Tikait and the movement by the SS led by Sharad Joshi has drawn more national attention because of their militancy and spread. We would begin with the BKU and then come to a discussion of the SS and end up with a comparison of the two movements.

Before we look at the BKU, let us look at the nature of the rural economy in the west Uttar Pradesh and in the states of Punjab and Haryana that forms the backbone of the movement. This region is highly prosperous because of the massive capitalist investment in agriculture. Apart from foodgrains, sugarcane is the principal crop that is produced. A section of the peasantry having land in these states has been transformed into a class of capitalist farmers who produce much more than what their family consumes and hence the surplus is sold in the market. They own capital assets like tractors, thrashers, pump sets etc. and hire agricultural labourers for the purpose of cultivation since their family labour is not sufficient.

The BKU was originally formed on August 13, 1978 in Haryana under the guidance of Charan Singh, the undisputed peasant leader of North India. The death of Charan Singh in 1987 created a political vacuum among the peasants in North India and this was filled up by Mahendra Singh Tikait. After the death of Charan Singh, Tikait attempted to convert the organisation into a militant one after the Shamli agitation in April, 1987 in Muzzafarnagar district. In this agitation the BKU raised demands against rise in power tariff and erratic supply of electricity that was so crucial for the farmers of western Uttar Pradesh. The concessions

which the BKU was able to secure (a reduction in the power tariff by one sixth) increased the prestige of the BKU and its leader, Mahendra Singh Tikait and soon after that a large number of rich peasants from several districts joined the organisation. After the Shamli agitation, two more agitations solidified the support base of the BKU and brought the BKU into national prominence. The two agitations were the Dharna in Meerut and Delhi in 1988. The agitations were long and militant in nature and received widespread support. The Meerut dharna continued for 25 days and was impressive and peaceful. The main demands of the movements were similar to the demands of the other agitations of the prosperous farmers in the country. The demands centred around, electricity, remunerative prices, low import costs and the inclusion of BKU representatives on various committess appointed by the government for fixation of prices. Since then the BKU has successfully spearheaded the farmers' movement in north India under the leadership of Mahendra Singh Tikait.

A few important points regarding the BKU should be noted at this juncture. It began as an organisation of all the rich farmers of western Uttar Pradesh but today it has essentially become the organisations of the well to do *Jat* peasant. The membership is primarily made up of the Jats. The Rajputs, the Gujars, the Tyagis and the Muslims (the other farmers) after participating enthusiastically in the BKU led movements in its early years had deserted the organisation. Thus the BKU has lost its multi-caste peasant alliance character. The second fundamental point regarding the BKU is its apolitical character. The constitution of the BKU states very clearly that it is an apolitical organisation. The leadership of the BKU has zealously guarded the apolitical character of the organisation. Mahendra Singh Tikait detests politics and argues that all parties are parties of India and not of Bharat.

Sharad Joshi's Shetkari Sangathan has its origin in the late 1970s when, in October 1979, it opened an office in Chakan, Maharashtra. It primarily represents the interests of the farmers who cultivate cotton, onions, tobacco, grapes and sugarcane in rural Maharashtra. The SS and Sharad Joshi rose to national prominence with the rasta roko (block roads) agitation in 1980 when tens and thousands of farmers in the state of Maharashtra blocked important roads connecting Bombay and other cities and the most important issue, which the SS raised, was the issue of low prices of sugarcane and cotton and demanded that the prices of these products be raised. The movement was successful because it was able to secure some rise in the prices of the commodities and also because it was able to bring the farmers' movement in the state to prominence.

Sharad Joshi again sought to address the plight of the Farmers with the Nipani agitation in April 1981. The movement's support, however, started declining till the mid, 1980s due to the fact that though the leadership announced a number of agitations, it did not launch any serious one. In the early 1980s, Sharad Joshi entered the Gujarat scene. Since then the SS is associated with the farmers' movement in Gujarat. His novel contribution in Gujarat lay in his emphasis that the Farmers' movement cannot succeed unless and until the agricultural labours and poor peasants are associated with the movement. With this emphasis, he was able to entice the rural poor within the Kheduts' movement or farmers' movement. In 1985 the SS took a very pragmatic decision in Maharashtra of supporting opposition political parties and started closely working with the other organisations and people who were associated with the rural sector. This paid some dividends and it is due to this its support base broadened. The next agitation that it organised was of January 1987 over cotton prices. Since then the farmers'

movement in Maharashtra has matured and gained prominence; but in recent years, there has been a considerable decline in the support base of the SS largely due to the fact that it has failed to launch any serious agitation in the 1990s and also because of Joshi's blatant support to the liberalisation of the economy.

A few points regarding the SS movement of Sharad Joshi must be made before we attempt to compare it with the BKU movement of Mahendra Singh Tikait in north India. The SS movement of Maharashtra and Gujarat is the movement of the rich farmers like that of the BKU movement in north India though it also voices the demands and interests of the rural poor. Another crucial point regarding the SS is that the movement aims at reducing the role of the state; the state is considered as the greatest enemy of the farmers. It is because of this position that it has embraced liberalisation, open market and even the Dunkel draft partially.

Though the similarities between the BKU and the SS are striking, there are dissimilarities as well. Gupta (1997) has noted six differences between the two. We shall however discuss only three briefly. The BKU is largely concerned with the owner cultivators, primarily *jats* of the region whereas the SS has tried to mobilise the rural poor though essentially it is a movement of the rural rich. Secondly, the SS movement is a movement, which has been joined and led by a few intellectuals, making it an ideologically organised movement in contrast to the BKU which possesses only an informal organisational set up. Lastly, the BKU now mainly represents the egalitarian *Jat* owner cultivators whereas the SS represents primarily the Marathas but it is not an organisation of a single caste. The Dhangars, Malis and Banjaras are equally involved in the organisation.

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## 14.4 SUMMARY

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In this unit you have studied about the working class and peasant movements in India. The working class movement has passed through the four phases. In the contemporary phase it is faced with the problems of communal division and the new economic policies. An analysis of the peasants and farmers' movements in the contemporary India reveals that although both forms of mobilisation and movements are prevalent, the first is mainly led by the mass organisations of the Left and other political parties and the second is being led by the well-to-do prosperous peasant organisations though it attracts even the marginal and poor peasants in different regions. The movements of the rich, however, have acquired more prominence because of its militancy and prolonged agitations in recent years whereas the first one suffers from the lack of militancy. In fact the Left, that had led agrarian agitations till the late 1960s has not led any serious movement since the last thirty years. This is largely due to the fact that serious class struggle is not in the immediate agenda of the established Left parties. The non-parliamentary Left, however, is exceptional in this regard but it enjoys only a limited rural base. The increase in militancy of the rich farmers has been mainly because of their location in the social structure, which gives them the ability to sustain movements more than the poor or the small peasants.

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## 14.5 EXERCISES

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- 1) Trace the history of the working class movements in the pre-independent era.

# **UNIT 15 MEDIA AND PUBLIC POLICY**

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## **Structure**

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 What is Public Policy
  - 15.2.1 Definitions
  - 15.2.2 Public Policy and Governance
- 15.3 Media and Democracy: its Role and Effect
  - 15.3.1 Early days
  - 15.3.2 Modern Democracies and the Press
  - 15.3.3 New Media Technologies and Democracy
- 15.4 Media and Public Opinion
- 15.5 Case Study
  - 15.5.1 Public Policy on CNG
- 15.6 Summary
- 15.7 Exercises

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## **15.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Democracy and Media are two major elements in the process of Development, as development is no longer viewed as the sole responsibility of the elected governments. In spite of the policy initiatives, the governments need people's participation in the development and the various democratic processes like elections, movements and public debates help in securing it. The Media, including the news media, too provides a forum for public debate on the issues of development apart from providing information regarding such issues.

In this era of globalisation, the media has emerged as one of the most powerful components of social management. The role of mass media in shaping the public opinion is well known. However, some communication experts and social scientists think that opinion leaders have more significant role in shaping the public opinion. But from the days of Capitalist revolution, the press was accorded the status of the fourth estate for no other reason than its power to influence the minds and thus accelerate the political process in favour of bourgeois democracy.

In this Unit, we shall understand the role of media in the policy making in general and public policy in particular. The role of media is two fold. On the one hand, the media influences the policy makers by putting forth the opinions expressed by various groups including educationists, journalists and experts, leaders of different political parties, religious leaders, workers and peasants Unions, etc. On the other hand, the media pressurises the policy makers or the authorities to act in response to people's interest and demands by opening a debate and educate the masses. We shall also discuss the

impact of globalisation and technological advancement on the process of democratisation as well as on media and social development.

We shall also examine the role of media technologies in advancing the process of democratization.

## **15.2 WHAT IS PUBLIC POLICY?**

Public policy is a process that allows the national government, state governments, municipalities and panchayats to implement certain measures that would be in public interest. The matters regarding the health, social welfare, media, defense, agriculture, etc., are considered as issues affecting the masses and are said to be matters of public policy.

### **15.2.1 Definitions**

A definition of public policy could be the one given by Considine who says, “public policy is an action which employs governmental authority to commit resources in support of a preferred value”. Policy-making, according to him, includes “the clarification of public values; commitments of money and services; and granting of rights and entitlements” (Considine, 1994, p3).

According to a scholar, public policy is where the “communities trying to decide something as a community.” However, another scholar feels that public policies are “government decisions and actions to solve public problems”. He also defines public policy by saying, “Public policy is the result of the struggle over the definition of the good society and the best ways to make it happen”.

Yet, another definition of public policy could be the one that sees public policy as a strategy for achieving public goals through the management and allocation of power, rights, resources, information, and inducements.

As we have seen, the domain of public policy is very large and it includes anything under the sun that concerns people. Be it a matter of hygiene or be it a matter of potable drinking water there is always a need to identify a policy and then execute it in such a way that people feel good.

### **15.2.2 Public Policy and Governance**

In democracies, people elect their leaders at various levels based on the latter’s capabilities of providing good governance. If the leaders belonging to a particular political party that forms the government do not make policies on matters affecting the masses, they are rejected by people. It is important for political parties who rule and those who sit in the opposition benches to have a certain perspective and stand on major issues concerning public policy. In a way, one can say that policy making, debating over the existing policies and projecting a different viewpoint about public policy, becomes an integral part of democracy and democratic governance.

In democratic forms of government; the major part of public policies are made in the parliament through legislative processes. Democracies have many layers of policy making institutions like state level and local governing bodies. Parliament is the supreme symbol of people's participation where people elect their representatives. These representatives then discuss and debate all policy initiatives of the government before they are legislated upon. The political parties are another form of people's representation. People with similar political interest and views form a political party that reflects the ideology of a section of people. Workers and peasant movements, civil society like NGO's and Social Movements are also forums of political expression. Media is yet another institution that facilitates the communication between the government and the people.

## **15.3 MEDIA AND DEMOCRACIES: ITS ROLE AND EFFECT**

### **15.3.1 Early days**

The press and politics have been closely associated since the invention of printing press and later with the emergence of democracy in Europe. Though the press emerged in Europe much earlier than the bourgeois revolution, it acquired significance only during and after the revolution. The feudal system was overthrown to establish the bourgeois democracy that cherished the values of liberty, equality and fraternity. However, the press, before the revolution, became a leading forum for the debate without which the thoughts of John Stuart Mill, Hobbes and Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu and many other philosophers and political thinkers would not have been disseminated. The much-talked about philosophical debate between Pascal and Descartes also became possible by the existence of the press. It would be appropriate to say that the press became the vehicle for these debates that provided the theoretical base to the political movement of bourgeois democracy. Therefore, it was legitimate to grant it the status of the fourth estate in modern democracies.

The task of the press in the initial days of capitalism was to consolidate the achievements of the emerging democracy. It was at this juncture where the role of press in the political development was defined. It became the main vehicle of the ideological growth of bourgeois democracy and communicated with the people on behalf of the authorities. Those who came to enjoy power have always claimed that they are forming a government of the people, for the people and by the people. Whatever political, economic, social or cultural had to be reported could not have been reported if it would undermine the gains of the system and would attempt to revert the society to the older system. It was for this reason that the advocate of the democracy said, "if freedom is abused to the extent of threatening good morals and the authority of the state, it must be restrained."

In the years to come the bourgeois democracies matured and realised that the process of democratising the masses could not be accelerated without allowing a more free press than what it already was.

The modern democratic states with their lofty ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity regulated the political process of the nations with the help of Parliament (Legislature),

Government (Executive) and the Court (Judiciary). It declared the press as the fourth pillar of democracy. The Press then became the prime agent of free debate in Europe and America.

Talking about the mission of American Press, Herbert J. Altschull describes the relationship of democracy and the news media. He says:

"In a democracy, it is the people who rule, and their voices are heard in the voting booths. The decisions made by the people in voting booths depend upon the information made available to them. The news media primarily provides that information. Hence, the news media are indispensable to the survival of democracy. To carry the assumption a bit further: A democracy is a free society. In no other form of government are citizens free. Hence, for a society to be free, the flow of information to the citizens must come from news media that are free. By now this is a central assumption not only to Americans but also to the most other citizens in the capitalist world".

### **15.3.2 Modern Democracies and the Press**

The media is increasingly intertwined with the practice of democracy in various countries. Government officials and political candidates use the media to advance their agendas. People rely more and more on the media to judge how their leaders campaign, govern, shape public policy, and communicate their ideas. Curiously, this increase in media influence corresponds to a decrease in voter participation. In order to be well-informed citizens and active participants in our democracy, people must understand both our governing processes and the role of the media in them.

Common citizens have a great deal of exposure to the media in the realms of entertainment and culture, yet most do not understand how the media, politics, and public policy interact with each other and thereby affect their lives. What they need is to know these things in order to become more thoughtful "consumers" of media messages related to politics. How can we challenge them to explore the changing relationships between the media and democracy? These are some of the questions that educators, journalists, media leaders, and citizens must explore together.

The modern democracies have witnessed the complex and increasingly critical relationship between media and public policy. In a society where a 24/7 news cycle bombards a fractured public, where 'infotainment' and the 'argument culture' often overshadow traditional journalism, it has become more difficult to focus public debate and build political consensus necessary to shape, lead or change public policy. Polls, focus groups, talking points, sound-bitten debates, massive spending by special interests and corporate ratings/circulation pressures can distort and overshadow important issues.

It has become imperative on students of media and public policy to know how these forces collide in our modern media. Equally important is to examine how coverage decisions regarding public policy are made in newsrooms, how advocates use and rely on the media to advance their message and how different media reflect different strengths and vulnerabilities.

### **15.3.3 New Media Technologies and Democracy**

The emergence of Information Technologies and the convergence of various communication technologies have changed the nature of media. The media, which earlier meant the press alone, now included radio, television and computers to make it much wider than ever before. However, the growing use of Information Technology has brought many new changes in the nature of press. The information is readily available on the net, which has reduced the dependence of the readers or citizens on Newspapers. The Governments world over are now not only using internet for providing information to its citizens, but are promoting the use of the internet and other digital technologies to transact day to day business like submitting applications, filling the forms, issuing orders and notices, etc. It is this use of digital technology that is known as e-governance.

The spread of the computers and the Internet is limited for the time being. But with more and more rationalisation of costs of IT and telecommunication facilities, the new media technologies would have a greater freedom of expression as the public or private control on the content is much less in new media than other technologies like press, radio and television. The earlier media were allowed the freedom so that they would be able to represent the people, but due to the cost of technologies and their management, the ownership of these media had the privilege of selecting their own content.

Now with the e-governance and seemingly lack of control of the Internet, the government and the people have a live channel for communication and more and more interest groups are networking with other people of similar interest and are also able to manipulate public opinion on certain issues.

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## **15.4 MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC OPINION**

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It can be said with certainty that media shapes the public opinion to some extent. There have been various studies that have shown that media is not the only agent of shaping the people's perception. During the US Presidential elections in 1940, Paul E. Lazarsfeld and others conducted a research and found that Mass media had no direct influence in the decision making of the people. In their book entitled "The People's Choice", they described the interpersonal relationships, peer group pressures and the opinion leaders as some of the major factors for shaping the public opinion. However, the role of mass media was not negated altogether in the two step flow of information model as the mass media was seen as a major player in disseminating the information to the people including the opinion leaders.

The communication theorists in the 1970s again emphasised the role of media in moulding the public perception. George Garbner (1967) worked on the Cultivation Theory in which he described the media as moulders of the society. He believed that Mass media has subtle effect on people's perception as he described the media as cultivators of dominant image patterns due to long and persistent exposure. His researches were in tune with the time as, during that period, advertising had made enough impact on the society. Later, the media and politics relationships were investigated and analysed by Maxwell McCombe and Donald Shaw (1972) who explored the role, the media played

in the agenda setting during the election. The Agenda setting theorists hold that the media is successful in telling the people "what is to think about" than in telling them "What to think". This theory depends upon the study of media where the significance given to certain issues by media were compared with the importance given to the same issues by people and politicians. It says that over a period of time, the priority given to certain issues by media become the public priorities as well.

Other scholars of media have provided us with alternative theories of Mass Media, but here we would discuss two other theories. Melvin de Fleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach proposed the Dependency theory in which certain social and psychological factors prevent media from exercising control over their audiences. As they say, "Mass Media not only lack arbitrary influence powers, but also their personal lack of freedom to engage in arbitrary communication behaviour. Both media and their audiences are integral part of their society. The surrounding socio-cultural context provides controls and constraints not only on the nature of media messages but also on the nature of their effects on audiences." The other relevant theory is called the Development Communication theory which was formulated during the efforts of McBride Commission to study the Communication problems of developing societies. The absence of communication infrastructure, the dependence on the developed world for hardware and software were some of these problems. The common commitment of these societies to economic, political and social development as the primary national task and the need to identify countries with similar interests and identities in international politics were the objectives that these countries wanted to achieve. The major concern of the development communication theorists was to find the means to use media for development programmes like poverty alleviation, population control, literacy drive, employment generation scheme, etc. The effectiveness of this theory depends upon the governments as they could restrict the freedom or intervene in media operations by legislating policies.

It is evident from the above facts that the media is a powerful tool of disseminating information, educating people on major issues and also of entertaining them. It is the power of media to influence the public opinion which sometime forces the governments to impose draconian measures like censorship.

## **15.5 CASE STUDY**

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The role of media in influencing or affecting the public policy could be seen in numerous public policy issues. For the purpose of our learning, we are only taking one example of public policy analysis, though in recent days a number of policy shifts have taken place. Each one of such changes have provoked a serious public debate i.e., the MRTP, disinvestment, labour laws, Foreign Direct Investments, etc.

### **15.5.1 Public Policy on CNG**

Recently, the Delhi Government on the orders of Supreme Court, decided to introduce CNG as environment friendly fuel in order to reduce the air pollution in this metropolis capital of our country. The decision came as a blow to the diesel vehicle manufacturers especially to those who either had launched their light motor vehicles or were going to

introduce diesel driven cars in the market. The need to convert all public transport vehicles into CNG operated vehicles caused many hardships to the transporters. They in turn harassed the commuters. The Supreme Court intervened and ordered a deadline for implementing the policy. However, due to contradictory interests, there were many kinds of pressures. Finally, one could see a considerable battle of interest between BJP, the opposition party in Delhi, and the Congress, the ruling party.

This battle was extended to media as it reported on almost every stage of the implementation of this policy. Some of the major headlines of the stories that appeared in newspapers during this period would explain the involvement of media. They were as follows:

Polluted Delhi wants CNG, but BJP says no  
(Times News Network)

CSE hails SC judgement  
(Express News Service, April 6, 2002)

CNG issue leaves Cabinet a divided house  
(The Hindu, April 8, 2002)

Khurana, Sahib Singh, thumb noses at Supreme Court  
Claim Ministers Ram Naik and Arun Jaitley back an ordinance  
(Express News Service, April 8, 2002)

Centre is trying to usurp court's powers: Experts  
(Express News Service, April 8, 2002)

In fact, apart from media, the political parties, and the interest groups like the transporters and the commuters, there were other pressure groups and opinion leaders in this game. CSE (Centre for Science and Environment), an NGO, was vociferously advocating the use of CNG as an alternative Eco friendly fuel for the vehicles in Delhi. The details of this case are archived by the NGO in their web site. Knowing fully well that CSE itself is a concerned party in this case any one studying the public policy analysis must also visit other sites and people to know their stand and reasons for supporting or opposing the use of CNG. Nevertheless, the material documented by CSE in its web site itself is enough to understand the role of public policy and analyse the policy of various governments towards pollution and related matters.

The extracts from a few press releases of CSE which highlight the issue of air pollution and various political and business interests involved in supporting or opposing the use of CNG are given here below:

**NOVEMBER 1, 1998**

## **TWO DECADES OF BREATHLESS DEVELOPMENT**

*The GDP in India has gone up two and a half times in the past twenty years — and pollution from vehicles has gone up 8 times. Policies such as those which allow the proliferation of two-stroke and diesel vehicles are responsible, says CSE*

According to a study conducted by the Centre for Science and Environment, while the GDP in India has gone up by two and a half times in the 1975-'95 period, industrial air pollution has gone up four times, and pollution from vehicles has gone up by a shocking 8 times.

These figures were released by CSE director Anil Agarwal at a public meeting on November 1, the third anniversary of the CSE Right to Clean Air Campaign. The campaign was launched on November 1, 1996, after the release of the report, *Slow Murder: The deadly story of vehicular pollution in India*.

The campaign had immediate effect after it was launched in 1996, when the Supreme Court issued *suo moto* notice to the Delhi Transport Department following the release of *Slow Murder*, and asked them to come up with a comprehensive plan of action. Following the November 1, 1997 anniversary meeting, when CSE revealed that one person dies prematurely every hour due to air pollution in Indian cities, the then environment minister Saifuddin Soz reacted to the resulting media publicity by announcing a white paper.

However, the government has failed to come up with a well thought out short-term strategy, Agarwal said. Instead, they have encouraged the proliferation of vehicles with diesel and two stroke engines, despite evidence that these two components of the vehicle population are the most polluting. The population of two-stroke vehicles grew from 40 percent of the vehicle population in 1975 to 70 percent of the vehicle population in 1995, while hydrocarbons, the main pollutant from two-stroke engines, went up 10 fold in the 1980-'94 period.

Similarly, diesel consumption has gone up 4 times in the 1980 - 1994 period, resulting in a 9 fold increase in suspended particulate matter. Criticising the government for selling poor quality diesel, Agarwal said that if Indian refineries are unable to improve diesel quality, the country should import diesel. "The diesel manufactured by the public sector Indian refineries is 250 times dirtier than the world's best," Agarwal said.

**January 13, 2000**

**"We shall overcome" claims Delhi CM**

Addressing visitors to the CSE exhibition on air pollution at the Auto Expo at Pragati Maidan, Delhi's chief minister expressed optimism that the problem would be solved

Among the glitzy cars and short skirts that are the usual attractions of the annual auto expo, the Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) exhibition on air pollution stood out as a grim reminder that there is a hidden price behind the expanding automobile sector. An indication comes from the statistic that every time the GDP in India doubles, air pollution rises by 8 times.

The CSE exhibition was inaugurated by Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, who contributed to a graffiti board, writing, "We shall overcome with your help". The chief minister said the government was not able to implement the Supreme Court's order for CNG buses by March 2000, but claimed that it would definitely be implemented by the end of the year.

According to the CM, the delay was caused by lack of facilities to manufacture the CNG buses, and because the central Ministry of Surface Transport failed to meet its deadline in setting up 80 CNG stations in the city. Only 12 have been set up so far. But according to R Ramakrishnan from Ashok Leyland, their company already has the capacity to manufacture CNG buses. To increase production and meet the requirements of the government, Ramakrishnan says Leyland would need a large enough order to make it viable for them to manufacture the kits.

Answering a question from school children, who attended the inauguration as reporters for Gobar Times, the CSE magazine for children, Dikshit admitted that the government had not done enough to curb the growth of diesel. Diesel vehicles emit as much as 10 to 100 times more suspended particulate matter than petrol vehicles. Several large cities of the world, with a high concentration of vehicles, including Tokyo and California have taken steps to reduce the use of diesel vehicles. Separate studies carried out by the German Environment Ministry, the California Environment Protection Authority and a Swedish consultancy have confirmed that the harmful effects of diesel exceed those of petrol.

CSE asked the chief minister to consider a 'smog alert' system for Delhi, to warn citizens when pollution levels reach a harmful level. Additionally, luxury diesel cars have to be banned immediately, and tax systems to improve technology and fuel have to be introduced.

**Date: 9th August, 2001**

**The Centre for Science and Environment is shocked at the way the Union petroleum minister Ram Naik is out to sabotage the Supreme Court's orders on CNG by raising false fears and more uncertainty in the mind of the public.**

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 9, 2001: Just as the deadline for converting all public passenger transport to CNG by September 30, 2001, is coming closer, for once everyone else is turning around to implement the Supreme Court order, but the Union minister for petroleum and natural gas, Ram Naik, in charge of gas supply in the country, is not interested in dealing with long queues for CNG by augmenting its supply. He is on the contrary busy creating more uncertainties and the brunt of the confusion is being borne by CNG users in Delhi. There have been flurry of statements by Mr Naik to the media raising several problems and projecting them as insurmountable. He has made misleading claims that there is not enough gas to meet the transport requirements in Delhi, that the entire city's fleet will come to a halt if the gas pipeline bursts or is under repair, and that CNG prices will shoot up once the administrative price mechanism is dismantled.

Anil Agarwal, chairperson, Centre for Science and Environment, while addressing a press conference in the Capital today took a serious note of the devious designs of the ministry of petroleum and natural gas and strongly condemned this misinformation campaign, "It is shocking that even after more than three years since the Supreme Court issued orders on CNG conversion, the petroleum minister claims that very little gas is available for the city's transport fleet. This is totally contrary to the information that the Indraprastha Gas Ltd. (IGL) has regularly provided to the Supreme Court. It is an

excellent disinformation exercise. All our investigations have found that each of these fears is either unfounded or can be dealt with," says Agarwal.

Clearly, Naik is desperate to cover his ministry's tracks and is still hoping to get Euro II diesel classified as clean fuel, and then do nothing extra than what is already available in the market.

**Date: 11th October, 2001**

**Yet another CNG bus blows up in the Capital and both the Delhi and the concerned central ministries remain quiet. They don't have any plan of action to offer for safety inspection or make manufacturers liable.**

**NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 11, 2001:** Centre for Science and Environment is shocked at the recent incidents of bus fires - consecutively four episodes within a short span of three months, and the silent government. Obsessed only with the desire to discredit CNG technology the official agencies forgot to do their own bit. Except for the standard promise of setting up yet another committee to investigate the matter, they have no plans to enforce safety compliance standards and establish accountability. Even the findings of the earlier committee reports on fire incidents have been suppressed.

No provisions have been made for the inspection of buses whereby each and every CNG bus undergoes inspection of the engine and high-pressure fuel storage and piping systems before being allowed onto the road - this is a norm in the rest of the world.

The government has completely ignored the need for clear guidelines for installation, fitting and bus body fabrication. While the government does not admit its own lapse, it along with the manufacturers, conveniently puts the entire blame on the bus body builders. Official silence is only shielding the bus manufacturer who should have taken the greater responsibility in ensuring that the bus body builders are trained to handle fitting and installation that need special attention during body fabrication. Technical guidelines are needed for routing of pipes, minimising friction, vibration and so forth.

These few clips only highlight the nature of this public policy debate. The conflicting parties in this debate were the Diesel vehicle manufacturers, Delhi Transporters, The Civil society's movement for clean air, Principals of schools who were bothered about the lack of CNG supplies and also about their own fleets of Buses that had to be converted to suit the new policy. The two parties, Congress – having its government in the State of Delhi and the BJP – having their Government at the Centre were also viewing the implementation of this policy from their electoral gains or losses. The Supreme Court was also playing its assigned role as Judiciary. The media was there trying to inform the people about this complex situation and was helping various groups in their attempt to generate public opinion in their favour.

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## **15.6 SUMMARY**

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We saw that public policy is a process of acting for the good of the society by the government. Sometimes the civil society challenges the existing policies and forces the

authorities to change the public policies. Such changes are possible in democratic systems as they have various checks and balances. There is no absolute power in the democratic systems, and what is already a law could be reconsidered by parliament if there are pressures. The legislative, executive and judiciary are three major components of the democratic system. The Press or the media has emerged as the fourth most powerful institution of democracy as it has the potential to mould the public opinion and influence the public policy. Political parties and civil society also play significant role in making and reforming the public policies.

Public policy is an integral part of development process. Press may not generally report the development issues, but it does intervene in case of a conflict of views on development, reports all perspectives, and thus moulds public opinion in favour of one or the other viewpoint.

We also learnt about the historical relationship between the press and politics and discussed various theories of media that support the argument that press or the media moulds the public opinion.

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## **15.7 EXERCISES**

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- 1) What are public policies, and what role do they play in the Development?
- 2) How does media help in framing public policies?
- 3) Analyse and differentiate the role of media in shaping public policies and public opinion.
- 4) What is the impact of new media technologies on democracy and governance?
- 5) How does the process of globalisation influence development?

the rise of pluralist state and the network of groups protecting interests of society as against the bureaucratised coercive state have become the driving force of democracy and indispensable actors of the policy process. The emergence of special interest groups alongside the political parties and the demand for democratic governance has made interest groups the greatest impetus as well as the greatest threat to the rights of ordinary individuals and to democracy.

What are these interest groups that became potential players in the policy process? An interest group is an organisation which tries to influence the public policy for its own personal and partisan interest without being part of the government. They represent private interests in the public sphere so that the government recognises and notices their special needs and requirements as a community and makes provisions for them in the public policy. They are microsporas of diffused social interests and help in crystallising group specific demands in the political process. As Ian McLean [1987:62] puts it in an empirical observation that Interest groups lobby for public goods, which could be a starting point of our discussion on the interest group politics. What is a public good that they lobby for? It is in this context that the government policy is a public good since it is for all citizens irrespective of their group affiliations. Paul Hirst [1994:44] has studied interest groups as a symptom of associationalist ethics and found it as being based upon the distrust of the centralised state for two reasons, first; that the state is a compulsory community although most genuine communities are freely formed, second; it (state) made omnipotent claims to regulate social life. Various writers from Proudhon, GDH Cole, J.N. Figgis, Laski to Manchur Olsen have considered these associations as natural appendages of the democratic society. They are constituted of loyal members and so little external or regulatory state effort is required to cement their unity, they tend to demand more freedom for their organic development and thus strive to turn policies in their favour. These groups which are formed of common interests should be justified on two ethical claims:

- In terms of their benefits to the individuals who constitute them. These benefits may be diversely defined such as access to wealth, or increasing the value of their prospective investments, control over resources, religious satisfaction or appeal to ethical beliefs.
- That they are based on choice rather than on fate. It is not incumbent upon the citizen to be a member of any such group. Citizens participate in group activity because they believe in the need to protect certain interests which may be in danger of usurpation by a wrong policy or unjust regulation of the state.

Thus an associationalist society tries to extract as much regulatory and policy support to itself and in turn consolidates democracy by bringing citizens together into greater loyalty and assertion of freedom. This would also mean that this consolidation of society on the basis of the group interests would become dependent upon specific interests. As Hirst puts it ‘that highly exclusive interests that are central to the concerns of small groups with substantial resources will be strongly organised, and that inclusive interests of large groups without significant resources will be weakly organised, or not organised at all.’ In other words the highly self-interested, rich and resourceful would be supported by the state because it has the electoral value for the state. This would lead to the problem of the public interest vs. the private interest and the natural concomitant to it that the state would be tied down to the fulfilment of the demands of strongly integrated group of the rich and the powerful. Olson [1971] in *The Logic of Collective Action* has found all associations or interest groups as

potentially self-interested and constantly striving to gain political and social power. In doing so they set up a rent seeking regime which distorts the market and imposes financial burden upon the society. Olsen has also described in his other work *The Rise and Decline of Nations* [1982] that the rent seeking comes out of protectionist policies and the state under the influence of organised interests continues to devise regulations which further protect and sustain the rent seeking. This leads to the inefficiencies of the state, greater rigidity, inflexibility and bureaucratic pathologies. The state would also tend to support organized interests such as trade unions, industry groups and builders organisations which have greater political constituency rather than the unorganised interests. This ignores or allows little or no space to those few altruistic people forming diffused and loose associations on issues such as gender cruelties, dowry prohibition, cruelties on animals, Vegetarianism, laboratory research, abuse of the old people or land grabbing in a remote village. A very recent example is the support of the Department of Biotechnology in the Ministry of Human Resource Development to the vivisectional experiments in animal research. Despite the fact that the government makes tall claims about animal welfare to the Jain and the Hindu communities it has gone out of its way to provide a strong backing to the scientists who form a consolidated group along with Pharmaceutical lobby as a Delhi Science Forum in contrast to the diffuse and feebly scattered union of the animal rights activists who demanded public scrutiny of the activities within laboratories.

## **16.2 DEMOCRACY AND INTEREST GROUPS**

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The decade of 1960s demonstrated that democracy did not function through individuals manning the coercive state but through various interest groups. The first development decade declared by the United Nations in the 1960s demonstrated the expanding politics of foreign aid and of the democratic ideals of freedom, rights and need for political participation. It was at the same time that Seymour Martin Lipset [1960:50-85] wrote a piece “Party Systems and the Representation of Social Groups” in the European Journal of Sociology. It became more and more apparent that political parties which had by then ruled the aspect of representing society had proved completely different in practice. They were neither the true representatives of people’s demands and aspirations nor were they truly able to represent public interest. Phillippe C. Schmitter [1992: 156] characterised this new pluralism in society as ‘decidedly unorthodox’ in the atmosphere of triumphant ‘behaviouralism and functionalism’. It was increasingly evident that the political parties had lost the confidence of people and therefore failed as representatives of people. Contrary to the opinion held by Schmitter and many other later writers like Manchur Olsen, James Buchanan and Nishkanen, Lipset in his seminal essay continued to believe that ‘parties are by far the most important part of the representative structure in complex democratic societies’. The general trend of democratic societies was its fragmentation and micro-splitting into socio-economic and religious interest groups which broke the monopoly of political parties over the representation of public interest. For contemporary political science the emerging significant issue of concern became the ‘consolidation of democracy in the aftermath of transition from the autocratic rule.’[Schmitter 1992:157] Broadly interest representation came to be split into several intermediaries such as political parties, interest associations and social movements. The political transition of democracy from a colonial world system to a system of a loosely knit and socio-culturally entirely different conglomeration of states also accelerated the disintegration of states from within into a new form of pluralism. This created new structures, social hierarchies and also historically different set of demand groups and lobbies. The rising aspiration level in the post II world was too varied in nature but demand specific which political parties were not geared to represent. Thus political parties tried picking up the characteristics of these groups or created spaces for the accommodation of interest groups in the democratic process. The shift in representative democracy was evident in the study made by Lipset in 1960 and its implications for the policy formulation process was also substantial. Schmitter [1992:157] has made the following observations regarding this change in empirical studies on political processes:

- Political processes cannot be reduced to the preferences or behaviour of individuals, but are conditioned by group actions and interactions.
- These groups—their solidarities and their conflicts—make independent contributions to determining political outcomes.
- “Representation” is the key (but not exclusive) relationship between such groups and the making of authoritative decisions.
- This relationship is increasingly structured through specialised, “legally constituted” organisations with identifiable and reproducible boundaries. Together, they form distinctive subsystems within the polity.
- These representative organisations have a relative autonomy and an operative logic of

their own that cannot be reduced either to the preferences of individuals or to the solidarities of the groups that compose them. In Lipset's terms, they were neither just "a means for political adjustment" among conflicting social groups nor merely "an instrument of manipulation" by dominant authorities.

- However the formal institutions of government—their procedures and substantive policies—can have a significant and enduring effect upon groups and organisations that represent them. In other words, public policy is not mere epiphenomenon produced by previously formed group interests, even less by independently established individual preferences.

This study which brought out the importance of interest groups in policy process did not conclude that these groups have the capacity to replace the political parties or that parties are subordinated to these group interests. The problem that emerged for the policy process was the consolidation of democracy in the post independent era.

### **16.3 INTEREST GROUP THEORY OF GOVERNMENT**

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Lately the linkages between economic progress and market friendly public policies has growing empirical evidence in its favour. It suggests that wherever institutions prevailed progress and monetary growth came more smoothly than those nations where institutions were weak and the regulatory framework more porous to the individual interceptions they neither could boost growth, generate wealth or attract monetary investments.

The neo-classical approaches led by A.C. Pigou [1932] tried to solve the policy failures by treating policy formulation as determined exogenously and therefore policy makers as well intentioned and those not motivated by self-interest. From the time of Max Weber the reason for policy failure was due to the inept official handling by a government which was otherwise always a benign, well intentioned and public spirited partner in public policy. The early management and policy experts had focussed upon the rules and procedures that governed organisations and suggested principles like POSDCORB and a reform of personnel and financial structures. These models have bypassed two important issues: first is that of the assessment of the cost of correcting policies. Second is that of evaluating the outcomes achieved. These classical and neo-classical theories have not been able to provide an answer to the constantly occurring market failures which lead to government interventions in policy specific ways by making regulatory arrangements such as taxes, subsidies, price regulations etc.

In sharp contrast to this the public choice theory suggests that policy outcomes are a result of endogenously determined political choices. This takes place under the influence of private interest groups working in connivance with self-interested politicians. 'Examined through the lens of public choice, policy outcomes naively assumed to be 'mistaken' are seen instead as the logical outcomes of a political process that provides policy makers with higher personal payoffs from supporting narrow special interests than from tending to the public interest. As such solving the mystery of growth is not so much a matter of identifying the 'right' model of economic development as it is incorporating into the 'right' model of government behaviour'. [Shugart 1999:170]

Thus interest group theory provides an insight into governmental institution and their role in

economic development. It turns upside down the Pigovian model of a government as a benign but inept external factor in policy sciences which can be traced back to the literature available in the work of Knut Wicksell [1896] which appears in the book written by Musgrave and Peacock [1958]. The interest group theory suggests that the policy makers have behavioural pattern of decision making which resembles the market behaviour of consumers and producers. There is a market for regulations also and public policy is formulated purely on the basis of calculating the politician's very own selfish interest gain. The use of cost-benefit analysis is made to fit into a framework which ensures private gain at public cost. Government goes on a profit maximising spree like a consumer in the market by taking policy decisions which either bring in profits in the form of an electoral gain or increasing the value of one's assets.

The greatest contribution of this theory is in propounding the idea that whenever policies fail one needs to broad base the search for locating factors for failure not in the organisational and procedural weaknesses which are purely external factors but in the outcomes of the persistently failing policies such as who gains and who loses and who bears the cost for failed policies. This brings in the use of the tools of positive economics to the analysis of political choices.

Interest group theory also exposes the fact which was formalised by George Stigler [1971] that the policy maker would be more supportive to interest groups which have a more unified and organised group of interest seekers. The policy maker would calculate the cost of collective action in organising and lobbying for a piece of regulation by interest groups and the ones with diffuse interests and high organising cost would stand to lose to the groups which are small and better organised due to their closely connected common interests. This is the reason that the industrial producer groups always gain the regulatory support of the government because they are small and are better organised in terms of their demands and associated interests about a regulatory policy as compared to the consumer and environmental groups which have difficulty in uniting due to dispersed interests and concerned only with a small area of regulations.

The political representative charges a fee for giving a regulatory gain to a group and for this he charges a fee in the form of rent. 'Rent' is the term coined by Anne Krueger [1974]. It is defined as the expenditure of scarce public resources to capture wealth transfers in the form of regulatory policy for a dominant group in society. This is a social waste because the expenditure of resources is not creating value in the form of the production of goods and services to add to GDP but is leading to a loss of public wealth to the benefit of the few in society. Thus interest group politics leads to protective markets and distorted regulations purely to support dominant groups. The result is a policy failure. Thus the interest group policy supports a contestable stand for free markets which have the minimum of regulatory control and thus the minimum of interest group interference.

Interest group theory can be understood in three steps;

- The distinctions prevailing between public and private interests models of public policy process.
- The process of redistribution of resources from the market of policies in favour of the well organised and consolidated special interest groups.
- The impact of this model on economic regulations and economic development of a nation.

## **16.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF INTEREST GROUPS: NUMBER, DENSITY AND REPRESENTATIONAL DOMAIN**

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On the basis of its numbers one can classify interest groups into small, medium and large. Olson has mentioned three categories of interest groups on the basis of their political constituency; privileged, intermediate and latent. In a privileged group one member who gains enough privately from public good (policy) to be willing to supply it on its own if necessary. Such groups are generally small but this is not always so. It is constituted of any industry that benefits from a tariff such as Reliance, or a trade union which is part of the political party such as All India Trade Union Congress or the Indian National Trade Union Congress. It may also have professional or occupational groups such as the Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti [MKSS] or the Sugar Mill Owners Association. The intermediate group is not privileged but sustains its collective action on the basis of mutual watchfulness over each other's behaviour such as the teachers associations which is divided right from the elementary, higher secondary school levels to the college and the university teachers associations, each functioning in its own small area and with weak participation. Olson finds that collective action is ensured through a process of threats, promises and conditional cooperation. The third type of interest group is neither privileged or intermediate but is more or less non-existent. Olson prefers to call it 'latent' as the interests of this group though being specific and important does not help to consolidate people into a group. This may include the unemployed group of people, consumer associations or Senior Citizen groups like Age Care or Helpage India. One can include groups like People for Animals. This kind of interest group may deliver certain benefits to its own members and thus to prevent freeride they offer these benefits only to those who become members. McLean [1982:95-100] has offered another three-way classification of interest groups. They are Producer groups, Consumer groups and the altruistic groups. Out of these the first category of producer groups may be the strongest since they control the forces of production which if withdrawn from the market may lead to a major problem for people. This includes the factory owners, trade unions and the farmers. If they withdraw their produce which is some or the other form of a tangible commodity like a produce or labour will bring immense pressure on the government. The second group is weaker than the first one since consumers cannot withdraw from the market something that they exclusively control. Altruistic groups may be even weaker since they neither have the spur of self-interest nor the drive for controlling some tangible produce. Thus McLean [1987:64] has observed that they may fit into Olson's 'latent' or some in intermediate groups also. The producer groups of McLean may fit into any of the Olson's category. What is brought out as an empirical observation is that fewer the members in a producer group the more likely it is to be privileged and consolidated. As Offe and Wiesenthal [1980] conclude their interests are more likely to be protected in lobbying.

## **16.5 HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT FROM POLITICAL PARTIES?**

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Parties have been performing the following functions in their main drive for interest articulation: structure the vote, integrate and mobilise mass public, recruit political leaders, organise government, formulate public policy and aggregate interests.[King 1969:120].Starting in the

1970s but becoming more apparent in the 1980s was the increasing insignificance of the party system in their main task of mobilisation and articulation of interest. In the post independent phase of the developing countries parties were not able to resonate the people's aspirations and were proving to be an alienated and disarticulated group of citizens. Parties had also lost their respect and importance [Ware, 1986:126] The former demarcation in which the parties remained at the centre and the interest groups were placed at the periphery of decisional authority was turned the other way round. The major dent into the strata of political parties came from the rise of the Western European states in which interest articulation became the task associated more with the professional groups rather than the political parties. This rise of new corporatism has tended to undermine the political party system of liberal democracies.[Held and Pollitt 1986:126] The case of West Germany could be understood as somewhat different as the parties have retained their mediating role in policy formulation even in the midst of strong presence of organisational groups. Besides the neo-corporatism of the West European countries the rise of 'cause' groups centred on a single issue or narrow cluster of issues is another threat to parties.[Held and Pollitt 1986:127] Issues like environment, labour, gender, colour and caste cut across the traditional divisions of parties and as a result most parties are not in a position to articulate clear positions on these activities. This pushes the creation of special interest groups in which parties are rather post-facto followers rather than the leaders. Another reason that has contributed to the rise of interest groups is the social life that they have been providing to their members. Earlier time offered these parties as the only place for like minded people to socialise but later on with the rise of affluence and increased choices for quality socialisation members became more associated with the group outside the parties. This development was not sudden but it was an outcome of a long and sustained failure on the part of political parties to divert attention from their petty regional and personal politics to issues of economic development and poverty eradication. This resulted in the complete failure of the first and the second development decade declared by the United Nations. Two developments can be seen as a threat to the position and the central role of the parties. Alan Ware [1986:126] mentions the first as the rise of 'liberal' or 'neo' corporatism in the Western European countries. This brings together channels of interest groups towards a more intimate contact between the government and their own members. This resulted into these groups 'policing' their own members to muster support for agreements they make with the government. The second development has been the rise of the 'cause' groups which have focussed and combined people in support of a single cause. These groups have always been there and have played an important role in the freedom movement of India. In Britain the Anti-Corn League was one such important non-party coalition. A greater part of this development can be attributed to the frustration with the rightist structures of the state in which the elites controlled the party structures. The protest against this centralisation and monopolisation of public interest by political parties began with the demand for the democratisation of the labour party structure in 1970s. Much of the agenda for change came from the left of the centre groups composed of poor communities, aborigines, subalterns and the environmentally affected groups. The increasing public frustration of people about political parties not disclosing their clear position on several developmental and economic policies has encouraged them to form groups to pursue their interests. In India the rise of several farmers and fishermen groups against the globalisation of agriculture and coastal fisheries respectively is directly linked to the slimy politics played by the political parties. The example of the well known and almost a legendary group Narmada Bachao Andolan and later the National Alliance for Peoples

Movement is an indication about the disenchantment built around most of the emerging single cause groups. These groups focus on the issue of mega-projects and rehabilitation of displaced communities. There are two direct consequences to their action. While the first factor resulted in the consolidation of the rightist structures or corporate lobbies for staking a claim in the share of the public policy the second factor led to the rise of people's movements to protect the people affected by anti-environmental and anti-people policies and hold the government accountable for it. One interesting example is the rise of a strongly consolidated group of industrialists and miners under Pinchot in USA called 'People's First' to counter the claims of those environmental lobbies demanding the state to adopt the 'environmental laws' to protect and conserve species and their habitat. These single issue group activities mostly cut across party lines as the animal rights activism, abortion law and environmental conservation. Thus collective action becomes more complicated than what it was under the truly party regime and even weakens party agendas and organisational unity. Beginning from the Pacifist Movement against the first World War of Bertrand Russell in which none of the political parties supported him to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament [CND] during the 1950s and 1960s in which political parties had to join the movement to make themselves effective for electoral victories. To sustain themselves in power parties found it more appropriate to use a fully ripe movement or hijack a challenging group protest for its own personal gains of sustaining in power. Single issue groups have come to 'occupy territory' which parties might have occupied' [Held and Pollitt 1986:129].

McLean [1987:127] has mentioned another factor that has led to the weakening of the party agenda. This is the merging of the political idealism with the social activity. In earlier times party organisations provided a good meeting and socialising opportunity to the party workers and like minded people. With the rise of alternative recreational means coupled with the increase of affluence and shorter work hours the parties were unable to provide for the kind of freedom which its members wanted to have. McLean has also pointed out the 'Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament' as an example of the change occurring in the society which widely displaced the rigid party loyalty amongst workers.

One cannot deny the interaction between the vote power and the lobby power. Parties have successfully utilised the consolidated unity of the cause groups for its own benefit. Thus as Olson formulated in his *Calculus of Consent* parties seek electoral support from these groups and in return represent their agendas and policy. Decisions hereby taken provide favourable policies to groups which send representatives in the parliament. This study of the linkages between the vote power and the lobby power suggests two outcomes; first, consumer interests are never adequately represented. Second, the number of members in a group is no assurance for the pressures which the group may bring upon the parties. For example a small group of telecommunication firms can press regulatory reforms and liberalisation of services upon the otherwise conservative government whereas a large number of University teachers may just not have any impact upon the insolent liberal government. Sometimes rational choice takes over the public choice like in the study of 'The Regulation of Railways Act ' 1844 pushed through Parliament by W.E.Gladstone, President of the Board of Trade despite opposition from the railway companies. It was described as 'not a normal politics' [McLean and Foster 1992:329] because normal politics is the politics of distributional coalitions in which producer groups secure monopoly privileges from governments at the expense of consumers. As regulations happen to be the testbed for the success of public administration, it may safely be concluded

that interest groups have remained successful in hijacking policies and distorting regulatory norms of the state.

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## 16.6 DEMOCRACY AND INTEREST GROUPS

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Political parties found themselves ostracised and constrained in the decade of 1960s by the rising control and capture of their political constituencies by the special interest groups. Instead of the issues originating from within the parties they were sparked by these groups and parties found themselves as followers of interest groups. The institutional structures of the society provided limited opportunity for the expansion of the base of party activities. Thus even the parties created their own interest groups to promote their agenda of politics. Thus the emerging fear has been that political parties are getting distanced from people and getting more occupied with the gains coming from the interest groups. Thus the greatest fear for democracy comes from the fact that political parties are central to the development and expansion of democratic consolidation but which may now not be in a position to represent the wishes and aspirations of the people. Thus this situation is a rejection of the widespread notion that democracy was a functional requisite of an ethical imperative.

However, this forms the core dilemma of the debate on governance. Democracy is still possible and all this depends upon the way strategic interactions with all actors in the society is undertaken. The solution to this perplexing debate on democratisation lies in the creation of a set of institutions which have been agreed upon by the political parties and citizens. Thus modern democracies which may look like compromises may also lead to paradoxical regimes of interests but as Schmitter cautions, ‘one does not have to be a strict devotee of Manchur Olsen’s *Logic of Collective Action* [1965] to recognise that once the “uncalculated” enthusiasm of participating in the mobilisational phase of regime change is over, the temptation to free ride on the efforts of others is likely to settle in.’ [1992:165-166].

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## 16.7 CONCLUSION

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It is not a logical conclusion that political parties have lost their representative character in policy process and are now groping in to win the support of interest groups. They are still the most accepted, widely dispersed and territorially represented structures of democracy which continue to be in an advantageous position as frontline representatives of people. Thus despite the rise of interest groups in power and number ‘democracy by interest groups’ can never be replaced by ‘democracy by political parties’. Public Policy process can not in times to come depend on interest groups as core functionaries since their own internal democracy is much in question and is not likely to be supported in electoral politics beyond a point. A thorough institutional build up may ensure that parties are able to retain their central role in performing their major role in present society. To conclude ‘Interest groups and civic organisations cannot substitute for coherent political parties with broad and relatively enduring bases of popular support for interest groups cannot aggregate interests as broadly across social groups and political issues as political parties can.’ [Diamond 1999:258-259]

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## 16.8 SUMMARY

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## **UNIT 17 IDENTITY POLITICS IN INDIA (CASTE, RELIGION, LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY)**

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### **Structure**

- 17.1 Introduction
  - 17.2 What is Identity Politics?
  - 17.3 Identity Politics in India
    - 17.3.1 Caste
    - 17.3.2 Religion
    - 17.3.3 Language
    - 17.3.4 Ethnicity
  - 17.4 Summary
  - 17.5 Exercises
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### **17.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Identity Politics has become a prominent subject in the Indian politics in the past few years.

Rise of low castes, religious identities, linguistic groups and ethnic conflicts have contributed to the significance of identity politics in India. The discourse on Identity, many scholars feel, is distinctly a modern phenomenon. Craig Calhoun aptly describes the situation when he argues that it is in the modern times we encounter intensified efforts at consolidating individual and categorical identities and reinforce self-sameness. This is primarily a modern phenomenon because some scholars feel that emphasis on identity based on a central organising principle of ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual preferences, or caste positions, etc, are a sort of “compelling remedy for anonymity” in an otherwise impersonal modern world. It is thus said to be a “pattern of belonging, a search for comfort, an approach to community.” However, the complex social changes and the imbrications of various forces, factors and events in this modern world have rendered such production and recognition of identities problematic. This is to say that any search for an ‘*authentic self* or *identity*’ is not an innocent and unnuanced possibility; it involves negotiating other, often overlapping and contested, heterodox or multiple ‘*selves*’. Cascardi succinctly elucidates this by observing, “the modern subject is defined by its insertion into a series of separate value-spheres, each one of which tends to exclude or attempts to assert its priority over the rest”, thereby rendering identity-schemes problematic. Nonetheless, the concerns with individual and collective identity that simultaneously seeks to emphasise differences and attempt to establish commonality with others similarly distinguished, have become a universal venture.

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## 17.2 WHAT IS IDENTITY POLITICS?

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But the question is how do discourses on identity fit into the political landscape? What are the political underpinnings of these discourses on identity? What are the organising principles of movements that characterise themselves as those based on identity concerns? Can we define movements of workers as an instance of identity politics? In short what is the politics of identity and what are its organising principles?

Identity Politics is said to “signify a wide range of political activity and theorising founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups”. As a political activity it is thus considered to signify a body of political projects that attempts a “recovery from exclusion and denigration” of groups hitherto marginalised on the basis of differences based on their ‘*selfhood*’ determining characteristics like ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, caste positions, etc. Identity politics thus attempts to attain empowerment, representation and recognition of social groups by asserting the very same markers that distinguished and differentiated them from the others and utilise those markers as an assertion of selfhood and identity based on *difference* rather than *equality*. Contrastingly placed, it is to imply that adherents of identity politics essentialise certain markers that fix the identities of social groups around an ensemble of definitional absolutes. These markers may be those of language, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, caste positions, religion, tribe, race, etc. institutionalised in jargons, metaphors, stereotypes, and academic literature and reinforced through practices of positive discrimination or affirmative action. The proponents of identity politics thus, assign the primacy of some “essence” or a set of core features shared only by members of the collectivity and no others and accepts individual persons as singular, integral, altogether harmonious and unproblematic identities. These core markers are different from associational markers like those of the workers who are defined more by their common interests rather than by certain core essential naturally ‘*given*’ identity attributes of the groups

engaged in identity politics. Though many would argue that “worker” was an identity deserving legitimacy and as a group, its movements can be referred to as identity Politics, but probably the term “identity politics” as a body of political projects implied to in contemporary discourses refers to certain essential, local and particular categorical identities rather than any universalising ideals or agenda. The adherents of identity politics utilise the power of myths, cultural symbols and kinship relations to mould the feeling of shared community and subsequently politicise these aspects to claim recognition of their particular identities.

The strongest criticism against Identity Politics is that it often challenges by the very same markers upon which the sense of self or community is sought to be built. It is despite the fact that identity politics is engaged in numerous aspects of oppression and powerlessness, reclaiming and transforming negative scripts used by dominant groups into powerful instruments for building positive images of self and community. In other words the markers that supposedly defines the community are fixed to the extent that they harden and release a process of in-group essentialism that often denies internal dialogicality within and without the group and itself becomes a new form of closure and oppression.

Identity Politics as a field of study can be said to have gained intellectual legitimacy since the second half of the twentieth century, i.e., between 1950s and 1960s in the United States when large scale political movements of the second wave-feminists, Black Civil Rights, Gay and Lesbian Liberation movements and movements of various Indigenous groups in the U.S. and other parts of the world were being justified and legitimated on the basis of claims about injustices done to their respective social groups. However, as scholars like Heyes point out that although “Identity Politics” can draw on intellectual precursors from Mary Wollstonecraft to Frantz Fanon, writing that actually uses this specific phrase—Identity Politics—is limited almost exclusively to the last 15 years.

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### **17.3 IDENTITY POLITICS IN INDIA**

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In India we find that despite adoption of a liberal democratic polity after independence, communities and collective identities have remained powerful and continue to claim recognition. In fact, Beteille has shown that the Indian polity has consistently tried to negotiate the allegiance to a liberal [individual] spirit and the concerns and consciousness of community. According to Bikhu Parekh this process has recognised a wide array of autonomous and largely self-governing communities. It has sought to reconcile itself as an association of individuals and a community of communities, recognising both individuals and communities as bearer of rights.

It was probably this claim for and granting of recognition of particular identities by the post-independence state of India that led many scholars to believe that a material basis for the enunciation of identity claims has been provided by the post-independent state and its structures and institutions. In other words the state is seen as an “active contributor to identity politics through the creation and maintenance of state structures which define and then recognise people in terms of certain identities”. Thus, we find identity politics of various hues abound in India, the most spectacular however, are those based on language, religion, caste, ethnicity or tribal identity. But having said this it would be wrong on our part to assume that each of these identity markers operate autonomously, independent of the overlapping influence of the other makers. In other words a homogenous linguistic group may be divided by caste affiliations

that may be sub-divided by religious orientations or all may be subsumed under a broader ethnic claim.

### **17.3.1 Caste**

Caste-based discrimination and oppression have been a pernicious feature of Indian society and in the post-independence period its imbrications with politics have not only made it possible for hitherto oppressed caste-groups to be accorded political freedom and recognition but has also raised consciousness about its potential as a political capital. In fact Dipankar Gupta has poignantly exposed this contradiction when he elaborates the differences between Ambedkar and Mandal Commission's view of caste. While the former designed the policy of reservations or protective discrimination to remove untouchability as an institution from Indian social life and polity, the latter considered caste as an important political resource. Actually, the Mandal commission can be considered the intellectual inspiration in transforming caste-based identity to an asset that may be used as a basis for securing political and economic gains. Though it can also be said that the upper castes by virtue of their predominant position were already occupying positions of strengths in the political and economic system, and when the Mandal heightened the consciousness of the 'Dalits' by recognising their disadvantage of caste-identity as an advantage the confrontation ensues. The caste system, which is based on the notions of purity and pollution, hierarchy and difference, has despite social mobility, been oppressive towards the Shudras and the outcastes who suffered the stigma of ritual impurity and lived in abject poverty, illiteracy and denial of political power. The origin of confrontational identity politics based on caste may be said to have its origin on the issue of providing the oppressed caste groups with state support in the form of protective discrimination. This group-identity based on caste that has been reinforced by the emergence of political consciousness around caste identities is institutionalised by the caste-based political parties that profess to uphold and protect the interests of specific identities including the castes. Consequently, we have the upper caste dominated BJP, the lower caste dominated BSP (Bhaujan Samaj Party) or the SP (Samajwadi Party), including the fact that left parties (for example use of caste idioms for mobilising agricultural labourers in Andhra Pradesh elections in 1950) have tacitly followed the caste pattern to extract mileage in electoral politics. The Cumulative result of the politicisation can be summarised by arguing that caste-based identity politics has had a dual role in Indian society and polity. It relatively democratised the caste-based Indian society but simultaneously undermined the evolution of class-based organisations.

In all, caste has become an important determinant in Indian society and politics, the new lesson of organised politics and consciousness of caste affiliations learnt by the hitherto despised caste groups have transformed the contours of Indian politics where shifting caste-class alliances are being encountered. The net effect of these mobilisations along caste-identities have resulted not only in the empowerment of newly emerging groups but has increased the intensity of confrontational politics and possibly leading to a growing crisis of governability.

### **17.3.2 Religion**

Another form of identity politics is that effected through the construction of a community on the shared bond of religion. In India, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism are some of the major religions practised by the people. Numerically the Hindus are considered to be the majority, which inspires many Hindu loyalist groups like the RSS (Rashtriya Swayam

Sevak Sangh) or the Siva Sena and political parties like the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) or the Hindu Mahasabha to claim that India is a Hindu State. These claims generate homogenising myths about India and its history. These claims are countered by other religious groups who foresee the possibility of losing autonomy of practise of their religious and cultural life under such homogenising claims. This initiates contestations that have often resulted in communal riots. The generally accepted myths that process the identity divide on religious lines centre on the ‘appeasement theory’, ‘forcible religious conversions’, general ‘anti-Hindu’ and thus ‘anti-India’ attitude of the minority religious groups, the ‘hegemonic aspirations’ of majority groups and ‘denial of a socio-cultural space’ to minority groups.

Historically, the Hindu revivalist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is considered to be the period that saw the demarcation of two separate cultures on religious basis—the Hindus and the Muslims that deepened further because of the partition. This division which has become institutionalised in the form of a communal ideology has become a major challenge for India’s secular social fabric and democratic polity. Though communalism for a major part of the last century signified Hindu-Muslim conflict, in recent years contestations between Hindus and Sikhs, Hindus and Christians have often crystallised into communal conflict. The rise of Hindu national assertiveness, politics of representational government, persistence of communal perceptions, and competition for the socio-economic resources are considered some of the reasons for the generation of communal ideologies and their transformation into major riots.

Identity schemes based on religion have become a major source of conflict not only in the international context but since the early 1990s it has also become a challenge for Indian democracy and secularism. The rise of majoritarian assertiveness is considered to have become institutionalised after the BJP, that along with its ‘Hindu’ constituents gave political cohesiveness to a consolidating Hindu consciousness, formed a coalition ministry in March 1998. However, like all identity schemes the forging of a religious community glosses over internal differences within a particular religion to generate the “we are all of the same kind” emotion. Thus differences of caste groups within a homogenous Hindu identity, linguistic and sectional differences within Islam are shelved to create a homogenous unified religious identity.

In post-independence India the majoritarian assertion has generated its own antithesis in the form of minority religions assertiveness and a resulting confrontational politics that undermines the syncretistic dimensions of the civil society in India. The process through which this religious assertiveness is being increasingly institutionalised by a ‘methodical rewriting of history’ has the potential to reformulate India’s national identity along communal trajectories.

### **17.3.3 Language**

Identity claims based on the perception of a collectivity bound together by language may be said to have its origin in the pre-independence politics of the Congress that had promised reorganisation of states in the post-independent period on linguistic basis. But it was the “JVP” (Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya) Committee’s concession that if public sentiment was “insistent and overwhelming”, the formation of Andhra from the Telugu-speaking region of the then Madras could be conceded which as Michael Brecher mentions was the “opening wedge for the bitter struggle over states reorganisation which was to dominate Indian Politics from 1953 to 1956”. Ironically, the claim of separate states for

linguistic collectivities did not end in 1956 and even today continues to confront the concerns of the Indian leadership. But the problem has been that none of the created or claimed states are mono-ethnic in composition and some even have numerically and politically powerful minorities. This has resulted in a cascading set of claims that continue to threaten the territorial limits of existing states and disputes over boundaries between linguistic states have continued to stir conflicts, as for instance the simmering tensions between Maharashtra and Karnataka over the district of Belgaum or even the claims of the Nagas to parts of Manipur.

The linguistic divisions have been complicated by the lack of a uniform language policy for the entire country. Since in each state the dominant regional language is often used as the medium of instruction and social communication, the consequent affinity and allegiance that develops towards one's own language gets expressed even outside one's state of origin. For instance the formation of linguistic cultural and social groups outside one's state of origin helps to consolidate the unity and sense of community in a separate linguistic society. Thus language becomes an important premise on which group identities are organised and establishes the conditions for defining the 'in-group' and 'out-group'.

Though it is generally felt that linguistic states provide freedom and autonomy for collectivities within a heterogeneous society, critics argue that linguistic states have reinforced regionalism and has provided a platform for the articulation of a phenomenal number of identity claims in a country that has 1,652 'mother tongues' and only fourteen recognised languages around which states have been reorganised. They argue that the effective result of recognition for linguistic groups has disembodied the feelings of national unity and national spirit in a climate where 'Maharashtra for Marathis, Gujarat for Gujratis, etc' has reinforced linguistic mistrust and defined the economic and political goods in linguistic terms.

#### **17.3.4 Ethnicity**

You will study in detail about the ethnicity in unit 26 of the book 2 of this course. There are two ways in which the concept of ethnic identity is used; one, it insders the formation of identity on the basis of single attribute - language, religion, caste, region, etc; two, it considers the formation of identity on the basis, of multiple attributes cumulatively. However, it is the second way formation of identity on the basis of more than one characteristics - culture, customs, region, religion or caste, which is considered as the most common way of formation of the ethnic identity. The one ethnic identity is formed in relation to the other ethnic identity. The relations between more than one ethnic identities can be both harmonious and conflictual. Whenever there is competition among the ethnic identities on the real or imaginary basis, it expressed in the form of autonomy movements, demand for session or ethnic riots. You will study about the major examples of ethnicity in Unit 26 of the book 2.

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### **17.4 SUMMARY**

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Identity has become an important phenomenon in the modern politics. The identification of a members of the group on the basis of sharing common attributes on the basis of all or some of the attributes, language, gender, language, religion, culture, ethnicity etc. indicates the existence or formation of identity. The mobilisation on the basis of these markers is called identity politics. Identity politics gained legitimacy in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States and

# **UNIT 18 CIVIL SOCIETIES: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, NGOs AND VOLUNTARY ACTION**

## **Structure**

- 18.1 Introduction
  - 18.2 Civil Society: Changing Notions
  - 18.3 New Social Movements
  - 18.4 New Social Movements as Agents of Radical Democracy
  - 18.5 NGOs and Voluntary Action
  - 18.6 Summary
  - 18.7 Exercises
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## **18.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In recent decades there has been a total rethinking of the developmental strategies we adopted in the post-independence period. This rethinking has been partly stimulated by the still persisting socio-economic problems of both rural and urban masses as well as the neglected tribes of the hilly regions. These developmental strategies have not only failed to solve the problems of poverty, illiteracy and health insecurities but also instead added newer problems to the existing list of issues.

In attempting for an introspection as to what went wrong with the whole exercise, invariably the state emerges as the anti-hero at the end of most of the analyses. The state-centric developmental approach followed by the post-colonial Indian state has been held accused for all the misadventures. Though the development has been carried out within the ideological framework of as well as the functioning of a vibrant democratic Indian polity, the central role given to the state and its bureaucracy in the development project seems to have precluded any real democratic participation of the masses-the local communities -whose living space has been the site of developmental activity. Though it was in their names it was not in their interests, critics complain.

This is the historical background, which is seeing the emergence of many new social movements and voluntary sectors focusing on specific issues for the furtherance of the values of democracy. A resurgence of the category of civil society has been the response to these experiential developments from the domain of theoreticians. The eclipse of civil society due to the towering figure of the state is held to be responsible for the developmental approach not reaching its proclaimed destination of the welfare of the masses. So a revival of and reconstruction of an active civil society supposed to be a precondition for the realisation of true democracy and development, are advocated by the proponents of such views. In this unit we will attempt to look into the conceptual as well as the practical issues that inform this kind of alternative framework of development and democracy.

## **18.2 CIVIL SOCIETY: CHANGING NOTIONS**

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The contemporary hype about civil society has been caused by the break-up of the socialist regimes in Russia and Eastern Europe and the revival of Tocquevillian tradition of celebrating the associational pluralism in the U.S. It has been surmised that the Soviet-type experiments have failed because of the absence of civil society in such states. Civil society has been hailed as the property of the liberal democratic states and a flourishing civil society has been considered as the precondition for the existence of democracy.

The concept of civil society has an interesting history. It has always been a part of liberal democratic theories. The liberal notion conceives of civil society as a sphere independent of but to be protected by the state wherein the rights-bearing individuals are free to pursue their private interests in free association with others. This definition reduces civil society to that of free market or free economy. Later liberals like J.S.Mill and Alexis De Tocqueville conceived civil society as a domain of social associations, which would check the excesses of the state. They were concerned about the growing power of the state and held the view that without active social associations, even democracies could become despotic regimes.

The early Marxist conception of civil society as one, which plays a facilitating role for the functioning of the capitalist economy, delimits the scope of civil society too much. But it was successful in its attack on Hegel for subordinating the civil society to the state. Hegel saw in civil society the mediating domain where the particular interests of the individual and the universal interests of the state could be reconciled in producing an ethical basis for the modern society. Hegel was concerned about the loss of morality in modern society due to the non-availability of traditional community relations to the modern humans. However, civil society characterised by its particular tendencies if left alone will destroy itself. So, in Hegel's view, though civil society embodies the unique achievement of modernity that of the individual, it has to be organised and institutionalised through the state.

Gramsci deepened our understanding of the civil society by extending the Marxian logic. Instead of depicting civil society as only embodying the practices of production and exchange relations, the Gramscian notion characterises it as a set of social relations that stand between the individual and the state. Consent is produced for the dominance of the state through the hegemonising impulses of the various institutions, practices and the concomitant myths and symbols at the site of civil society. Gramsci claims that a hegemonised civil society or captive civil society is responsible for revolutions not taking place even under classic cases of the presence of required economic crises. According to Gramsci, hegemony is a strategy which could very well become a property of the proletariat and the subaltern masses. In his revolutionary strategy Gramsci demands an alliance of all the opponents of the bourgeoisie to be led by the proletariat. This alliance, Gramsci argues, should hegemonise the civil society in order to challenge and reorder the political society.

The political implication of the Gramscian notion seems to be crucial. Though historically the space provided by the civil society has been appropriated and hegemonised by the dominant classes, it suggests possibilities for the reappropriation of civil society by other social actors as well. However, in recent times, theorists like Partha Chatterjee and Sudipta Kaviraj have given interesting arguments regarding civil society in the third world countries in general and

India in particular. They point out the fallibility and incompatibility of the Western ideas and forms of governance that have been imposed through colonial intervention. At the same time, this imposition, for quite a long time has initiated various processes in its attempt to introduce political modernity in these societies. So the western notions of the state and civil society are not useful categories in understanding the Indian situation since the nature of these institutions have become substantially different from those of their European counterparts. The uncritical application of the concepts of state and civil society to evaluate the Indian situation has caused many distortions. They view with skepticism the attempts of those scholars who are privileging the civil society by decrying the dominant role of the state. According to them, the state in India is less extensive than those its Western counterparts. Using the western critique of the state to argue for the withdrawal of the state is spurious. Partha Chatterjee hopes to understand the Indian situation by devising a new concept called ‘political society’ distinguishing it from civil society. He attributes the rise of various forms of populism within Indian democracy to the evolution of political society by which he signifies the special relationship between the state and the masses. Kaviraj’s final statement about the debate on civil society is quite instructive which is as follows:

“It is in the nature of the problem that the debates about civil society remain inconclusive; but these are not, for that reason, fruitless. After all these debates form parts of a collective reflection on the nature of the conditions which political democracy requires to take root and flourish. Precisely because of its elusiveness and intractability the idea of civil society in the third world forces us to think about the social terrain behind explicit political institutions and try to explicate what happens in that essential but relatively dark analytical space”.

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### 18.3 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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The earliest of social movements in India could be traced to the Gandhian efforts of Sarvodaya. Gandhi recognised the need for social change. But he believed that the change has to come from the bottom to top if it has to be non-violent, successful and permanent. Sarvodaya was the direct offshoot of Gandhi’s constructive programme. According to Radhakrishna, the ideological paradigm of Sarvodaya sought to create a stateless and classless society of Gram Swarajya, establish the principle of sharing voluntarily such as through Bhoojan and Gramdan, develop village industries and agro-industrial communities and apply the Gandhian concept of trusteeship in industrial activities. But the limitations of this approach of moral persuasion have been well documented by history. Though it evoked much hope in the beginning the gross failure of Bhoojan in land redistribution through voluntary means has evaporated that hope.

Since 1970s a number of social movements emphasising on a range of basic issues have come to animate the sphere of civil society. They are ‘new’ in contrast to the old trade union and working class movements, which were political in the sense of having an alternate political vision of the state itself with revolutionary ideals. But the people’s movements, as they are called, are the result of broader-based people’s responses to ecological or gender or caste conflicts. The distinguishing feature of these movements is that they are not homogeneous and differ in their origins. As Wignaraja notes, some are the result of romantic and idealistic approaches taken by charitable institutions, religious institutions, the ‘small is beautiful’ advocates, etc., which have tried to teach the people to do ‘good’ things often treating the village as a harmonious entity or community. In many cases the local initiatives merge and give rise to the

formation of a large-scale movement at the intervention of intellectuals backed with media support.

As Wignaraja further points out only ‘some of the people’s movements have been sustained over time, others are eruptions and die down after a while..... Similarly some of the grassroots experiments represent seeds of change, while others are mere bubbles’. He further elaborates on how to differentiate between a seed and a bubble. A seed can be identified with such broad aims as equality and access to resources; equality of social, political, cultural rights; real participation in all social decisions affecting work, welfare, politics etc; the end of division between mental and manual labour and the use of technology appropriate for this purpose. It is not, however, merely a matter of stating these objectives: genuine participation, self-production and self-management, autonomy, solidarity and innovativeness. A bubble on the other hand, is a soft process and may not last, for a variety of reasons. However, he alerts us to the fact that bubbles should not be outrightly dismissed as they may represent entry points to change and some can be transformed into seeds through additional sensitisation and conscientisation programmes, training of facilitators and change agents. Self-employed Women’s Association (SEWA), the Chipko movement, the Kerala Science movement (KSSP) and the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) Samiti are seeds in point. There are innumerable other movements as well differing in degrees of mobilisation, conscientisation and organisation for development and democracy.

All these initiatives may not always proceed in a uniform pattern of development. Within the political space available, there have been interventions in the socio-economic system. In the case of smaller experiments, someone with an advanced consciousness initiates dialogue and a group activity, for example, landless labourers, poor women or a (youth) group trying to do something as a means of living, or a social activity, such as a health or environmental sanitation programme; the process can move forward to become a seed or stay as a bubble until it bursts.

Now we shall look into some of the movements that have highlighted issues of great concern to people and ecology. Chipko deserves to be listed foremost them all. Chipko as a spontaneous movement started in the early 70s and got organized under the able leadership of Sunderlal Bahuguna. It was ignited by the opposition of the people of the Tehri-Garhwal region to the felling of trees by outside contractors. In the Himalayan regions forests form an indispensable source of livelihood for the mostly tribal population living there. Chipko literally means ‘hugging’ the trees. The movement articulated the concerns of forest-based communities such as depletion of forests, erosion of soil and consequent landslides, drying up of local streams and other water resources and shortages of fuel and fodder for domestic consumption. It also fought against the construction of the Tehri dam which threatened the eviction of around 25,000 hilly residents. Though the movement has not succeeded in all its endeavours it has achieved some commendable victories. Getting ban on felling trees above an altitude of 1000m and making the government to announce certain forest areas as protected regions are some of the successes of the movement.

Chipko being a non-violent resistance movement embodies the Gandhian spirit of struggle. Chipko movement inspired green cover movements elsewhere in the country the most important being the Appiko movement in the Western Ghats against the over-felling of trees and covering

forest lands with commercial trees replacing the natural ones. The slogan of Chipko movement is ‘ecology is economy’.

Another major social movement has been that of Anna Hazare who has been fighting since more than two decades for bringing about transparency in bureaucratic apparatus of the state. His movement has changed his village Ralegon Siddhi in Maharashtra into a model village. His movement emphasises the right of the common people to know the information regarding government initiatives and the implementation procedures of the welfare schemes. The government is being pressurised to enact the ‘Right to Information’ act. This legislation would entail the right of the people to gain access to government records and thereby bring transparency and accountability in the functioning of the government. This would ultimately serve to check corruption and rent-seeking practices.

Yet another important movement of the present times is Narmada Bachao Andolan Samiti. This movement, led by Medha Patkar, has sensationalised the issue of building huge dams as a solution for growing stress on water resources. This movement is in opposition to the construction of nearly 3000 major and minor dams across the river Narmada which would submerge an estimated 3,50,000 hectare of forest land and 2,00,000 hectares of cultivated land. About one million people are estimated to become ousters.

There have been a number of other struggles prioritising issues related to women, dalit empowerment, land use and pollution related issues. Women’s movements, though lacking a tradition equivalent to that of French and English feminist movements, have reached a point where they are able to identify common cause with all those movements which would further the advancement of the values of democracy and sustainable development. Dalit movements are also heading forward in the same direction.

However, movements fighting for separate statehoods and autonomy also come under the broad rubric of social movements. Though their source of origin could be the same that of uneven development and the failure of the state to respond to their specific problems, these sub-nationalist and autonomy movements fundamentally differ from other types of social movements. Whereas all other social movements are inclusive i.e. open to all, these movements are exclusive and have particular objectives rather than universal principles.

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## **18.4 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS AGENTS OF RADICAL DEMOCRACY**

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Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have attempted to theorise the phenomenon of the emergence of new social movements. Their primary concern is to offer an alternative social imaginary to both capitalism and socialism as they view both the systems to be retaining the elements of domination and unfairness. Taking the cue from Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe call for hegemony through a process of political coalition of various discrete social groups but without the assertion of leadership within the coalition by any specific group such as working class as it is in the Gramscian revolutionary strategy. Thus they call for the construction of a consensus acceptable to all rather than a quest for supremacy by some ideology or group over other ideologies or groups, in consistent with their radical egalitarianism. Also influenced by the Foucaultian notion of power they argue that social power can no longer be seen as centrally

located in the state or the economy but instead it is exercised as well as resisted at the societal level. The political implication of such an argument being the negation of any privileged arena of political struggle. Laclau and Mouffe praise the new social movements for their particularities as against a unified vision or project.

The new social movements are indicators of the pulse of the people that they are no longer ready to accept the developmental paradigms that keep them out and preclude their participation. They may not be concerned with the capturing of the state power through revolution. Yet they may be building consciously or unconsciously a countervailing power to the dominant state power. The new social movements also represent ways to humanise the larger macro developmental processes in order to demonstrate the fact that the modes of incorporation into the modern world at all levels could be altered. These movements also show how people cope with multiple and simultaneous crises and move on.

People's movements are emerging out of peculiar contradictions within societies and cultures in transition. They may also arise out of contradictions and weaknesses that appear in the role of the state and in the division of labour resulting from the intervention of transnational capital. The new social movements are also bringing about the horizontal integration of people instead of hierarchical integration. According to Rajendra Singh, "ecology movements constitute transnational, biophilic, universalised and moral movements. Their basic commitment and fundamental ideology not only transcend the human categories of caste, class, race, religion and nations but also the categories of species divisions and the divisions of the organic and inorganic world also. This movement is a unique event which brings together the otherwise divided humans on one platform around a single issue, mobilises them to struggle for one cause the defence of all living beings born and unborn".

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## 18.5 NGOs AND VOLUNTARY ACTION

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The modern notion of voluntary action has its origins in Protestant Christianity. Conceptually, it just means anything we involve out of our own choice without any compulsion. Having a purpose or meaning in the action is important for an action to be voluntary. The need for voluntary action arises when individuals feel that the existing socio-political and economic structures of the society are not paying sufficient attention towards some aspects of the society. Or it could be that those structures are not in a position to respond to some issues arising in the society. The motivation to do such action is very often unrelated to one's self-interest.

However, Rajni Kothari argues that voluntarism is the essence of Indian civilisation. He argues that the core of the Indian civilisation is cultural rather than political. He further argues that historically in India states were always marginal and limited in their sphere of action. The real functioning of the society was enabled by voluntary organisations that are based on caste, religion and commercial interests. He also claims that "if one says that voluntarism has been an enduring feature of India, it only means that many people at many places are engaged in multifarious action without being asked to do so by an external agent-political, bureaucratic or market-propelled. The perception of a dichotomy between state-directed and voluntary initiatives has arisen only in recent decades after the modern state and its institutions either began to impede the voluntary ethos of Indian society or forced themselves on what people

did on their own". So Rajni Kothari finds the contemporary interest in voluntary action as something like going back to indigenous Indian tradition of community management of social life.

Now let us have a brief look at the present day voluntary organisations, which are considered synonymous with Non-governmental Organisations, though there is a subtle difference. NGOs are not the only form of voluntary action. NGOs could be a part of voluntary sector. Being non-governmental is only one among the many aspects of voluntary action. The activities of the Christian missionaries in providing health, education and various other facilities are also viewed upon by some, to be the first of voluntary actions in India. But their marked difference lies in the value framework within which they function. Their services are located within the Christian worldview of spreading the message of Christ and ensuring redemption to all. The contemporary NGOs have their origins in 1970s and 80s. This is the period when the state initiatives were increasingly being looked at with skepticism. It was a response and reaction to the failure of the State and its policies. From then on there is a virtual multiplication of NGOs. Though only about 15,000 NGOs have been registered, it is estimated that their number could range anywhere between 50,000 to 1,00,000. NGOs are increasingly being viewed as having an indispensable role to play in supplementing the developmental initiatives of the state.

The co-opting of NGOs by governmental agencies in implementing its policies has evoked mixed response from the scholars. While some view it as a positive development some do not share this view. They feel that this is an encroachment in the sphere of civil society by the state and it is done by the state for encouraging neo-liberal agendas. Sarah Joseph claims that "the spurt in voluntarism, or what came to be called 'grass roots politics', after the emergency in the late 70s provided the hope for a while that a new style of politics was emerging which would regenerate democratic institutions in India. A more participatory model of democracy would emerge it was hoped as a result of popular pressures and the work of voluntary organisations which were involved in organising and mobilising the people, was extolled. Their intervention could, it was felt, help to articulate the needs and priorities of the people and lead the state to devise more people-friendly schemes". Though the governmental and the international agencies also have noted the phenomenon of grass roots activism and the role of NGOs, she points out that the official interest was in using them as sub-contractors for more targeted and efficient delivery since it was felt that they might be more committed and honest and acceptable to the people than the bureaucracy.

The importance of NGOs in the developmental terrain does not, however, lie in the quantity of their work but in quality. As Anil C.Shah and Sudarshan Iyengar point out, there have been many instances where the people once served by the NGOs subsequently demand the same standard in the performance of the government apparatus and agitate for the same. Though, by way of quantity their share has been negligible when compared with that of the government, the quality of the work done by them is impressive. The works done by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme(AKRS) in Gujarat is telling in this regard. They propose six parameters in judging the quality of NGO activities which are as follows:

- i) People's participation
- ii) Technical excellence

- iii) Cost-effectiveness
- iv) Equity-concern for the deprived, and for women
- v) Institutional, financial, and environmental sustainability
- vi) Accountability

They argue that the greatest of the NGOs is their approach and method for enlisting people's participation. "Working informally in a friendly manner, they do not undertake development as government agencies generally do, with the primary concern being the achievement of a certain target irrespective of the needs and priorities of the people". This shows the need for a change in the attitude of the government agencies involving in the task of development. However the emphasis on the attitude instead of larger socio-economic structural changes is seen by the advocates of a radical change as a neo-liberal conspiracy to legitimise its expanding role and also to bail out the state, which is collaborating to this effect.

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## 18.6 SUMMARY

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The catapulting of civil society to the centrestage of political discourse on political processes is like a double-edged sword. While it holds the promise of democratising the development phenomena by increasing popular participation it also possesses the danger of undermining the legitimacy of the state. Though many NGOs are doing commendable service in the promotion of the values of freedom, democracy, social justice and sustainable development, it has to be kept in mind that they can never have the reach of the governmental apparatus. As one author notes, 'even thousands of NGOs cannot replace the role of the government'. The accountability of the NGOs is also another issue of concern. As already noted, a majority of them are not registered under the Foreign Currency Regulation Act (FCRA). But their importance lies in demonstrating to the public the possible democratic ways of development with their participation and thereby make the people to pressurise the government to bring constructive changes in the modes of development. One also has to share the optimism of Rajni Kothari towards voluntary action. He claims that though the contemporary interest in voluntary action is seen as a reaction to the failure of the state, we are very soon likely to discover a more positive and liberated sense of what voluntarism involves. Only the unfolding political events of the future can either vindicate or refute such claims.

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## 18.7 EXERCISES

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- 1) Do you share the arguments of many of the critics regarding the supposed negative role of governmental apparatus in India's development process? Give valid arguments for your stand.
- 2) Discuss the changing notions of civil society and critically evaluate the contemporary importance attached to it in this era of globalisation.
- 3) Critically analyse the role of new social movements in promoting the values of sustainable development and empowerment of marginalised communities.
- 4) Discuss the role of NGOs in supplementing the developmental task of the governmental

agencies and the promise held out by the voluntary sector in the present global era.

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## **UNIT 19 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

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### **Structure**

- 19.1 Introduction
  - 19.2 Approaches to Human Development
    - 19.2.1 Income/GNP Approach
    - 19.2.2 Human Capital Formation Approach
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### **19.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The issue of development has been central in social sciences discourses for a long time. Its content, form and meaning had experienced sea changes particularly with the emergence and maturity of capitalism as the first Global System. The 33<sup>rd</sup> US President, Harry S. Truman through his Point Four Programme launched on 10th January 1949, assigned to it its present meaning. Before that it was used in a limited sense particularly with reference to species, to real estate and to moves in the game of chess. Hereafter, it was used to refer to people, to countries and to economic strategies. It was a paradigm shift in the true sense of the term. Today development is used in a wider context. It is used as a reason of the state, a legitimiser of regimes, a power relation and above all the philosophy and ideology of the state. Correspondingly, there came a spate of 'development theories', formation of 'development communities' and inauguration of 'development epochs or decades'. However, there was something more conspicuous than many other aspects of development. It was related to the use of development for peace and for establishing global hegemony. The developed countries mostly from the group of former colonisers also known as the 'North' succeeded in constructing and defining Development in a particular way within the limits of certain parameters and thereafter they tried to judge all the other countries and communities through a single yardstick. Countries and communities that failed to qualify in accordance to the norms outlined in the yardstick were subjected to various types of manipulations and manoeuvres. Most often these interventions were against the history, culture and popular will of the people. One such yardstick is the concept and idea of "Human Development".

## 19.2 APPROACHES TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Many scholars and thinkers tried to evolve various approaches to conceptualise and define human development at various times in the past. Some of the most debated ones are:

### 19.2.1 Income/GNP Approach

It is often said that “*virtue thy name is Gold*” or “*Sarve guna kanchan mashrayanti*”. Wealth or income of a person or of a nation is not only a good indicator of their range of choices they can exercise but also of the realm of freedom and possibilities. Wealth is not only an asset in the hands of a person but it is also the totality of his being in a system where ‘having determines ones’ being’. This is perhaps one of the simplest and once upon a time widely used approach for measuring human development. According to this approach the total (Gross/Net) produce of the country is converted into money value and divided by the total population of the country. A higher per capita income will indicate a higher level of human development. But, in recent times this approach has come under severe criticism for a variety of reasons:

- Income is only a means and not an end in itself. Higher income need not necessarily mean better quality of life. Well-being of an individual and society mostly depends upon the use to which income is put and not on the level of income alone. Higher income of a drug addict, a sick person, and a country engaged in prolonged war and internal conflicts may not show better level of well-being.
- Income takes into account only the material aspects of the social assets and it does not take into account the non-material components. Well-being largely depends upon the opportunities and capabilities available with the individual in a particular society, which in turn is based on the nature of "social capital as a feature of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the coordinated action of an individual in a society".
- Income of a country or an individual at a particular point of time is incapable of assessing the potentialities and growth prospects in future. Countries that have made good investments in human resource development such as in imparting education and skill may indicate low levels of income but higher potential in future than countries that have higher level of income at present but spend little on such investments.
- Higher income with higher disparities will indicate relatively lower levels of well-being than medium income with low level of disparities. The experiences of the countries show that high levels of human development at modest income levels and poor levels of human development at fairly high income levels.

To sum up, it can be safely stated that links between income and human development is neither direct nor automatic. Income and GNP are at best necessary but not sufficient conditions for human development.

### **19.2.2 Human Capital Formation Approach**

Human Capital Formation is also known as Human Resource Development Approach. It; primarily looks at human beings as means rather than as ends. These theories are mainly concerned with the supply side and consider human beings as instruments in extending the expended commodity reproductions. Once again, there is no denial of the fact that it is primarily human ability to produce that distinguishes them from rest of the species in the animal kingdom but this is a very narrow view of human productive potentials. Apart from commodity production human beings are also creators of their own history which is not only a unique but a most significant feat as far as realisation of human worth is concerned. One of the two principal contradictions of all the class societies was denial of this realisation to a majority of human beings, that they are important actors in the saga of human history. To be recognised as a distinct identity is quintessential to receiving any distributive justice, which in turn is intricately related to the quality of life and well-being. This is perhaps one message that has come clear and loud from the fall of former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Pretoria and Iraq etc. at the beginning of the twenty first century that, "every thing else is negotiable except the right to be recognised". Redistribution and recognition have become the inseparable components of human freedom in this century. Thus the concept of Human Resource Development captures only the smaller part of human creativity and misses the most important one.

### **19.2.3 Human Welfare Approach**

This'approach has gained popularity with the maturity of the modern welfare states. It looks at human beings more as the beneficiary of development rather than participants in the process. At a glance, this approach appears to be in the interest of general well-being and common good. But a critical insight into the structural logic reveals that various welfare measures carried out by the different states world over are prompted under the compulsion of gaining legitimacy and consent from the masses. It was primarily in the aftermath of the French Revolution when there occurred a paradigm shift in the nature of social power. It was followed by a shift in the source of legitimacy from the almighty to common man, which in turn was accompanied by a shift in the nature of class rule. Hereafter, class rule was replaced by hegemonic control, use of open violence by structural violence, and brutal power by capillary power relation. Consequently, naked exploitation gave way to hegemonised control and governmentality. Therefore, a most ideal welfare state represents one that uses structural violence and capillary forces to exercise hegemonic control over its people. Consequently, what may appear as welfare measures to many are quintessentially components of hegemonic control and aspects of governmentality. Educational and health facilities given by many states world over in the name of welfare measures are the best examples of exercising structural control and governmentality.

### **19.2.4 Basic Minimum Need Approach**

This is one of the most important and also rigorously debated approaches. It was initially proposed by International Labour Organisation (ILO) as a measure of adequacy of a development process. ILO has identified six basic needs namely health, education, food, water supply, sanitation and housing. It basically concentrates on the bundle of goods, commodities and services that the deprived population groups needs rather than the issue of

human choices. It is because of such a crass existential approach toward such a sensitive and human issue like human development that this has been criticised by many. Some of the important issues raised by this approach are:

- Who determines basic needs? Is it the people, government or the organ of the state? Is it possible for any one to lay down a basket of commodities that people should regard as basic? For example, the ILO considers employment a basic need; according to Sidney Webb it includes leisure; in China it is a decent funeral; and others may consider safety as a basic necessity.
- Is the concept of basic needs subjective or objective? How to resolve the differences that emerge due to the position one occupies in the market? Looking at it from the supply side it may be possible to suggest objectively specified quantities of goods, **commodities** and services such as food, clothing, shelter, water and sanitation that are essential to prevent ill health. But from the demand side there may be differences in the ordering of the items in the bundle along with the level of satisfaction each consumer derives **from** the items in the bundle.
  - Do basic needs refer to conditions for a full, long and healthy life of a specific bundle of goods and **services** that are deemed to provide opportunity for these conditions? What is the basis to assume that basic needs expressed by the consumers has a **full** knowledge of and free access to market and they **are not** gullible to temptations created by misinformation through advertisement etc? Moreover, how can one **justify** that selection of the bundle of basic needs is a result of their **free** will and rational choice and these are not made under pressures, enticements, fears and cajolery etc?
  - What is the purpose of participation? What form should it take? How does a right to participate (if it exists) relate to the political/administrative structures necessary for efficient implementation of the basic needs approach? Participation of people is seen as a major advancement towards their empowerment and well-being. But, the question is whether it is a means or **an** end? What is the purpose of participation? Is it for personal satisfaction, work enrichment, greater efficiency to improve results including cost **minimisation**, community development or promotion of solidarity etc? Similarly, what should be the nature and form of participation?
  - What is the relationship between the redistribution approach to development and the basic needs approach? Does the basic needs approach require **fundamental** systematic change or it is palliative? Participation does not always mean empowerment and democratisation. The annals of history prove that autocrats and dictators too encouraged participation of workers, scholars, politicians, scientists and philosophers through highly undemocratic means. The findings of the B.R.Mehta Committee Report on the **functioning** of Panchayati Raj System in India also proved that devolution of powers at the lower levels have proved counter productive in the spread of democratic ethos in the country and this system of governance further consolidated the hegemony of the rural potentates with additional power at their disposal. Moreover, it is also a common experience of most of the elected democracies that leadership very seldom represents the masses. Most of the leaders who succeed in getting elected are manipulators and **power brokers** rather than grass root level mass workers. They emerge as leaders through manoeuvres instead of a real mass movement.

The experiences of the western democracies too prove that labour aristocracy had detrimental impacts upon the working class movements in these countries. Apart from these the questions this approach need to answer are:

- Whether basic needs are an end in itself or they are instruments for developing human resources?
- In the age of globalisation, what will be the role of the forces of globalisation and international support in mobilising the basic needs? Finally,
- What is the relation between poverty eradication and reducing income inequalities?

A.K. Sen is one of the most articulate critics of the Basic Needs Approach. According to him the need, satisfaction, happiness and commodity based approaches present a one-sided view only. Human Development is a complex and multidimensional process and he conceptualises it in terms of 'Opportunities' and 'Capabilities'. Commodities are like text, open for multiple interpretations and appropriations. A given quantity and quality of food basket has different significance for different consumers. The uses and utilities taken from the given basket of food will depend upon the sex, age, health, rate of metabolism, state of the physical and mental health of the consumer (for example a pregnant woman and a lactating mother), nature of work, climate of the place, the level of knowledge about the nutritive value of various food items and rate of loss of nutrition through different cooking methods etc all will be determined by the capabilities of the consumer. Sen also argues that human development should not be judged from the degree of freedom one enjoys in having different options to select from which is the most important aspect of well-being. In support of his arguments he places the examples of a starving beggar, a fasting monk and Gandhi on hunger strike. According to him the last two i.e. the fasting monk and Gandhi on hunger strike have capabilities and they have the freedom to exercise their option. It is only the starving pauper who lacks capabilities and has low levels of human development.

It is evident from the above discussion that the basic needs approach has been severely criticised by scholars and many scholars have expressed their opinions in favour of a more comprehensive approach to define human development. Capability, options and freedom are the three non-negotiable minimum acceptable criteria laid down by many. But, in no way are these agreeable to all. Frances Stewart suggested that human development should be assessed in terms of more objective and observable achievements rather than in terms of subjective parameters like, happiness, freedom and choice etc.

In the backdrop of these debates, claims and counter claims, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) tried to define and conceptualise human development. It was in 1990 that the UNDP finally came up with its own definition and notion of human development.

### **19.3 DEFINING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

*"As a process of enlarging the range of people's choices- increasing their opportunities for education, health care, income and employment and covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political freedom".*

For many it may appear a simple and an easy exercise to arrive at a consensus in evolving a definition of a concept like human development but as far as UNDP is concerned, this

was any thing but an easy and simple exercise. The first report on human development prepared by the UNDP made it explicit:

*"This report is about people- and about how development enlarges their choices. It is about more than GNP growth, more than income and wealth and more than producing commodities and accumulating capital. A person's access to income may be one of the choice, but it is not the sum total of human behaviour."*

*"Human Development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical of these wide-ranging choices are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and personal self-respect".*

The other core issues of concern that find mention in the reports are:

- Development enables people to have these choices though no one can guarantee happiness to others.
- Development should aim at creating conducive environment for people, to develop their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives in accord with their needs and interests.
- Development should concern more than the formation of human capabilities, such as improved health or knowledge and it should focus more on the realisation of these capabilities in every possible spheres of our social life.

Human freedom is vital for human development. People must be free to express their choices.

- Human development is not only the satisfaction of basic needs but also of human development as a participatory and dynamic process. It is applicable to both the developed and the developing countries.
- The other and most significant aspect of the report was the identification of certain key indicators of human development, their measurement and preparation of human development index for all the countries of the world.

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## 19.4 INDICATORS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

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At the world level, the United Nations' Development Programme was the apex body to prepare a Human Development Report for all the countries. It was felt that measuring the progress of various countries on the basis of single criterion i.e. GNP has too many limitations to be used as the basis of comparison. Many scholars looked for a more comprehensive socio-economic measure because they believed that:

**"Human Development is about people – and about how development enlarges their choices. It is not about more than GNP growth, more than income and wealth and more than producing commodities and accumulating capital. A person's access to income may be one of the choice, but it is not the sum total of human endeavour".**

The 1990 report was the first endeavour in this direction. This report identified three essential elements of human life: **Longevity, knowledge and decent living standards.**

### **Longevity**

Life expectancy at birth is the indicator for measuring longevity. The theoretical justification provided for selecting life expectancy lies in a common belief that human life is most precious and long life is priceless amongst all human achievements. It is both the means as well as the end. Long life is closely associated with adequate nutrition, good health and personal safety.

### **Knowledge**

"Knowledge is power" is an old saying. Literacy is a person's first step in learning and knowledge building. Therefore, a literate person has greater access to power than an illiterate. Moreover, the importance of literacy has been enhanced in the age of information technology because it is no longer considered an achievement of an individual but the basis of one's existence.

### **Decent living standard**

It is an accepted fact that command over resources is a must for a decent living but it is one of the most difficult to measure. The most readily available indicator is per capita income, but it has a wide national coverage and variations along with many other serious anomalies. Therefore, using purchasing power-adjusted real GDP per capita provides better approximation of the relative power to buy commodities and to gain command over resources for a decent living standard.

It is understood that the above-mentioned three indicators have serious limitations owing to the level of macro generalisations of averages it is based upon. At the same time these are also less sensitive to the regional, gender, historical and class differences that are most significant in the measurement of these indicators. Moreover, it has also been criticised for positioning human development against growth, its over emphasis on sectoral rather overall growth and leanings towards the poor countries whose primary goal is to satisfy their basic needs, minimises its applicability in case of the developed countries.

Though, the overall conceptualisation and definitions of human development remained unchanged for the next two years, yet, in the report of 1992, special attention was paid to link human development with some other important components. These were concept of sustained development, unleashing of the creative energies of all people through competitive and efficient markets and the adverse impacts of discriminatory trade policies particularly the immigration policy adopted by the developed countries which are largely responsible for the continuing disparities between the rich and poor countries and low level of human

development in the developing countries. The important highlights of this report were:

*"One of the great lessons of recent decades is that competitive markets are best guarantees for human development. They open up opportunities for creative enterprises and they increase the access of people to a whole range of economic choices".*

It also recognised the discriminatory and less responsive approaches followed by the rich countries. It is mentioned in the report that:

*"It is irony that the public enterprises are opening up for privatisation, consumers' demands is replacing centralised planning but global market is restrictive. The developed countries are not opening their markets to the products of poor countries".*

Thus, market reforms and human development were linked with each other in this report.

There was some sort of paradigm shift from the last three years report and the one published in 1993. People's participation and their security were the major issues in the Human Development Report of 1993. It also emphasised on progressive democratisation and increasing empowerment of people as minimum conditions for human development. The report indicated that: '**development must be woven around people, not people around development**'. It mentioned that the power of development lies in the development of people's empowerment. The report recognised greater constructive role of '**Civil Societies**' in bringing about peace and human development. According to the report, "A vibrant and vigilant civil society must stress on the security of the people rather than that of a nation". It should work for building up an opinion for reduction in the military expenditure, demobilisation of armed forces, transition from defence to production of basic goods and services and particularly disarmament and reduction in the nuclear warheads by the developed countries etc. In a nuclearised world, peace and well-being are major global concerns. So long as the threats of mass annihilation looms large over our head, insecurity and apprehensions will not allow peace, goodwill and compassion for fellow human beings to prevail in the world. It also acknowledged that dictatorship and military rulers are greatest threats to human development. As opposed to this, vibrant civil society insures relatively better opportunities for peace and human development.

The paradigm shift that was envisaged in the 1993 report was consolidated in the reports of 1994 and 1995. Sustainable Development was the new buzzword. It gave new meaning to life itself. The report mentioned; '**It does not value life because it produces material goods but because it values human life itself**'. It initiated positive steps to eliminate all kinds of discriminations. The most important aspect of the HDR of 1994 was methodological and conceptual changes in the construction of Human Development Index relating to variable.

"No child should be doomed to a short life or a miserable one merely because that child happens to be born in a **wrong class** or in a **wrong country** or to be of **wrong sex**". It also spelt out the details of security concerns that continue to threaten the life globally and suggested effective measures to each type of security such as economic, food, health,

environment, personal, community, and political security. Moreover, international terrorism was also recognised as an important threat to human well being and human development for the first time.

Gender equality was the theme of the Human Development Report in 1995. Equal opportunity to all, particularly to females was the prime concern. It mentioned that, "**human development if not engendered is endangered**". The findings of the report are startling but true. Some of the important findings revealed in the report are:

- "Poverty has a woman face" —roughly 70 per cent women in the world live in poverty.
- Removing gender inequality has nothing to do with national income.
- While the doors of education and health opportunities have opened rapidly for women, the door to economic and political opportunities are barely ajar.
- Women receive disproportionately small share of credit from banking institutions. It is as low as 7-11 per cent in case of Latin America.
- Women receive much lower wages than men.
- All regions have higher rate of unemployment of women.

In developing countries women constitute only 1/7 of the administrative and management jobs.

- Women occupy only 10 per cent seats in parliament and 7 per cent as cabinet ministers.
- In 55 countries there are no or below 5 per cent women in parliament.
- A major index of neglect reveals that many economic contributions made by women are grossly under valued or not valued at all. The magnitude of this omission is to the tune of \$11 billion a year.
- Discrimination against women and their devaluation begins even before life begins. It starts early in life and continues through out. 1/3 of women in countries like Barbados, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and USA report sexual abuse during childhood. Over a million children in Asia and mostly girls, are forced into prostitution every year.
- Violence against women becomes part of marriage. In some countries 2/3 married women suffer domestic violence. Sometimes it is manifested in the form of rape too. In Canada, USA, New Zealand and UK, one out of every six women is raped in her lifetime. It may end in murder or in suicide.

However, the most important aspect of the HDR of 1995 was methodological and conceptual changes in the construction of Human Development Index relating to variable. There were two changes made in this report:

The first was related to level of knowledge and awareness. Till 1994 Mean Year of Schooling as an indicator for estimating the level of literacy was replaced by the combined, primary, secondary and tertiary level enrolment ratio.

The second change was related to the lowering of the minimum value of income from PPP\$200 to PPP\$100.

Finally the report concluded that if half of humanity faces such gender discriminations, then any talk about human development is not only worthless but is also violence against the gender. The report took full note of the gravity of the situation and initiated the processes of computing Gender Equity Sensitive Index or Gender Related Development Index (GDI) along with Human Development Index.

The report published in the subsequent year likened human development to economic growth. It recognised 'human development as the end and economic growth as the means'. But it also warned that there is no direct link between the two. In fact on the basis of the last 15 years performance the report concluded that some countries have made spectacular economic advancement but some have registered unprecedented decline. As a result, the disparities have increased. Consequently there emerged two diametrically opposite worlds in an otherwise uni-polar world. It also revealed that of the \$23 Trillion Global GDP in 1993, \$18 trillion was in the developed countries and only \$5 trillion was in the developing countries, though the latter had 80 per cent of world's population. It warned that short-term advancements in human development are possible but they will not be sustainable without further growth. Conversely, economic growth is not sustainable without human development.

The 1997 report considered poverty eradication as the necessary step for human development. Its focus was not just on poverty but poverty from the human development perspective. Apart from broadly agreeing with the definition of poverty stated in the 1990 human development report, this report included additional choices of 'political freedom, human rights and self respect' including what Adam Smith called "the ability to mix with other without being ashamed to appear in public" as elements of human development. It critically looked at all the three perspectives on poverty:

- Income perspective,
- Basic needs perspective, and
- Capacity perspective.

The most significant aspect of this report was outlining the criteria of ill-being which is so very important to assess capacity building and measurement of well-being. These include:

*Being disabled (blind, crippled, mentally impaired and chronically sick),  
Lacking land, live stock, farm equipments, grinding mill etc,  
Being unable to bury their dead ones,  
Being unable to send their children to school,  
Having more mouths to feed and fewer hands to help,  
Lacking able bodied family members who can feed their families in crises,  
Having bad housing,  
Suffering from the effects destructive behaviours (drugs, alcoholism etc.)  
Being "poor in people" lacking social support,*

*Having to put children in employment,*

*Being single parents,*

*Having to accept demeaning low status work,*

*Having food security for only a few months in a year, and*

*Being dependent on common property resources.*

An important feature of this report was preparing Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) and (HPI-2) for the developed and the developing countries respectively. It concentrated on deprivation in three elements of human life already reflected in the HDI i.e. longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living. The deprivation related to these indicators were:

- Deprivation related to survival —vulnerability to death at a relatively early age.
- Relating to knowledge—being excluded from the world of reading and communication, and;
- Relating to decent living people below poverty line.

The report in 1998 was different from the previous reports in more than one sense. The major concern of all the previous reports was centred around increasing consumptions and meeting basic needs. This report blamed spurious consumption patterns by some countries responsible for low levels of well-being world over. Therefore, it emphasised on changing today's consumption pattern for tomorrow's human development. The report highlights that world consumption has expanded at an unprecedented pace over 20<sup>th</sup> century, it touched \$ 24 trillion mark in 1998 which was \$12 trillion in 1975, \$ 4 trillion in 1960 and \$1.5 trillion in 1900. Consumption is an essential means for human development but the relationship is not automatic. The present trends of global consumption reveals that it has enlarged in the developed countries which has adversely affected the level of well-being in the developing countries mainly in the following ways:

- Overt and spurious consumption by the rich have created the conditions of induced scarcity in the commodity market which has artificially pushed up the prices of commodities and making these beyond the reach of commons.
- It does not only create scarcity at present but is likely to be more acute for the future generations.
- Present consumption patterns have become inimical to human development as it is undermining the environmental reserve base. Therefore, it is jeopardising the prospects of future generations.
- It has resulted in exacerbating inequalities over space and generations.
- There exists a dynamic nexus among consumption-poverty-inequality- environmental degradation.
- Environmental Pollution, ecological crises have become the natural allies of consumption.
- Sustainable development should be based on a change in the production technology.

To enforce change in consumption patterns, a reduction in the subsidies provided by the developed countries to their producers is a must.

- Change in the mind set is imperative for sustainable development. "Thinking globally **and** acting locally" holds the key to human development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The culmination of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed consolidation of globalisation as an inevitable process. Therefore, the best way to come into terms with this was to emphasise on the human dimension of it. Though globalisation was not a new phenomenon yet, the recent phase has distinct features. The collapse of Berlin wall and fall of iron curtains did not only bring an end to the large part of the former Socialist World, but there was also a shrinking of space, time and disappearance of boundaries. It appeared as if the world has collapsed into a small global village linking people's life more intensely, more deeply and immediately than ever before. Globalisation offers new opportunities for human advancements but its advantages can be availed only by those who have strong governance: i.e. those equipped with new market, new tools and techniques, new actors, new rule and ultimately new people. This is the age of globalisation where only the powerful have the right to exist. Fierce and relentless pressure of global competition is squeezing out the invisible heart of human development. Thus, it has serious repercussions on the overall security environment. Therefore, the report reflected the needs of providing a human face to human development.

The report of 2000 started with a strong and uncompromising commitment to human rights, freedom and solidarity in order to bring in the human touch to globalisation. It stated that human rights and human development share a common vision and common purpose to secure freedom, well-being and dignity of all people everywhere. It talked of

Freedom from discrimination—by gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin and religion

- Freedom from fear of threat to personal security, from torture, arbitrary arrest, and other violent acts
- Freedom to develop and realise ones human potentialities
- Freedom from injustice and violation of the rule of law
- Freedom of thought and speech and to participate in decision making and forming associations and
- Freedom for decent work without exploitation.

This report also made attempts to evolve an encompassing definition of human development. Human development means:

*"To have access to the resources for a decent standard of living. But, the realm of human development extends further in to other areas of choice highly valued by people including participation, security, sustainability, guaranteed human rights all needed for being creative and productive and for enjoying self respect, empowerment and a sense of belonging to a community".*

And finally to define human development in one sentence it is "***development of the people, for the people and by the people***".

The 2001 human development report tried to link human development to technology. It acknowledged that technology networks are transforming the traditional map of development. It is expanding people's horizons and creating the potentials to realise a decade's progress in a week's time that required generations in the past. But technology is a double-edged sword or to put it differently it is a good servant and bad master. It is primarily the use and control over technology by some powerful countries of the world that has subjugated large number of other countries to positions of permanent subjugation amounting servitude of a nation. Countries, communities and individuals that are slow and at the receiving end of technological innovation are constantly haunted by the fear of obsolescence and redundancy and ultimately being a permanent misfit to a fast changing world. This gravely affects the well-being and sense of self respect among the individual.

The 2002 report adds a new dimension to human development. It is a report about politics and human development. It is about how political power and institutions—formal and informal, national and international—shape human progress. It shows concerns about deepening democracies in a fragmented world. According to this report democracy that empowers people must be built on the confidence and resources of the people and it cannot be imported. It is against one model of democracy to all over the country. And respect for difference is the heart of democracy and development.

The report of 2003 makes a bold beginning by setting "Millennium Development Goals: a compact among nations to end human poverty". According to the declaration made by the heads of the states, it is binding on every state to 'attack inadequate income, widespread hunger, gender inequality, environmental deterioration and lack of education, health care and clean water. They also include actions to reduce debt and increase aid, trade and technology transfer to poorer countries'. Some of the important Millennium Development Goals and Targets outlined in the report are:

Goals	Targets
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Reduce the number of people by 50 per cent between 1990 and 2015 whose income is less than \$1.
Achieve universal primary education.	Reduce the number of people by similar percentage who are suffering from hunger.
Promote gender equality and empower women	Ensure that all children will be able to complete primary schooling by 2015
Reduce child mortality	Eliminate gender inequality in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels by 2015
	Reduce child mortality below 5 year by two-third, between 1990-2015

Improve maternal health	Reduce maternal mortality ratio by three fourth by 1990-2015
Combat HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases	Halted by 2015 in case of HIV/AIDS
	Halt incidence of malaria and other disease by 2015
Ensure environmental sustainability	Make environmental policies as the basis of national planning and reverse the process of environmental degradation.
	Reduce the ratio of people by 50 per cent that do not have sustainable access to safe drinking water.
	Improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.
Develop a global partnership for development	Develop an open, rural based non-discriminatory trading system
	Address the needs of least developed countries.
	Address the needs of landlocked countries, small island states
	Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries.
	Collaboration with the developed countries for productive employment of youth
	Provision for cheap and essential drugs to the poorer countries
	Partnership between the private sector for the diffusion of new production and information technology.

It is evident from the brief survey and discussions of the human development reports presented by the UNDP that attempts have been made to include all the possible aspects in the report that concern human well-being and development world over. The reports have also tried to interrogate the new challenges that threatened human well-being, peace, security and freedom world over. But it is surprising to notice that only three indicators were selected in computing the Final Human Development Index.

It was mentioned earlier that the UNDP was well aware of the importance of taking more and relevant indicators for measuring a multidimensional phenomenon such as human development. It

has made various attempts to make it as relevant as possible. However, it had to stick to three indicators only. The justification provided for the same in the UNDP states:

"The ideal would be to reflect all aspects of human experience. The lack of data imposes some limits on this, and more indicators could perhaps be added as the information becomes available. But more indicators would not necessarily be better, some might overlap with existing indicators: infant mortality for example, is already reflected in life expectancy. And adding more variables could confuse the picture and detract from the main trends".

After the selection of the indicators, the most crucial aspect is to prepare a Human Development Index to measure the performance of each country in terms of the level of human well-being. For this purpose preparing a human development index is the most significant and crucial aspect.

## 19.5 COMPUTING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

As mentioned earlier some changes were made in the selection of indicators for the measurement Human Development in the report of 1995. Till 1994 Mean Year of Schooling was taken as an indicator for estimating the level of literacy. In the report of 1995 this indicator was replaced by the combined, primary, secondary and tertiary level enrolment ratio. The justification provided in the report was the difficulties in getting authentic data along with lack of compatibility among the data supplied by different countries. The second change that was incorporated was related to lowering down the minimum value of GDP (income) per capita from PPP\$200 to PPP\$100.

Once again the justification provided in the report was to include those countries that have PPP below \$200. It was noticed in the previous reports that a large number of countries mostly forming a group of former colonies have PPP below \$200 but these have large variations among them.

According to the report published in 2002, HDI is a summary of Human Development. It measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of Human Development:

A long and healthy life, as measured by life expectancy at birth.

Knowledge, as measured by the adult literacy rate (with two-third weight) and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (with one-third weight).

- A decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita (PPP US\$),

It is also felt that "Before the HDI is calculated, an index need to be created for each of these dimensions". Therefore, it was also felt that minimum and maximum values (also termed as the Goal Post) be chosen for each indicator.

The Goal Posts fixed for the year 2002 are as follows:

Indicator	Maximum value	Minimum value
Life expectancy at birth (years)	85 (for a country)	25 (for a country)
Adult literacy rate (percentage)	100	0
Combined gross enrolment ratio (percentage)	100	0
GDP per capita (PPP US\$)	40,000	100

To illustrate each of the indicators in case of Ivory Coast for the year 2000:

Life expectancy at birth in years: 47.80

Adult literacy rate : 46.80

Gross enrolment rate : 38.00

GDP per capita in PPP US \$ : 1630

Calculating life expectancy Index:  $= 47.8 - 25185 - 25 = 0.380$

Calculating Adult literacy Index =  $46.8 - 0/100 - 00 = 0.468^*$

Calculating Gross enrolment Index =  $38 - 0 / 100 - 00 = 0.380^{**}$

Calculating the GDP index = $\log(1630) - \log(100)/\log(40000) - \log 100 = 0.466$

Calculating the Human Development Index =  $\frac{1}{3} \text{ (value of life expectancy index)} + \frac{1}{3} \text{ (value of education index)} + \frac{1}{3} \text{ (value of GDP Index)}$

OR

$$\frac{1}{3}(0.380) + \frac{1}{3}(0.439) + \frac{1}{3}(0.466) = 0.428$$

## **19.6 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA**

India, unlike many developing countries, has a well-developed statistical system. Thanks to the colonial governmentality, in our countries there are a lot of agencies that have been collecting information and data on various aspects of our economy, polity, environment and resources etc over a long time period. Among the most prominent agencies are: National Population Census, National Family and Health Survey, Sample Registration System, National Sample Survey etc. It was however, realised that though these agencies are contributing significantly in obtaining information on different aspects, the information lacks coordination and is not directly related to each other as far as data generation is concerned. To quote Abusaleh Shariff of NCAER:

*"The population census provides detailed information on demographic characteristics and other variables. It has no information on income, asset, ownership, consumption pattern and other variables. It thus felt that a unified survey covering different facets of Human Development, level of living, employment and*

*wages, literacy and education, morbidity, disability and nutrition, effectiveness of public services such as the PDS, education and healthcare etc, and Demographic characteristics would be useful. Such a unified survey would enable researchers to draw interrelationships between these different variables and thereby better understanding".*

As result today we have human development report at the national level published every year. The exercise has become so popular among the planners and scholars that some of the major states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh etc have also prepared human development reports for the respective states. It is interesting to note that the unit of analysis in this case are the districts. An important aspect of these reports is that they tried to incorporate India and state specific indicators for preparing the Report. For example the Maharashtra State Report has taken following indicators:

- Infant mortality and child mortality rate.
- Nutrition (below 2 years of Age).
- HDI and per capita district domestic production (at current prices).
- Literacy rate, mean year of schooling and dropout rate.
- Achievement and improvement indices for literacy 1991-2001.
- Achievement and improvement indices for IMR 1981-1991.
- District wise classification of village amenities.
- Percentage distribution of census houses by Kuchcha, Semi-Pucca, Pucca and houses having facilities available.

The information obtained is used to classify different districts on the basis of the HDI, which in turn, is used to guide various policy options of the state and central government.

## **19.7 SUMMARY**

Human development is one of the indicators of the overall development of countries. It can be measured in terms of the wealth of a country, the human resource a country possesses, the health facilities and welfare measures that a country offers to its people or fulfillment of the six basic needs internationally identified as health, education, food, water supply, sanitation and housing. Human development should be the ultimate aim of each and every activity of the state, the objective of all scientific investigations and above all interaction between two individuals and trading partners. But, unfortunately this particular aspect remained most neglected so far. There has been resurgence in the interest on human development in recent years. Many scholars and leaders at the world level have claimed to work towards improving the quality of life without discrimination. The United Nations Development Programme attempted to define the notion of human development for the first time in 1990. It has also tried to work out broadly agreeable indicators of human development and preparation of human development index. And it continues to improvise these concepts with every new challenge it faces. But, it is unfortunate that for want of adequate data and information it relies on indirect methods of estimation. Moreover, it has come to notice that the global hegemonic powers are using human development index for intervening into the internal

'affairs of sovereign states. Therefore, human development is a noble concept and preparation of HDI is a noble exercise but in an unequal world it is also used for justifying ulterior motives.

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## 19.8 EXERCISES

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- 1) What do you understand by human development? What are the various approaches to the study of human development?
- 2) What is the Basic Minimum Needs approach towards human development? Why is this approach criticised?
- 3) Identify the indicators of human development. What are the other concepts and dimensions that have been linked by the Human Development Reports to the concept of human development?
- 4) Write a short note on human development in India.

## **UNIT 20 GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Structure**

- 20.1 Introduction
  - 20.2 Women and Gender
  - 20.3 Development and Gender
  - 20.4 Agencies of Development
  - 20.5 Critique of Development
  - 20.6 From Women in Development to Gender and Development
  - 20.7 Gender Development and Justice
  - 20.8 Summary
  - 20.9 Exercises
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### **20.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The biological difference between man and woman is generally the basis of defining them in two diametrically opposite social categories as male and female and thereby attributing to them the characteristics of masculine and feminine. This sexual difference becomes the basis of many unscientific, irrational and artificial differences between man and woman. The way these differences are produced and then rationalised is what is known as gender relationship. Thus while sex is natural and biological and one can do very little to change it, gender is a socio-cultural phenomenon and hence changes its definition, etc., according to its socio-cultural locale. A pioneering feminist Ann Oakley has tried to state this in these terms: "Gender is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification of men and women into 'masculine' and "feminine." Gender reflects the existing power relationship in any given society. The power relations in society are of unequal nature, where women are given secondary position to men. What seems to be the way out? What are some of the ways in which the solution to this massive inequality has been sought to be overcome? These are some of the issues that we shall deal with in this unit.

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### **20.2 WOMEN AND GENDER**

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According to the historians of gender relations, women have been given a lower socio-economic and political status in social hierarchy. Their status is determined by the politically and economically dominant power which is quite often wielded by the male be it as an individual or as a group. In 1974 Kate Millett in her book *Sexual Politics* defined this structure of power as 'patriarchy'. The way a girl child is socialised into accepting the powerful male authority has been one of the key themes of the sociologists and historians.

Another pioneering feminist, philosopher Simone De Beauvoir in her monumental book *Second Sex* tried to unravel this aspect of our social life. There have been, therefore, serious attempts to understand, and as a Marxist and a feminist would say, to break the power relationship so that women could come out of their subordinated position to taste the freedom of opportunity, life and happiness.

Patriarchal system impinges on every sphere of a woman's life. In modern economy for example, woman, as woman, neither has easy access to the formal sectors of employment nor is there generally an equal wage structure for both men and women, i.e., women were paid less than the men for the same job. They also lack access to space and institutions to express themselves. At home, from selecting a partner to planning the size of the family, one finds, her power of decision-making is quite often circumscribed by familial, societal or community rules and norms. Finally, access to facilities of better health care and nutrition is also preferentially distributed. Women, either as girl children or as pregnant women, or merely as women, do not get the required attention. This gets reflected in the rate of mortality and exposure to illness.

In cultural arena too, from religious discourse to the portrayal in media, women quite often are reduced to the role of what is called second sex or quite often treated merely as an object or a commodity.

### 20.3 DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER

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Development has been differently defined as, progress, positive change in the socio-economic position of the people, a community or a nation. In the Third World and in most of the erstwhile colonised countries, it was the demand for development and a future developmental vision that defined their movement for liberation. In India, for example, the nationalist leaders had already arrived at a consensus on the developmental path that the country would choose once it gets independence. The idea of self-reliance both the ability to take independent economic decisions and follow independent path of development was shared by leaders across continents. The Marxist understanding of the primacy of economic basis of exploitation added an extra merit to such ideas. For the feminist who shared the Marxian analysis as well as politics therefore the idea of development was not something contrary to their basic programme. If development was supposed to change the economic bases on which gender relationship was defined then it was presumed that development was the preferred mode of changing those bases.. It is therefore not a coincidence that large women's movements have never been anti-developmental.

This vision of development was, however, not merely economic progress but was closely related to the political expression of independence. Democracy was closely tied to this vision of independence. Democracy and democratic institutions, for example, as Constitution framers of India thought, were the greatest guarantee of women's rights and well-being. As experience has shown, it is the democratic system which has provided the women space to make their individual as well as collective voice felt. No wonder that we have found that the women's voices were quite strong in the movement for restoration of democracy in Latin America, Asian and African countries.

The state occupied quite a central place in the developmental vision. First, it was the leadership of the anti-colonial movement which came to occupy the state apparatus and therefore there was some amount of a close relationship between the leadership, the state and the masses. Second, it was only the state which could have mobilised resources at such large quantum and therefore became quite crucial.

Economic development and political development was quite often co-terminus with the drive for modernising the state, the society and its institutions. Equality, the legal rights of man and woman, and idea of citizenship were the key to such modernisation. For example, in Egypt it was Gamel Abdul Nasser's administration which expanded the economy and brought large women work force out of their traditional working environment, guaranteed them equal rights and since 1954 guaranteed equal wages. Similarly, in Tunisia where it was the moderniser and secular president Bourguiba and in Iraq it was the Baath socialist party which tried to bring about modernisation by developing their economy. In India too it was the state which initiated the first reform measure when after a lot of debate and discussion, it reformed the Hindu Succession Act in 1956 in which women were given equal right of inheritance.

There were two predominant strategies for development followed by the less developed and ex-colonial countries. First, there was a sense of urgency in correcting the disarticulation effected by the colonial countries. Creating an industrial base for the future industrial and economic activity in this sense was a natural outcome. This prioritised the heavy industries sector and an import substitution strategy. In many countries, like India, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan and even in Iran, it was the state which initiated and supervised the entire activity through planning resource mobilisation as well as resource distribution.

The second strategy adopted was export led-growth. Followed mainly in smaller sized countries, it entailed a close linking with the global economy and specialising in the goods and services produced for the world market. This was followed mainly in the East Asian countries, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, etc. Korean economy which was even in the 1960s was a sleepy economy could get into the dynamic fold and made huge strides.

## 20.4 AGENCIES OF DEVELOPMENT

There is a close link between the change of the overall status of women and the autonomy that she gains through changes in some crucial areas of her life, i.e., access to education, better healthcare, access to gainful employment and opportunity to take decisions, etc. The society, as is empirically known, does not grant these without struggle. Thus, there is a vicious circle. The three agencies which seem to help her in this struggle to break this circle and thereby help her gain the required autonomy are namely, the *individual* (she herself), the *community* that she lives in and in the modern times *the state*. In recent times there have been other agencies, the United Nations, the World Bank, and multinational aid and developmental agencies which are supra-state or multinational agencies. However, at the moment, in most places, they try and invoke primarily the agencies of self, community and the state in furthering the interests and development of women.

There is a strong belief, i.e., the libertarian, which insists that it is the individual and her merit that alone count. Any intervention by the community and the state on her behalf, they argue, proves not only counterproductive in the final analysis but also detrimental to her well-being. This proves helpful in pursuing policies, which advocate the state's withdrawal from any welfare activities. It was made popular during the early eighties with people like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan who argued for what is known as complete freedom to the individual and the withdrawal of the state from affairs of individual

freedom. Thus women too have to fend for themselves according to this logic and only the meritorious would come up.

There is another stand, i.e., the communitarian view, which has gained some popularity these days due to two factors. First, the most powerful women's movement over the last three decades have been fought by women with the help of the local communities. They have thus inspired other struggles. Second, the western aid agencies too are propagating the communitarian idea in their programmes. Quite often they are projected in opposition to *the state*. The basic proposition is that women's development and freedom lies in the community itself where rights are enshrined. It is therefore the **community** which should be galvanised to further the development of the women. On closer analysis, however, one finds that the natural or traditional communities in most places are bound up with patriarchal normative universe from which the women could hardly get true justice. The religious communities, village communities or even artificial communities like trade unions or other professional bodies are hardly the epitome of equality between men and women. Quite often the religious communities have made the life of women worse as has happened with the traditional Hindu or for that matter Muslim and Christian social life. The women in countries like Algeria, Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco were gaining freedom and equality under modern regimes till the Islamicists arrived in the scene in the eighties. So is the case with the Catholic communities where the women are still struggling for their sexual rights or rights of divorce. There are matrilineal communities where women possess a lot of rights but a close look would reveal that the matters of power and political decisions are controlled by men. There is also a continuous effort to wrest from women's control even the residual powers. Thus, the claim that the communitarian makes, i.e., that it is the communities which ensures real freedom for women, seems, on a careful analysis, not true to a great extent. However, the communities of women, have proved to be a successful contribution of the feminist movement. This not only gives women the much needed political and social space to express themselves freely but also paves the way for political and social mobilisation.

In modern times it is the state which has most often played the crucial role in enabling the women to access those facilities and resources that facilitate her autonomy. However, the dilemma remains that when the powers inimical to women's interest capture the state, women are left to fight one more agency. This time it is superior to all others by virtue of having a monopoly over coercive authority. When the state goes to war, for example, with another state it can be harsh to the rights of women. Iraq under the Baath party rule in the seventies gave women tremendous autonomy and facilitated their development. By the end of 1970s 29 per cent of the medical doctors, 49 per cent dentists, 70 per cent of the pharmacists, 46 per cent of the teachers and university lectures, 33 per cent of the government staff and 45 per cent farm employees were women. Maternity leave was generous and pregnant women had their jobs protected. But the War with Iran in 1980 changed the state's attitude. Now they were told that they should bear five children to narrow the gap between Iraq's population (15 million people) and Iran's (47 million).

From a very prominent one to a supportive role, the state figured in all paradigms of development. In the socialist model of development, the state played not only a central role but was also the organiser and mobiliser of production in society. Market was seen to

have no role in the decisions of production. However, in cases like that of India, state was thought to be pivotal and acted as such. Here state not only acted along side the market but at the same time it played a socially emancipatory role too. On the other side of the spectrum societies like the USA where state seems to have a withdrawn role, in the final analysis it is the state which comes in basic developmental agent in both infrastructural as well as in the domain of infrastructural facilities for the development.

However, the state has a significant role to play in the developing countries. Even in the Scandinavian countries, it is the state, which has come up to mobilise the social resources to provide some of the largest welfare measures to the women. In Latin America for example, it was the state, which provided education to the largest chunk of women. Many of the West Asian countries played a crucial role in changing the status of women. Here the state has to fight the family and community ties. Iran, Iraq, Tunisia, Turkey, etc, helped to bring women out in the productive space and to attain some amount of autonomy.

In India, for example, like many other colonised countries, the leadership of the freedom movement inherited the state apparatus of the erstwhile rulers. They tried to reorient those structures into taking up the role of new developmental tasks. Gender and particularly the development of women was also considered as a responsibility of state. The women's movement in India for example till today keep forcing and demanding that the state should intervene more and more to bring equality between sexes in public places and work place, curb violence against women in both domestic and public places, and provide opportunities to women. However, the movement felt that making the state take up these tasks needs the presence of women in decision-making places and hence there are demands for guaranteeing women space in the otherwise male domain of legislature.

The idea of well-being sees an entrenched women's development in the development of her capabilities through which, it is argued, her freedom and development is ensured. These capabilities include those, which are essential for her survival as a human being also. Exploring gender and human development in India, Martha Nussbaum argues very strongly for an approach which seeks to raise the capabilities of the women and therefore their possibilities in warding off the exclusionary chances. She argues that the key to development of women is to provide them with the cover of justice because only in such a situation can these capabilities be ensured. There is a strong need for the fulfilment of what she tried to develop as the list of 'Central Human Functional capabilities'. The list includes, life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, control over one's own environment.

The fulfillment of these capabilities involves addressing the moral question too as it involves prioritising the fulfilment of such capabilities over something else. Also, it is the question of these human abilities exerting a moral claim in the political arena. The basic intuition from which the capability approach begins, in the political arena, is that certain human abilities exert a moral claim that should be developed. This begs the question as to "whom does this make the claim on?" And then one realises that for gender justice and development issues of larger society cannot be whisked away. They are as important as talking about the claim of capabilities, and there should be a democratic order to which these claims can be made.

And it is here that a humane exploitation-less society based on some normative horizon is striven for, the century-old women's movement has been a living testimony of how collective human endeavour can change the face of human civilisation from a patriarchal barbarity to a more equal and just society.

## 20.5 CRITIQUE OF DEVELOPMENT

Beginning with the anti-Vietnam War movement to the radical students' movement in the USA and Europe, there were other events that were changing the world in the sixties. The growing environmental activism of the late 60s in the west and the cultural revolution in China with the massacre of the communists in Indonesia and other places and the intensification of the cold war and finally the defeat of the US forces in Vietnam were shaping the face of an entirely new world. The hike in the oil prices shocked the first world economy and there seemed to be a new confidence of the Third World countries.

On the other hand, the growing awareness of the issues and criticism by the women's movement gradually began to view the existing models of women's liberation critically. Ester Boserup's work, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, for example, was a major eye opener. It argued that economic work of the female is never accounted for in the analysis of economic activities. Thus, the Green Revolution agricultural strategy was criticised. It was argued that it focused on technology and training of men while conveniently forgetting the women whose work, quite a substantial economic activity in the fields, was considered non-consequential. On the theoretical domain it meant there were efforts to: 1) bring about changes in the way the economic activity is perceived and, 2) broaden the concerns and issues of women so as to include the women of the Third World.

It was now argued by the feminist groups and women's movement in various countries, as they took cognisance of the experience and aspirations of the *middle class European white women* that some of the fundamental premises of the feminist movement was too limited. Any meaningful struggle for liberation, it was argued, must take into account the problems which women in the Third World face in their day to day life. The poor women of the Third World were doubly exploited. First, they are women and secondly, they come from Third World and poor background. Thus class and gender both fuse in them. Their issues were not merely related to domestic violence or demand for sexual choices but to the very basic human development items, i.e., education, health and employment. They needed to come out of the vicious circle of poverty which prevented them from even coming out of the tyranny of tradition. It began to be argued that for the end of subordination of the female, the beginning should be made from the lower end, i.e., the poor women of the Third World.

On the other hand, there have been efforts by the United Nations since 1975 (which was declared as the women's year) to bring the issues related to women in the major international forum and discuss the issues relating to their resolution even at a global level. As a result there has been a real internationalisation of the issues of women's development and freedom. The ensuing debate, in fact, forced many states and women's movement to have a relook at their programmes and priorities.

The Indian case is worth considering as it has made major contributions. The women's movement flourished during the anti-colonial struggle. The fact that the constitution had accepted equal rights to vote other equalities was a vindication of the fact that national movement had accepted the basic ethos of equality in 1947 itself. The focus of post-independence movement was to get the state involved more and more into the development programme in such ways as not to let women lag behind. It is for this reason they attacked the government to shed its welfarist approach. Since the mid-1970s, however, one can see two broad terrains in the women's movement. One that was part of the larger political economic movement and demanded more state's action in the issues of women. The other were the autonomous groups which took specific issues of women and organised people along those issues. Soon sharp divergences began to appear as one could see that the autonomous groups began attacking the development role of the state.

There have been strong criticisms of the idea of development. The ideas of modern industrialism, nation-state, and the scientific world view are closely associated with the idea of development which was the newest of all. The criticism came that all of them have worked against women. They have, it is argued, increased inequalities and deprived women of whatever control they earlier had over the resources of community or family. It is the modern state and its agencies which were supposed to have taken over those rights and powers. Similarly, the critique pointed out that the massive industrial complexes are antithetical to the women's interests. Technical complexes and technological world militates against some of the basic features of women's nature and interest. Thus the stream of environmental activism and one stream of feminism mingled and created a strong critique which came to be known as eco-feminism. Some of the feminist authors have shown India's Green Revolution as a classic example of how development was anti-women.

In the 1950s to the late 1970s, the Green Revolution swept the world. It focused on increasing food production through expanding the area under production and increasing yields from those areas already under production by using faster maturing and higher yielding seed varieties and higher inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. It resulted in dramatic increases in food production, and increased standard of living in some regions (increases in housing, electricity, transportation, etc.). Critics of the Green Revolution have pointed out that it has brought uneven distribution of benefits and its emphasis on new technologies in fact was creating more inequality between men and women. This also resulted in monoculture which meant less variety and therefore dependence on the market thereby making the lives of women more difficult than before. Similarly, with monocultures, crops also have become more vulnerable to pests, droughts, etc., and thus not only there is reduced food security at the local level but also environmental hazard such as increased salinity, etc, began to affect the life of the people. And in all this women were a major casualty.

The post-independent development in many ex-colonised countries was also seen from the prism of socialism. It was argued that development was leading to a capitalist development which does not augur well for women as it was argued that capitalism is not only antithetical to gender justice, development which is leading to capitalism, but also not conducive to women's well-being. They show as vindication of their point, the widespread practice of female foeticide in some of the relatively more developed states like Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat in India.

It was argued that during the 1950s and 60s development was considered merely a technical problem of raising productivity by technological input. It is said to have been lacking both political or ideological and even policy dimensions whereby women and children could be brought under the rubric of development. When women were included they were more often than not confined to the reproductive roles which was a stereotypical western understanding of the Third World women; No agency was given to women to voice their own understanding and concerns. At a more basic level they argued that initial concern for equality between women and men **was** based on the enlightenment ideals of a liberal western world which did not take into cognizance the women of the Third World. Here they were not only countering the male dominance but also poverty and other forms of exploitation and inequality. Thus, the concern in even what emerged as the feminist studies also began shifting to "poor women" and poverty alleviation rather than, the welfarist or pure humanitarian concerns. Women were now constructed as "vulnerable," as "victims," and as "invisible." Scholars and policy makers argued that one of the major reasons for the failure of different development projects was precisely this invisibility.

## **20.6 FROM WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT TO GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT**

The result of the criticism of development was that by 1986, at the end of the United Nation's initiative in which Indian experience and women's movement also had a contribution, there should be large scale and conscious effort to involve women into the development process and be given access to the formal sector of the economy. Its rationale was that development was failing because it is failing to take advantage of the labour of half of the population- that is, the labour of women. As a prescriptive analysis, income-generation and micro-enterprise projects become popular focus. Women's time began to be seen as "elastic", in other words they have time to take on new projects. Thus, the incorporation into formal or informal sector as workforce was seen to be a solution to the vicious circle in which the women were.

At the strategic level, the Women in Development (WID) approach focused on women as a group and sought to address the exclusion of women from the development process. It emphasised that if development would only incorporate and include women's productive capacity, it would be much more efficient. Since the 1970s the world is no more the old world. Global environmental concerns, issues of smaller communities living in far off places like the villages in the Himalayan hills, or the Andean villages in South America or the Chiapas in Mexico or in the African continents, etc. were coming to fore in the discourse on development. The issue of power relationship, key to the decision-making process, also was gradually coming into open even in the discussion of women's issues. Starting with the German Greens, the concerns began to take shape in the women's movement as well as movements of different local communities in Asia, Africa and South America. From 1974, the women in the Garhwal Himalayas (India) got engaged in a long struggle against the felling of trees by Government contractors. As forest was key to the day to day livelihood in which it was women who had to struggle most, it was the women of the area who pioneered the movement. It was not a feminist movement so to say, but a struggle for livelihood, for a better and humane development. Soon the protest embraced other issues

but the protest which soon attracted outside attention became a focal point in concern over the livelihood issues which were intimately connected with the planning process and developmental concerns. Similar struggles dotted the South and Latin America where the 1970s was also the phase of a very bitter and powerful democratic upsurge as well as popular movements. Neo-liberal reforms had failed to provide a better life situation or employment opportunities and the end of the 1970s saw economies after economies in Latin America plunging into economic and financial crisis. The women became the greatest sufferers of these developments. As a result there grew a strong reaction to the idea that development itself is not a solution. Suspicion of the state too has surfaced in many quarters. Thus critique of component of development has taken the shape of a critique of development itself. A multitude of feminist movements across the world also added to the experience. They showed the deep negative impact of developmental work by the State or multinational agencies were doing on the lives of females at the local level. These experiences then got transferred into the theoretical domain.

All these have led to what is in the theoretical domain began to be referred to as Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm. This would advocate not to look at women as just to be there to be inducted into some developmental programme but argue for looking at development as something completely different from how it has been perceived so far. It would argue for closer look into the structures of decision-making of development. One of the premises was that the paradigm that dictated development was defined and structured along patriarchal lines and quite often based on western models too which structurally are incapable of taking into account the concerns and issues of the non western women and hence paradigm has to be shifted.

One stream within this talked of autonomous spaces to be given more importance. It emphasised that self-reliant development is not possible within established structures which were definitely patriarchal. The large developmental and modernising projects were seen as more often detrimental to women's development and well-being and at the prescriptive level they favoured small, local and participatory projects where women's voice could be more decisive. Hence, instead of large governmental projects, small is argued to "beautiful and effective".

Empowerment of women was thought to be the only way to ensure their participation in their own development and this in turn was possible only when the concentration were to be small with an effective local level development vision. Thus, at the execution level it favoured non-governmental initiative which it was thought could bring in more of the participatory approaches, focused on small-scale women-only projects, to assure participation and prevent male domination. At the level of political struggle an autonomous movement of women has been projected as the only possible way to achieve more power to the women.

In this understanding, the crucial feature has been the attack on the idea of the traditional understanding of the domain of Private and Public in which women's work as well as life has been compartmentalised. It has been argued that in the final analysis this dual domain is instrumental in/women getting exploited on a daily basis. The male argument of being breadwinner rests on his work on the public domain. The women's work in the private

domain is economically not even valued and if she works outside as well, only the outside is valued. Therefore, the notion of public/private help sustaining an exploitative gender division.

The premise of this approach is also that women are "poor" and "victims". It somehow ignored a more dynamic analysis of the way the male domination is established by ascribing gender roles in the society. It spent quite a lot of energy attacking western models of development, capitalism and power relations. There have been shifts in the GAD in recent years and now people assert the need to investigate relationships among gender ideology, the sexual division of labour, women's subordination, and the operation of social, political and economic power. It draws on both the perspectives of the north and the south and emphasises the global diversity of women's experiences and interests. Influenced by the writings of "Third World" feminists, it acknowledged the need to understand gender relations on the ground. It emphasises the global inequalities and global systemic crises. It seeks to empower women through collective action in grassroots women's groups.

Shift is accompanied by a newly emerging notion of power which saw power relations not merely in grand scale between male and female but it argued that the relationships negotiate on everyday basis. Thus the struggle for the well-being of women has also to be on a day to day basis and on micro level. The construction of the ideology of gender and assignment of gender roles is dictated by the power relation in the society and its negotiation, has also to be westing this power.

The consequences of these have been the increasing voices which argue for empowerment as the basic approach to women's issues. Emerging from the south are voices of Bina Agarwal, Vandana Shiva, Arturo Escobar, Maria Mies, etc.

At the strategic level GAD focused on women and men in relation to one another. GAD sees the subordinate status of women to men as determinined by society as the core problem that needs to be addressed, and believes that focusing on women in isolation does not address the power issues that are at the core of the problem. For more information, see Kabeer (1994), who provides a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the evolution of the field of Women in Development to Gender and Development (GAD).

## **20.7 GENDER, DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE**

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Gender equality, equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and political and other prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

One of the most crucial issues that face the women's question today is the relationship of larger political processes, the idea of justice and the role of women. There is no confusion today that the agency of women has to be there in their own well-being and that the women's well-being is something on which even male's well-being depends. This close relationship has been reflected in the very high human development indicators from several states in India, like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Tamilnadu, etc., where a general improvement in the conditions of health of women has led to the general improvement of health of both male child and female child.

However, the political processes are extremely and quite crudely male-centred. Thus, another vicious circle presents itself. To make the political processes and spaces attuned to the female presence also, institutions of male dominance, ownership patterns, decision making monopoly, etc., have to be weakened. Here one key component, one agrees, is democracy where the voting rights give the ultimate decision-making power to women. No wonder that in many a country it is the women who are in the forefront of movement to bring democracy in that country because existentially one can see that it is the democracy which is the greatest guarantee of women's well being, and independence. As Amartya Sen has pointed out, "freedom in one area fosters freedom in other area as well".

Development is seen as the only way possible to bring out a positive change in the status of women and change gendered exploitation. Indian developmental experience has been a shining example of this. What is now referred to as Nehruvian vision is based on the development. In India for example at the time of independence the political equality between men and women was considered as a matter that was settled. Thus it was only economic equality that was sought after. Despite criticism, development has improved the condition of women a lot.

Over the years in India the welfarist approach and the pressure of the movement and other autonomous groups have provided a major corrective to the attitudes of the state and the male. During the 1980s efforts were made to make gender an important component in development programming. This was the beginning of the 30 per cent reservation for women at the local level administration, i.e., panchayats, so that they could enter into the decision-making domain. The issue of 30 per cent reservation for them in the parliament and state legislature then was taken up but is still mired in controversies and debates and pending before the Indian parliament.

Economist Amartya Sen called development as freedom where development is the way to provide capabilities to women to bring out her fullest self. This is, as is argued, to be done through providing literacy, health and other basic facilities that give her the wherewithal to change her economic standing in the family and society and thereby improve her position in order to wrest decision making powers too. In the Indian development phenomenon, development as a philosophy of progress has assumed that with asset formulation, etc., women would have greater freedom than in traditional society. Third World development discourse from the very beginning believed that it was poverty and quite often the woman's economic and social exclusion that deprived her of any role in decision-making. This strengthened the patriarchy system and women's exploitation was accentuated due to the extreme poverty.

The Indian development experience can show that through the development process there has been a revolutionary change in the basic indicators of women's lives. The indicators like education, health, or life expectancy does not simply reflect the well being of the woman involved, but as commented by many economists or sociologists, its fruits are shared by the coming generations too.

## 20.8 SUMMARY

Gender refers to the social classification of men and women into masculine and feminine and reflects the existing power relationship in any given society. It is a socio-cultural phenomenon. Women have been historically given a lower socio-economic and political status in society and this continues in modern society. Democracy and development are two main areas by which the state has to progress in order to modernise the state, society and institutions in order to guarantee equal and legal rights to both men and women. In this respect women too have put their effort in the movement for restoration of democracy and subsequent development.

There are three agencies of development which are regarded as important in the struggle for women's rights. These are the individual, the state and the community. All these should play a role in ensuring the well-being of a woman and the development of her capabilities and her freedom. But it has been argued that while development focusses on technology and training of men, the economic work of women is never accounted for and was considered non-consequential. All ideas of development usually work against women, increasing inequalities and depriving them of whatever control they had over the resources of the family and community. As a result of this criticism the United Nations decided that there should be a conscious effort to involve women in development and give them access to the formal sector of the economy. This was the Women in Development (WID) approach. To this was added a multitude of feminist movements showing the negative impact of the work done by the state or multinational agencies on the women at the local level. These experiences were transferred at the theoretical level and began to be referred to as the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm. It advocated a look at the decision-making structures of development which was structured along patriarchal lines and often based on western models incapable of taking into account the concerns of the non-western women. Thus what can be done is empowerment of women to ensure their participation in their own development, focus on small scale women-only projects to avoid male domination and in recent years the need to investigate relationships among gender ideology, women's subordination and operation of social, economic and political power. GAD has been focussing on men and women in relation to one another.

Gender equity entails the concept that all human beings be it men or women are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and political and other prejudices. Their different behaviour and aspirations should be valued and favoured equally and they would be treated fairly according to their respective needs. Development is seen as an important way to achieve this.

## **20.9 EXERCISES**

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- 1) What is development and how does it help in ensuring the **rights** of women?
- 2) Identify the agencies of development. How do they contribute towards bringing women out into the productive arena?
- 3) Has development been anti-women? Comment.
- 4) Write short notes on: i) Gender Equity and ii) Women in Development (WID) **Approach**.