UNIT 1 DEVELOPMENT OF STATE POLITICS IN INDIA

Structure

1.1 INTRODUCTION

State politics as a specialised field of politics in India developed in the post-independence period. The states of Indian Union assumed the form of distinct identities following the their reorganisation in 1956. Prior to their reorganisation, they were placed in four categories — A, B, C and D states. But it was only in the 1960s that the political scientists felt the need to study state politics as a specialised subject. The disquieting developments during the 1950s and 1960s in several states prompted a large number of them to study politics in different states. In an attempt to place the state politics in India in a perspective, two seminars were held in the USA in 1961 (University of Chicago) and in 1964 (the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) with the initiative of Myron Weiner. The scholars working on nine of the seventeen states in India presented their findings in the latter. The report on the first seminar was published in *Asian Survey* of June1961. The papers presented in the seminar of 1964 were published in the first book on state politics *State Politics in India* (1968) edited by Myron Weiner. In the similar vein, Iqbal Narain edited a book *State Politics in India* (1976) which was the first attempt to cover politics of all states in India including Assam and Jammu and Kashmir. Its predecessor, Weiner's book, did not cover all states.

State politics has undergone significant changes in the post-independence period. It has emerged from the periphery of the national politics to the centre stage in the politics of India. Since the 1990s the states have become partners in the coalition governments at the centre. Earlier they occupied secondary position in relation to the centre in India's politics. Now they are in a position to not only set the agenda for the politics in India but have become partners in the formulation of the state policies. The states participate in the national politics by becoming members of one or the other coalition partners. They represent different regional and social forces.

The purpose of this unit is to familiarise you with the development of state politics in India. This unit does not analyse the state politics. Analysis of subject matter state politics will be done in

other units of this course. The present unit discusses how the patterns of state politics have changed in India since the 1950s. The main issues which are covered in this unit include changes in the status of states in the regional and national politics, the issues and problems, leadership patterns and political parties and political processes. The focus of the unit is show how the patterns of state politics have developed over a period.

1.2 STATE POLITICS: THE 1950s–1960s

State politics in the first two decades after independence grew under the influence of centre, which focused on the pursuit of the nation-state building in India. During this period the Nehruvian model of development and the single party dominance of the Congress signified the politics in India. State politics was mainly a replica of the national politics. The central government occupied a dominant position in the Indian political system where the state occupied the secondary place. Under the directive of the centre, the state governments introduced several measures in order to contribute towards nation-building, like land reforms, and community development programmes. The Congress party shared power at the centre and in a large number of the states. Different factions within the Congress representing sectarian interests in the states were appendages of the faction leaders at the national level. The fact that the dominant party reigned in the centre and several states simultaneously gave the impression that there was a common pattern of politics in the states and centre. The governors, as appointees of the sympathetic governments at the centre, with a few exceptions, remained non-controversial. No doubt, it was a dominant pattern. But along with this, there also emerged dissenting patterns simultaneously within state politics. These developments challenged the dominant pattern of politics: the dominant position of Congress and secondary position of state politics. Within a few years of independence the Naga and Mizo insurgencies started in the North-East India, Plebiscite Front movement started in Jammu and Kashmir, and the demand for reorganisation of states was raised in south India. Even the parties with different ideological persuasions from that of the Congress played a significant role during this period in the politics of states. The socialists and the Left together in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal, Jana Sangha in north Indian States, the Akali Dal in Punjab mobilised the people on difference issues against the Congress. These developments had set a tone for a pattern of state politics which was to emerge in India in the near future. The dalit movement led by the RPI in Maharashtra and UP, and the Dalit Panther in the Maharashtra, the cow protection movement of the Jana Sangha, RSS and their affiliates in north India; socialist movements for the spread of Hindi language and opposition to the imposition of Hindi language in Tamil Nadu and demand for secession of Madras / Tamil Nadu from India were the early examples of ethnic dimension to the patterns of the state politics. The Congress hegemony was also challenged by conservative parties like Swatantra in Gujarat and Rajasthan. These developments had prompted Selig Harisson to call the 1950s as the "most dangerous decade". The dominant pattern of state politics was challenged even from within the Congress. Faction leaders within the Congress were not behind in creating their respective social bases. Even while being members of Congress, they consolidated their own bases in their respective states. This, in fact, resulted in the trading of charges between various faction leaders. The example of Charan Singh is among the most appropriate here. He had already carved out a base for himself within the intermediary and backward classes of UP, while he was still in Congress. The faction fight between Charan Singh and other Congress leaders had resulted in the split of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh and the emergence of a very powerful regional and rural force in the politics of

the north Indian states. This pattern found its expression in the defeat of the Congress in several states in the general election in 1967 and formation of the coalition governments in 1969. It set a new trend in the politics in the states of Union of India.

1.3 RISE OF REGIONAL FORCES AND STATE POLITICS: THE 1970s

Changes in the patterns of state politics during the 1960s-1970s took place in the backdrop of the demise of Jawaharlal Nehru – the decline of the Congress system and rise of Indira Gandhi who personalised the Congress and institutions of governance. One of the most significant feature of the state politics between the late 1960s and the 1970s had been the rise of the rural rich or the kulaks especially in the areas which had witnessed the Green Revolution. The most relevant examples are those of Jats in UP, Haryana and Punjab; Yadavs and Kurmies in Bihar and eastern UP; Reddies and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh; Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka, etc. Charan Singh formed Bharatiya Kranti Dal with the focus mainly on the agrarian agenda. He provided leadership and forum to a strong section in the state politics in north India for two decades (1967-1987). He, along with the state level leaders in Bihar and Haryana, dominated the politics of north India during this period. In a large number of the states strong regional leaders with formidable social bases among the agrarian classes emerged on the lines of Uttar Pradesh. These leaders and parties focused on the regional issues and demanded revamping the centre-state relations. The role of the governor who was perceived to be sympathetic to the dominant party - the Congress came to be questioned and demand for changing centre—state relations arose. These developments became decisive in the state politics in he subsequent years.

The process of coordination between the regional leaders and the political parties became conspicuous. Some of these leaders graduated to be the national level leaders. These leaders drew their strength from the regional/state politics (despite having graduated to the national politics) and led regional political parties. Imposition of emergency provided an opportunity to several state and national leaders and parties to come together against the dominant Congress. Regional and national parities formed the Janata Party at the national and state levels, and formed the governments in the centre and the states. The Janata Party-led governments both at the centre and in the states introduced certain measures which had repercussions for the state politics. The appointment of the Mandal Commission and introduction of reservation for the backward classes in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh set the new trends which were significant both for the state and national politics.

The state level leaders and political parties challenged not only the leadership and organisation of the Congress symbolised by Indira Gandhi, but also sought a stronger place for the states in the centre-state relations. Conclaves of the opposition leaders, appointment of Rajammannar Commission in Tamil Nadu the resolution of the Left Front in West Bengal and appointment of Sarkaria Commission in 1983, etc., for revamping of the centre-state relations, were some of the most significant examples of rising significance of the regional political forces during the late 1960s-early 1980s. The leadership of the Congress and Indira Gandhi was challenged by the J P movement and Gujarat agitation in the 1970s. Unable to meet the challenge of the regional forces, J P movement and verdict of Allahabad High Court against Indira Gandhi, the centre to

imposed emergency in the country for twenty months (1975-1977). The post-emergency era saw the elevation of the regional leaders like Charan Singh to the national politics. Along with this, state level leaders like Karpoori Thakur in Bihar, Devi Lal in Haryana, Ram Naresh Yadav and later Mulayam Singh Yadav in UP and in several south India states started pushing their programmes in the central politics.

1.4   STATE POLITICS: THE 1980s ONWARDS

1.4.1   Assertion of Identities

The developments since the 1980s further contributed to the changing phase of the states politics in India and states' role in the national politics. These developments were – frequency of coalition politics at the national and state levels, globalisation, emergence of yet another generation of leadership, assertion of multiple identities based on ethnicity, i.e., caste (dalits and backward classes), tribe, language; the farmers' movements, insurgency in North-East, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, and autonomy movements. Movements of different social groups have come to be known as new social movement. Though these developments were caused primarily as a result of the state policies, yet these were distinct features as compared to the earlier period.

The assertion of the dalits and backward classes in the North in the recent period has only contributed to the politics of similar assertion in the south which took place much earlier. Politicisation of the dalits in north India in the form of the BSP, of the backward classes in the form of various incarnations of Janata Dals in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and also the non-party fronts related to various castes as well as the religion further added new dimension to the state politics in India.

The period also witnessed the rise of the rich farmers in the form of BKUs (Bharatiya Kisan Unions) in UP and Punjab, Shetkari Sangathan in Maharashtra, Khedyut Samaj in Gujarat and Karnataka Rajya Ryatha Sangha in Karnataka. These groups also had their earlier incarnation in the 1970s when they were addressed as kulaks in the north as well as the south. But there was difference between the trends of the 1970s and those of the 1980s. While the former as the product of the green revolution and the land reforms mainly sought the share in the political power and favourable terms of trade for agricultural products, the latter focused on the issues related to the market economy. The new social forces raised multiple demands in different states. These demands were reflected in the form of reservation, the creation of the new states and greater allocation of resources from the centre to the states.

1.4.2   Impact of Globalisation

The state politics took a new turn towards the end of the last decade of the twentieth century. Globalisation has weakened the position of the centre on the one hand, and enabled the states to be autonomous players in the national as well as state politics. The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) did not have an even impact on all states; some states have benefited from it while others lagged. In fact, liberalisation has resulted in competition among states to seek investments. Some observers feel that it has created disparity among the states. Some states have become more advanced while others have become more backward.

Lawrence Saez's book *Federalism Without a Centre* shows that globalisation has enabled the states in India to act as independent entities to pursue their agendas; they can now negotiate

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directly with the international donors, and enter into agreement with different agencies. Of course, this has to be done with the consent and approval of the central government. It was not possible in the pre-globalisation phase. Globalisation has also resulted in the erosion of inter-governmental institutions. Saez argues that the inter-governmental cooperation has given way to "inter-jurisdictional competition".

During the phase of globalisation even the party system has witnessed changes. In most of the states two or more than two parties emerged as principal parties. West Bengal presented an exception where one party remained the dominant force. Even here, it has been able to wield power in collaboration with other like-minded parties in the form of Left Front. State level parties are oriented towards specific regions, religion or caste. These parties are able to exercise their influence through pre and post election alliances, fronts and partners in the coalition governments. The most glaring examples in this regard are: BSP with its base in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Lok Dal, Indian Rashtriya Lok Dal, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Nationalist Congress Party, Akali Dal in North Indian States; Biju Janata Dal in Orissa in East; Telugu Desam Party, AIADMK and DMK in South, and Shiv Sena in western India. In North-East India regional political parties abound.

The role of political parties is generally focused on electoral mobilisation. But emergence of new social forces like the dalits and OBCs has also added to the non-electoral mobilisation in the state. The latter, however, gets linked to the electoral mobilisation also.

The proliferation of political and social forces does not allow a single force to dominate the state politics; at the same time all of them want a share in political power. While there are broad ideological basis of the formation of coalitions or political fronts of both the ruling and opposition, the main causes of their formation are based on practical and political considerations.

1.4.3   Insurgencies and State Politics

Besides the issues discussed so far in this unit, the insurgency and related issues occupy a central place in the politics of several states especially in North-East India, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. These are also related to the self-determination movements. These developments not only impact politics of respective states but also have serious repercussion on national politics of the country. The problems of insurgency are related to the issues of development, inter-ethnic relations and autonomy. While insurgency is directed against the nation-state or its referents, in several instances it gives birth to the ethnic riots and conflict among the ethnic groups. Problems of insurgency is not new to India. As mentioned earlier, India faced such problems immediately after the achievement of Independence like Naga and Mizo insurgency in the North-East India, Plebiscite Front agitation in Jammu and Kashmir, demand for a separate sovereign state for Tamil speaking population in south India, etc. But it was from the 1980s that insurgency has spread to more states. While the rise of the state leaders and parties till the 1970s challenged the dominant party system, insurgency movements question the homogenising "nation-building" approach of the centre in support of "federation-building" approach. In some cases insurgency has been a by-product of autonomy movement or the movement against the outsiders. In the process new groups demand autonomy or self-determination. Such examples abound in the North-East India. For example, supporters of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) movement, Bodo's and Karbi's movements were once part of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) agitation in Assam. Having felt neglected by the dominant groups within the AASU agitation, they resorted to their separate agitations demanding sovereignty or autonomy within the Indian union.

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1.5 SUMMARY

State politics in India has developed through phases. For around two decades following independence, especially since most of the states assumed their distinct identities in the wake of the reorganisation of states in 1956, state politics largely followed the pattern of the national politics. The Congress then known as single dominant party, generally controlled the governments both at the centre as well in the states. However, the state politics which assumed the distinct form by the end of the 1960s was a precursor to the defeat of he Congress in 1967 general elections in several states and formation of non-Congress governments in 1969. There emerged regional leaders and political parties with their strong social bases. Reasons for these developments lay in the factionalism within the Congress in several states and popular mobilisation of the people by the opposition parties in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Emergency gave an opportunity to the state level leaders with regional bases to come together on the same platform.

By the 1980s rise of the identities based on caste, region, religion and ethnicity and that of the new generation of leaders, with their regional bases and parties, agendas of the states got a prime place in politics of India. Coinciding with the impact of globalisation and dilution in the role of the nation-state, states in India have come to occupy a centre stage in Indian politics. The states, the regional political parties and leaders are playing decisive roles in the national politics. They do so as members of coalitions or within the political space outside political institution. This was not possible before the 1990s. Therefore, we can say that state politics has entered a new phase where states are no longer the followers of the centre but are decisive participants in the national politics.

1.6 EXERCISES

1)	What were the dominant features of state politics in India in the first two decades following independence?

2)	Why did the Congress system or the dominant party system decline?

3)	Explain the impact of identities on the state politics in India.

4)	What is the relationship between globalisation and state politics in India?

UNIT 2 FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSIS

Structure

2.1   INTRODUCTION

As you have studied in unit 1, development of state politics in India was marked by the emergence of new issues, processes and political forces over more than five decades. These changes gave distinct identity to the state politics. They also drew the attention of scholars to study them. For understanding the social and political reality some analytical tools are necessary. Such tools are known as the perspectives or frameworks. Any attempt to understand reality without a framework is like groping in the dark. Political scientists have used different frameworks in order to capture and understand patterns of state politics in India. It should be noted that there are no specific frameworks meant exclusively to state politics. The same frameworks can be applied to study politics at any level of its operation—national, state or local. The categorisation of frameworks is generally known by the level at which it is applied. Thus when applied to study state politics, these frameworks can be referred to as the frameworks for the analysis of state politics. In this unit you will study about these frameworks.

2.2   SYSTEMIC FRAMEWORK

Systemic framework is one of the two frameworks which have been most commonly used to analyse state politics. It is also known by its variants like structural-functional, modernisation or developmental frameworks. The other such framework is Marxian, which you will study in the next section. In fact, till the 1970s these two frameworks were the predominant. As you will study in this unit, there also emerged other frameworks in the later period. But these two frameworks continue to be used in one or the other forms. Some of the later frameworks are the off-shoots of these two principal frameworks—the systemic and the Marxian. Besides, some scholars have used a combination of frameworks at the same time.

Let us begin with the systemic framework. As a part of the behavioural movement in social sciences, this framework was adopted by political scientists to study changes and order in the political systems. Developed basically in America, this framework was used to study the politics of the countries which had been liberated from the colonial rule. It became very popular in these countries following the publication of G. A. Almond and J. S. Coleman (ed.) *The Politics of Developing Areas* in 1960. The basic features of systemic framework are the following. The unit of political activities is a political system. The political system consists of political institutions/ structures and processes. Different constituent structures/institutions of the system keep interacting, conflicting and adjusting with each other, balancing and counter-balancing themselves. These processes occur in a social and political milieu. In such situation the political system maintains itself. It does not break down. The political system thus is resilient. Many political scientists have followed the systemic framework to study Indian politics. It has been used to study both the politics of the country as a whole and also state politics. The most important example of its application to all India level politics is Rajni Kothari's *Politics in India*. With the recognition of state politics as distinct arena of study, the systemic framework came to be used by several individual scholars in case of studies of individual states or the group of states. They studied various aspects of state politics. These aspects included principally political parties, factions within parties, caste, religion, language, leadership, election, pressure groups, etc. These aspects were also considered as sub-system of political system. Two issues which are among the most significant part of studies are political parties and caste. Paul Brass and Richard Sisson have studied Congress in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively applying the systemic framework. Richard Sission studied the institutionilisation of Congress—adaptability of modern institution, political party to the traditional system of caste. Rajni Kothari, in fact, had conceptualised Congress party as Congress System. Congress had shown resilience in adapting to the factionalism within it. These are some examples of the application of systemic framework.

Caste also drew attention of political scientists like that of the sociologists. In an attempt to understand the developing or traditional societies, they strove to comprehend the interaction between the modernity and the traditions. Modernity was identified with modern political institutions and processes—elected government, nation-state, modern leadership or elite, universal adult franchise, parties, elections, etc., which were new to the newly decolonised countries. And tradition was identified with the ascriptive or the primordial attributes like caste, religion, tribe, etc. While studying interaction between modernity — elections, political parties, etc. and the tradition like caste Rajni Kothari argues that the interaction between caste and politics is a two-way process; both caste and politics change each other. In the process caste no longer plays the traditional or ritualistic role. It has got secularised.

While perusing pioneering studies of politics in different states within broad systemic framework, published in Myron Wiener (ed.) *State Politics in India*, a large number of scholars focused on the following aspects — the social and economic environment of political processes, description of political processes, and performance of state government. The principal variables to study socioal and economic environment included social configuration (caste, religion, language, etc.), economic structure, rural-urban divide; the description of political processes dealt with political parties (with special emphasis on factionalism within Congress), interest groups, leadership pattern and conflict over public policy; and performance of government was assessed primarily in terms of distribution of goods and services. The scholars used these variables in varying degrees, but the common framework of their analysis has been systemic framework.

The studies of different states which have been published in Iqbal Narain (ed.) *State Politics India* are also done in the systemic framework; they also give prominent place to the context of state politics. The context includes history, political status of states, roles of states in national movements, castes and religious composition, levels economic developments, role of educated middle classes. The differences in the levels of these determinants or the context get reflected in differences in state politics. Despite these differences, general framework of analysis in these studies is systemic analysis.

Systemic framework has come under attack from various quarters. Its most scathing critique has been provided by the Marxist scholars. They argue that systemic framework overlooks the role of class in politics; it undermines the significance of history in political processes; it subordinates the state to the political system and does not link the politics within a country to the influence of outside forces like imperialism. They contend that systemic framework is basically anti-change and status quoist.

2.3   MARXIAN FRAMEWORKS

The Marxian framework analyses politics in terms of class relations or social relations of production and forces of production. It considers politics as reflection of class relations. Politics is impacted or determined by the economic relations in a society. The political institutions including the state are representatives of the class interests. And in a class divided society they serve the interests of the upper or the propertied classes. Unlike the systemic framework the Marxian framework links the politics in a developing country to the imperialism of the developed countries. The imperialism influences the politics in the developing countries by the conditionalities of the international funding agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a result of these conditionalities, the states within the developing countries devise policies which adversely affect the ordinary people. Peoples' reaction to these policies form the part of class struggle against the ruling classes. Unlike the system analysis, the Marxian framework traces the politics to its history. It uses the principle of dialectical materialism to comprehend the social and political reality. The application of dialectical materialism is known as historical materialism. It is worth emphasising that the application of Marxian analysis has been more interdisciplinary in comparison to the system analysis. There are differences among the Marxist scholars regarding the determining role of class or economic factors. In the light of these differences, the Marxian framework can be divided into two groups — classical and neo-Marxism frameworks.

2.3.1   Classical Marxian Framework

The classical Marxian approach mentioned in the *Communist Manifesto* accords an over-determining role to economy in relation to politics. In this case the economy is base and the politics is superstructure. Marx and Engels revised their thesis regarding the determining role of base in *The Eighteenth Bruimmiare of the Louis Bonaparte* . They now believed that superstructures are not always determined by the base. The latter has its relative autonomy. But in the ultimate analysis it is the base which determines the superstructure. Thus politics has its relative autonomy.

Like the system framework, the classical Marxian framework has also been used to study politics and the national and state levels. The prominent all India level studies relating to post-

independence period by classical Marxian framework include Charles Bettlehiem's *India Independent* and Achin Vanayak's *The Painful Transition: India's Bourgeois Democracy*. The prominent application of the classical Marxian analysis has been to study the agrarian movements, agrarian relations and land reforms and the trade union movements in different states.

The classical Marxian framework is criticised for giving undue importance to economic factors in comparison to the non-economic factors. The followers of the classical Marxian approach counter this charge: the Marxian framework accepts the autonomy of politics from class, which is relative, but ultimately it is the class which is determining; it is rather the followers of system framework, which ignore caste or non-economic factors at cost of role of class.

2.3.2 Neo-Marxian Framework

The Marxian perspective which gives adequate focus to the non-economic factors —culture, consciousness to the analysis of politics or any other issue is known as neo-Marxism. The neo-Marxism has emerged as a result of the influence of Gramsci, Frankfort School and Ralph Miliband. The Gramscian impact is most visible in the subaltern school. Popularised by Ranajit Guha subaltern school is significant in the study of modern Indian history. But the insights and concepts used by the subaltern school are used by individual political scientists to study the contemporary politics as well. The scholars applying the subaltern framework argue that the ordinary people develop their autonomous consciousness and take decisions accordingly, without the impact of outside agencies. Belonging to the Frankfurt School, as based in Frankfurt, Germany philosphers like Althusser, Kolakosky, Poulantazas, etc. criticised the dialectical materialism of the classical Marxism

2.4 THE POST-MODERNIST FRAMEWORKS

As you have studied in unit 1, several significant political, social and economic changes have occurred in India. These changes are denoted by advancing globalisation, democratisation, decentralisation, emergence and assertion of identities based on caste, religion and ethnicity, and new social movements. These developments are being captured from various perspectives including the systemic and the Marxian. Some scholars are mixing more than one framework. But there is a growing understanding of some scholars that hitherto available frameworks are not able to explain the new features of politics. They follow the alternative frameworks, which are known as the "post- modernist" framework. Inspired by the writings of philosopher like Lyotard, postmodernism has become a significant framework of analysis for several disciplines. The adherents of the postmodernist framework hold the modernist project of development and its referents responsible for crisis in the society. According to them, the modernist project has not given the autonomy to smaller identities, traditions and indigenous knowledge system. The application of the postmodern perspective is necessitated by the simultaneous rise of identities, social movements and heightened social conflicts or even ethnic/communal riots. The scholars who use the postmodernist framework find an alternative to modernity in the traditions, sustainable development and indigenous knowledge. The common adversary in modernity has enabled the Gandhians, Socialists, "non-traditional" Marxists, environmentalists, etc. to come to a common platform. Such movement—disenchantment with modernity and search for an alternative is referred to as post-modernism. The postmodernist frameworks are used to study identities, riots, social movements. They are used by scholars belonging to different disciplines.

Let us consider its application to the study of state politics. There is a growing understanding among some scholars that studying the political system as mega unit of analysis – nation-state, political system, party system, caste system, etc. has been impacted by the modenisation project. While in the practice politics of modernisation or modernity does not give enough autonomy to the parts of a political unit, in academic studies the impact of modernisation project or modernity is reflected in the neglect of these parts. In order to beak away from such framework of analysis, a large number of scholars emphasise the need to study the fragments of the mega units, to acknowledge their autonomy.

Inextricably linked to the post-modernist perspective is the discourse or deconstructionist analysis. According to the "discourse" or "deconstructionist" perspective a narrative can be understood by breaking its contents into pieces or by deconstructing it. The best way to understand it is contexualising the narrative in terms of knowledge power and discourse formation, areas which have been theorised extensively among others by Michel Foucault. For example, in case of conflict between more than one party, it is difficult to know as to what is the truth. Every pratoganist in the conflict justifies its version, and logically; it is difficult to know which version is true. In such a situation, if the conflict, parities and processes related to it are placed in specific context, it is possible to understand it. Paul Brass in his books *The Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in Representation of Collective Violence* and *Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* has developed a framework to analyse the ethnic riots between social groups. He argues that it difficult to understand the reality in the riots. It can only be possible by placing the riots, institutions, persons and processes in proper context.

2.5   FEDERATION-BUILDING FRAMEWORK

This framework is developed against the modernisation or development perspective to study the problems related to the self-determination movements – autonomy movements, insurgencies, secessionist movements and conflicts arisen because of them, in the states located in the periphery of the country, especially North-East India; it can also be applied to Jammu and Ksahmir, Punjab or any other state where self-determination movements take place. The most articulate expression of this perspective is found in Sanjib Baruah's *India Against Itself*. Advocates of this perspective argue that the modernisation or development framework to study the problems of federalism, self-determination movements is biased towards the formation of nation-state, it ignores the point of view of the segments which form the nation-state. The nation-state, according to them, is actually a construction. Such perspective sidetracks the problems of the states by looking at the issues in terms of dichotomy between tradition and modern, incongruence between the aspiring new social forces and the ability of the system to satisfy their demands. The policy makers and the scholars representing the dominant opinion in the country do not take into consideration the perspective of the constituent states. They adopt "step motherly" and arrogant attitude towards the smaller states. Sanjib Baruah suggests that the "nation-state" perspective should be discarded and "genuine federation-building" perspective should be followed so that the "sub-nationalism and Pan Indianism" have stronger relations.

2.6   SOCIAL CAPITAL FRAMEWORK

With the publication of Putnam's *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, social capital has become quite popular concept to study the significance of associations

in public life. Social capital is considered to be indicative of existence of civil society and democracy. Drawing on Toquevillian notion of associations, the Putnam popularised the concept of civil society; attributes of which are trust, shared values and norms and networking among the members of associations. The rise of new social movements, civil societies and realisation to study substantive democracy has added to the significance of this perspective. In an attempt to study social capital in fragmented societies, the scholars have given significance to it. Ashutosh Varshney in his book *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* has used social capital framework to study ethnic riots in six cities of India. He argues that ethnic riots occur in the cities where the people do not have good associational relations among themselves. And they do not occur where people have associational relations. He seeks substantiate his argument with the empirical study of pairs of six cities, three of which have witnessed riots and three of which have not. In the similar vein, a large number studies which have and social capital framework to study politics in some states have been published in *Interrogating Social Capital* edited by Dwaipayan Bhattacharya, Niraja Jayal, Sudha Pai and Bisnu N Mahapatra. The scholars of these studies attempted to study of possibility of existence of social capital and its relationship to democracy in states of India, as a case of segmented society.

2.7   FRAMEWORKS TO STUDY ELECTIONS

Elections have been considered as the most expressive medium of existence of democracy. Indicative of only minimalist notion of democracy, elections, however, according to critics do not always prove the existence of true democracy unlike the substantive democracy. Nevertheless, elections are among the most significant features of democracy in India, at various levels of their operation – national, state or local. Their significance has got further enhanced with the increased frequency of elections in India since the last decade of the twentieth century. Elections have attracted the attention of scholars, journalists and psephologists to study electoral politics, especially at the national and state levels. The general interest in elections which mainly started in the 1960s has got further boost since the 1990s. A host of people, survey agencies, psephologists conduct surveys before and after elections to cater to the immediate need to satisfic the public curiousity as well as to provide data to analyse democracy in India. This is known as survey research. The efforts in this direction by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, is note worthy so far as the usage of its data for the usage of academic analysis is concerned. The election surveys done on the meticulously selected samples collect data on the profiles of voters, constituencies and relate the election result to assess the performance of parties, democracy, etc. Answers to questions like "Is India Becoming More Democratic?" are sought in the light growing participation of large number of social groups.

Since survey research to study elections are time – bound, conducted before or after elections, they do not tell as to what happens when elections to not take place. Paul R. Brass argues that if survey research is corroborated with the ecological analysis, we can be able to make much better analysis of political processes. Ecological analysis means the analysis of data from various regions of a country or state within the country. These data could be about economic, social, educational, etc., profile of people of people living in different areas. With the help of correlation coefficient analysis a relationship between the electoral performance of political parties with different social groups can be ascertained. Brass combined the survey data with ecological analysis to study *"The Politicization of Peasantry in UP"*.

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2.8 SUMMARY

 To sum up, frameworks are necessary tools to study the social reality. For the study of politics there are some principal frameworks. These are – systemic, Marxian, neo-Marxian, postmodernist, frameworks to study elections, etc. The systemic framework considers political unit of analysis as a system. It argues that every system consists of various components which keep conflicting and adjusting with each other. In the process, the system maintains itself; it adapts to the challenges and the environment. The Marxian framework on the other argues that politics is reflections of the class relations in the society. The nature of politics depends on that of economic contradictions in a society. But there have been changes in this type of Marxian framework. The advocates of these changes agree that economy is important in impacting politics but non-economic factors are also very important. The latter also have their relative autonomy. The Marxian framework with these changes is known as neo-Marxian framework.

It must be noted that these frameworks are not specific to the unit of political analysis local, state or national levels. These could be applied to any unit – local, state or national politics. For the purpose of studying state politics, these could be called as the frameworks for the study of state politics. Their significance further increases for state politics as several aspects of politics are more visible in states. In fact, there are not uniform patterns of state politics. In this context these frameworks assume special significance.

2.9 EXERCISES

1)   Discuss how the systemic framework is used to study state politics?

2)   Identify the basic features of the Marxian framework.

3)   Discuss how different frameworks are applied to the study of identities, new social movements and elections in state politics.

UNIT 3 NATURE OF INDIAN DIVERSITIES AND NATIONALIST RESPONSES

Structure

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Nehru's catch-phrase 'unity-in-diversity' is perhaps best reflective of modern nationalist responses to the challenges posed by diversities. Travelling through India on the eve of the general elections of 1937, Nehru discovered and enthused about the natural and cultural diversity that he found everywhere–in the physical layout of the land as well as the physical appearances of the people, in their cultural habits and religious differences. But underlying this diversity, he had 'glimpses' of a 'dream of unity'. This unity was not visible in external standardisation of beliefs or customs but was 'something deeper'. It was not just an intellectual unity but an emotional unity to be experienced. Did this unity really exist 'out there' in the world? It is important to note that Nehru wrote of the 'dream' of unity; like any dream, it called for active imagination and effort on our part. Like him, most nationalists saw mind-boggling diversities and dreamt of a unity; but like all dreams, their dream was continuously interrupted, distorted and shaped by the realities of politics.

Let us begin with some clarifications regarding the title. Firstly, on diversity; in ordinary usage, diversity is understood to mean variety and difference. In this sense, diversity may be found everywhere, from the physical landscape to the cultural practices as Nehru discovered. But diversity, in itself, is probably not politically significant until it becomes the basis of a struggle for recognition. Whether we take the question of caste or religion or language or tribe, we discover that nationalist leaders were compelled to respond to diversity in the face of serious challenges posed by some activist reformers and social movements. In other words, Gandhi was forced to investigate the caste question in a political sense when Ambedkar insisted upon in social sense through the separate electorates. Undoubtedly, Gandhi dealt with caste in a moral sense before he met Ambedkar but not so in a political sense. Similarly, when the Muslim League raised the demand for a separate nation, the Congress leaders were forced to consider religious diversity in political terms.

Secondly, there was no single nationalist response to these diversities. Depending on their ideological biases and the immediate political context, nationalists responded differently. These responses may be examined at two levels–the level of ideology and the level of political accommodation. For after all, nationalist response implies not only how some leaders thought

about diversity but also how some compromises had to be made so that diversities and differences were recognised. Historically, caste groups and religious minorities posed serious challenges to the nationalists from the beginning and had to be dealt with regularly. Language and tribe remained somewhat marginal in the consciousness of most nationalists.

3.2 CASTE, UNTOUCHABILITY AND OPPRESSIVE DIVERSITY

Caste identity, either as a fourfold order or as *jati* could not simply be celebrated as an expression of Indian diversity. But it did not become the subject of an explicit national campaign until the early years of the twentieth century. Bhikhu Parekh has noted that as Indian nationalists began to demand social and political equality from colonial government, the fact that such equality was denied to many within the Hindu society had also to be faced. A second political reason was that Hindu leaders began to see that internal divisions and disunity had to be overcome in order to wage an effective struggle against colonialism. Lala Lajpat Rai lamented how untouchability had caused many to convert thereby increasing the numerical strength of the Muslims and Christians. He warned that Hindus might become minorities in their own country unless they set their house in order. Thus untouchability slowly but definitely became a matter of shame, a 'blot' on Hindu conscience to be removed. Despite widespread consensus on the issue, the Congress did not pass a resolution condemning untouchability.

Ideologically, Hindu nationalists drew upon different intellectual sources to attack untouchability. Some resorted to Hindu scriptures to argue that there was no religious basis for the practice. But the Hindu texts could not be said to be opposed to the practice in an unequivocal manner. Others opted to follow European liberal sources and saw the practice as an inhuman and unjust inheritance best left behind. Nehru voices liberal opposition when he argued that caste identity leads to the exclusion and suppression of some groups from the mainstream and discourages the pursuit of merit and excellence in all. A third strategy was to simply launch a political critique of the institution pointing out how the practice harmed the anti-colonial struggle.

But untouchability slowly forced the nationalists to interrogate the larger question of caste itself. Most nationalists felt that the caste system was originally rational and good. The underlying principle, they speculated, must have been division of labour or occupational specialisation. Gandhi, for example, felt that it provided for hereditary callings that prevented competition, transmitted religious and moral norms and practices, ensured local order and peace and provided an emotional and economic support system. Thus although sound in principle, human greed and selfishness had vitiated this institution and it had degenerated. What was to be done now? Liberals hoped that caste would slowly die out and be forgotten. The traditionalists, who wished to justify a non-hierarchical caste system, one where vocational training would be based on diverse natural aptitudes, faced an uphill task.

Ambedkar launched the most devastating critique of this position claiming that caste was an integral part of Hinduism, that there was nothing rational or ethical or efficient about classifying people as superior or inferior at birth, that untouchability was an integral part of the caste system and that none of these could be simply reformed away without a major overhaul of the religion itself. He reminded that even enlightened saints and seers like Samkara or Ramanuja never attacked social inequality, only inequality before God. Ambedkar's wrestling with this question and his final exit from Hinduism are telling in this regard.

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Gandhi himself repeatedly tried to distinguish between caste and hierarchy, caste and untouchability and eventually conceded that 'caste had to go'. But then it is questionable whether Gandhi fully triumphed over upper caste biases in his own activity. As Dilip Menon has noted, Gandhi's speeches on his Trivandrum tour are replete with appeals to lower castes to observe cleanliness and eschew vices like alcohol. In north India, *shuddhi sabhas* had been in operation for long. On the one hand, this emphasis on cleanliness draws upon the brahminical obsession with purity and pollution. Undoubtedly, Gandhi was more progressive than the orthoprax Namboodri pundits of Trivandrum who did not wish the untouchables to be using the same roads. But Gandhi primarily saw untouchability as a 'sin' of the caste Hindus who had to repent. That is why he involved the caste Hindus rather than the untouchability in his Harijan upliftment programme. Bhikhu Parekh has noted that Gandhi never took the caste question beyond a moral and religious dimension to a political level. This was crystal clear in his opposition to separate electorates in the Poona fast of 1932.

Casteist attitudes persisted also at other levels in the nationalist movement. Ranajit Guha has alerted us to the fact that those who did not participate in *Swadeshi* or *Non-cooperation* campaigns faced social boycott from the nationalist neighbours in many villages. Even when nationalists were disowning caste at a theoretical level, they relied on caste sanctions in practice. If someone used Liverpool salt, social boycott was resorted to. Or if someone did not join the swadeshi cause, he would be denied services of a barber or washerman; and without the services of these professionals, a Hindu could be rendered impure. In other words, while caste is being denied at one level, it was being reinforced at another level.

The paternalistic tone within nationalist discourse has obscured the fact that during the national movement, so-called lower castes were asserting themselves at various levels. In the south, E.V Ramasami Naicker, later famous as Periyar or the 'Big One' pushed the non-brahminical movement in radical and leftist directions. In this movement, large numbers were rejecting temple-entry, priests officiating at weddings and so on. Time and again, movements from below attempted to divert the nationalist movement and deepen it.

Despite these shortcomings, the Constitutional settlement aspires to empower the SC's and OBC's through special provisions designed to increase political representation and enhance their economic and employment opportunities. Article 17 abolished untouchability while articles 15 and 19 are explicit in providing for special provisions for some caste groups. There is to be a National Commission for overseeing the working of the safeguards and report to Parliament.

3.3   RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY VERSUS COMMUNALISM

The Indian nationalists had to contend with diversity and differences within religions as well as between religions within the Indian context. Most nationalists, whether they were Hindu revivalists like Tilak or liberals like Nehru explicitly rejected the idea of a majoritarian rule based on one religion or language. On the surface, they eschewed thinking of the nation in terms of a single religious identity.

At a general level, religious diversity, in itself, was not a problem; in fact, it was cherished as a unique manifestation of Indian, more specifically Hindu, toleration. But communalism, that is, a 'narrow group mentality basing itself on a religious community but in reality concerned with political power and patronage of the interested group' was a problem fuelled by the divide and rule policy of the British.

But then few nationalists managed to transcend communal thinking and preserve diversity within and between religions. Hindu revivalists such as Tilak considered diversity within Hinduism as inhibiting Hindu unity to some extent. Sectarian prejudices were seen as weakening the Hindu community. He saw history largely as a struggle between different religious communities. In the past, he claimed, Buddhists attacked Hinduism; in the future, he foresaw Christianity challenging Hinduism. Against this threat, Hindu community had to fortify itself. The way in which Tilak looked at the past was to some extent conditioned by his hopes for the future. He did not ask whether battle lines were drawn in the past in the same manner as they were in the present, that is, in terms of religious identities and communal loyalties.

Further, Tilak's vision of the future where he saw the Hindus united into a strong community also had to be examined. To what extent is such a vision friendly to the diversity within Hinduism? Most nationalists, be it Tilak or Radhakrishnan approached Hinduism through selective metaphysical ideas of *advaita* and neglected the rich layered diversity of practice. To some extent, they resorted to some key texts like the *Gita* and *Upanishads* and attempted to streamline the diversity of Hinduism along the lines of semitic religions, i.e., one text, one god and perhaps one organisation or church? In turn, this leads to a denial of conflicting theologies within Hinduism that contributed to its strength at different historical junctures. Further, the attempt to introduce Ganesh and Shivaji festivals to mobilise the Hindus into a community opened up the dangerous possibility of the political use of religion for majoritarian ends. His opposition to the Age of Consent Bill which sought to raise the marriageable age for girls from 10 to 12 also lent weight to orthodox Hindus. Although Tilak himself was not personally against the Muslims and commanded many admirers among them, he inaugurated a style of politics that contained the seeds of an aggressive Hindu nationalism. Even during his time, *Swadeshi* often got mixed up with Hindu religiosity although there were dissenters. Rabindranath Tagore's entry and exit from *Swadeshi* was probably the most eloquent expression of both the attractiveness and anxiety induced by such a heady combination of radical politics and religiosity.

In contrast, Gandhi forged a nationalist response that was relatively more inclusive and less aggressive vis-à-vis other religions. Besides the *Gita, he* appealed to other sources such as Sermon on the Mount, Jain ideal of *ahimsa* and Vaishnavist *bhakti*. Gandhi continued to conceive of the Indian nation based on Hindu ideals such as *swaraj* or *Ram Rajya*. But through the ideal of non-violent action, he hoped to temper the assertive impulse from turning into aggressive Hindu nationalism. His vision of Hindu community did not require new temples on disputed sites. Also, he would have reminded Hindus that mythic sites are not to be confused with specific locales; *bhakti* theology claims that ultimately these spaces are to be found in the heart. Gandhi was probably only one devotee to have said that the *Gita* and *Koran* are his two eyes. As Ashis Nandy puts it, Gandhi forged a religious tolerance which was perhaps more suited to the Indian psyche. He was open to others in and through his active religious practices. This openness was not acceptable to fanatical Hindus.

A third ideological response to religious diversity came from liberal secular persons such as Nehru. For Nehru, Muslims were not a community opposed to the Hindu community. He saw them as equally divided by class, language and ideologies. Similarly, he did not see the Hindus as a homogeneous community. As noted above, he was more concerned about this kind of thinking leading to conflict. Nehru grasped that people could believe in different gods and books but he was apprehensive of the political passions generated by faith. But then Gandhi realised

that in modern times, politics is everywhere and so religion gets politicised. The problem is not to shield any realm from politics but how to train people so that they respect democratic norms and are forced to respect rule of law while using religious ideologies and symbols for their own interests.

Now these ideological responses were shaped by different political circumstances and movements on the ground. Were Hindus and Muslims really divided into clear-cut communities as Tilak encourages us to think? Or were they really living in perfect amity until the British came to divide and rule? As Sumit Sarkar points out, the development of communal and national consciousness are both modern phenomena in that they were facilitated by modern economic linkages and communications. Before that, Hindus and Muslims in different locales may have discovered their differences but they may not have thought of themselves as homogeneous communities. Secondly, though Hindus and Muslims may not have lived in perfect amity, communal riots were not regular or frequent events. There were quarrels but there were also Shia-Sunni quarrels and caste conflicts.

The reform movements among Hindus and Muslims helped them acquire a sense of communal identity. Hindu communalism was made possible thanks to reform movements. In the early part this century, Dayanand Saraswati's Arya Samaj succeeded in combining the earlier social reform issues (opposition to child marriage, idolatry, polytheism, widowhood taboos, brahminical dominance etc.) with a pan-Hindu consciousness. Along with *shuddhi* campaigns, they gained deep roots among a variety of caste groups. By the 1890s the Arya Samaj was beginning to criticise the Congress for not being Hindu enough and held conferences at Kumbh Melas and Sanatan Dharma Sabhas. Elsewhere, Ramakrishna Mission in Bengal, Prarthana Samaj in Pune region and Theosophical society in Madras also promoted a sense of Hindu community through their revivalist practices.

What about Muslim communalism? Among them too, reformist as well as revivalist trends arose. In U.P for instance, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's hopes for reforms among the Muslims found a ready audience in traditional Muslim landowners and service families (Aligarh elites) which found their influence declining. Initially, the British supported the reformists in order to counter the spread of strongly anti-imperial, pro-*caliphate* Islam from the Deoband seminary. Subsequently, the British encouraged separatism by arguing that Bengal partition would mean more jobs for Muslims. Though *Swadeshi* did attract some Muslims, British propaganda succeeded in driving the upper classes from the movement.

At a political level, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had opposed council entry and competitive exams for civil service on the general ground that they would only empower the Hindus who had an edge in English education. The Indian National Congress had not managed to attract many Muslims. The formation of the Muslim league in 1906 and the concession of separate electorates ensured that separatist agendas were represented and argued out. In other words, separatism may be fostered by elite groups who mobilise people for their own interests.

However, people are not always victims; they also act as agents. If they are being influenced by revivalist and separatist politics, there must be some objective reasons. In the U.P and Punjab, communal riots became frequent from 1880s. Sumit Sarkar points out that socio- economic tensions may have played a part in triggering these riots. Hindu peasants faced Muslim *taluqdars* and landlords in large parts of Avadh and Aligarh, Muslim artisans, shopkeepers and petty traders faced big merchants and bankers in towns of U.P while Muslim peasants faced Hindu money-lenders in the Punjab. In Bengal, riots increasingly occured in 1906-1907 in different

areas. The targets were Hindu *zamindars* and money lenders and the Muslim rioters were seen by nationalists as hired agents of the British. And then in 1917, crowds of upto 50,000 Hindus attack Muslims in 124 villages in Shahabad and Patna. Cow protection propaganda and Sanatan Dharma Sabhas played a part in provoking such riots but they were not sole causes; considerable rumour mongering and gossip about collapse of British rule as well as simmering peasant discontent may have found an outlet in such riots.

But the people were not always only expressing economic discontent in a communal/religious garb? And not always were Muslims drawn to pro-imperialist and separatist politics. In the Khilafat movement, Muslim leaders like Mohammad Ali issued first a call for Non-cooperation in November 1919. Muslim leaders, conscious of the need for Hindu support to make non-cooperation a success, passed a Muslim League resolution calling stopping *Bakr-Id* slaughter of cows. Gandhi and the Congress, after the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh joined hands with the Khilafat activists. Post-Khilafat time saw the revival of separatist identity thanks to separate electorates and rising unemployment. Hindu communalism was also becoming restive and hostile. From 1924, the Muslim League would raise the demand for a federation with full provincial autonomy until the demand for Pakistan in 1940.

The response of the Congress to the Hindu Mahasabha was always ambiguous. Despite his opposition to Non-cooperation, Madan Mohan Malaviya was courted by the Congress leaders. From the mid-twenties, it had been active along with the RSS in spreading Hindi, *Shuddhi* and Hinduism. In some places like Banaras, the Swaraj Party and Hindu Mahasabha were the same organisation. Moulana Abul Kalam Azad complained in 1937 that Congress members could not join the League but they were not barred from being active in the Hindu Mahasabha. It was only in 1938 that Congress declared the Hindu Mahasabha membership being disqualification to remain in Congress. Through the mid-thirties, the growth of both Hindu and Muslim communalism continued, and Nehru would admit to Prasad in 1939 that they had been unable to check anti-congress feeling among the Muslims. The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign launched by Nehru was subverted by local Congress committees dominated by Mahasabhites anyway.

Further the nationalist voices among Muslims such as Abul Kalam Azad battled against partition for long and their voices did not get recognised. He argued with both Nehru and Patel that partition would not solve the communal problem but make it more permanent. But somehow the mood of the dominant nationalists such as Patel was to accept partition and be done with it. We must also note that there were also other voices such as that of the *Jam'iyyat-i 'Ulama-I-Hind* which were averse to the idea of Pakistan and felt that partition would endanger the Muslims in India. But they were not an influential voice among the Muslims.

Thus by hindsight one can see that the nationalist movement failed time and again to check communal developments within itself. Theoretically, this was because many nationalists often thought of Hindus and Muslims as monolithic communities or as raw materials for such communities. Historically, different historical factors somehow aided the development of a communal consciousness and it may not be fruitful to figure out whether it all could have been avoided. What must be clear that is that religious identity and difference, once politicised can take both benign and malevolent forms. A minimum agreement on liberal constitutional principles may be the best way of ensuring that such politicisation of religion does not subvert rule of law or ensue in militant suppression of others. Such a minimal framework is provided by the Constitution which provides for freedom of religion as a fundamental right alongside cultural and educational rights.

3.4   LANGUAGE: HOMOGENEITY OR PLURALITY?

The question of linguistic diversity emerged in the form of debates over national/official language and the feasibility/desirability of linguistic provinces. At an ideological level, it appeared obvious to many that there had to be a 'national' or 'official' language' though there was no need for a national or official religion. What about continuing English as the official language? Even Nehru claimed that it was a foreign language and was not known to large masses of our people. But he took a moderate position on the replacement of English.

In general, many nationalists like Tilak found the diversity of languages an obstacle to national unity and urged the need for a common language. He suggested that the *Devanagari* script may be used for all northern languages. Subsequently, the north-centred composition of the Congress and the influence of Hindu Mahasabha contributed to Hindi in the *Nagari* script being elevated into a possible national language for Free India. Gandhi too was keen on promoting Hindi especially in the South. But the southern experience was ahead in this regard. In 1938, Rajagopalachari, the then premier of Madras had introduced Hindi whether in Nagari or Urdu script as an optional subject or as he put it 'chutney on a leaf—take it or leave it'. And failure in the subject was not to detain promotion to higher grade. But his experiment nicely contributed to E.V.Ramasami Naicker's popular struggle against Aryan impositions on Dravidian culture. This experience made Rajaji oppose Hindi imposition in post-independent India.

Granville Austin has documented the extent to which Hindi-supporters were to insist upon adoption of Hindi as official language. The 'Hindi extremists' produced a Hindi constitution which even Hindi speakers from North India found hard to understand given the sanskritisation of the same. Austin writes, "a Sanskritized translation would not only be unintelligible except to a tiny group of the initiate, but it was doubtful if a Sanskritized Constitution could be superimposed on the base of parliamentary government and the British common-law tradition to which the nation was accustomed and which Assembly members wanted to retain." Finally consensus emerged over the continued use of English for at least fifteen years until the 1960's agitations over the issue again.

A second issue to emerge was that of linguistic provinces. Given that the British created multi-lingual states to forestall unity, the Congress had agreed in principle to creation of linguistic states. But Nehru was to move slowly on this issue after independence and it only assumed salience in the 1950s.

3.5   TRIBAL REVOLTS: CIVILISE AND PRESERVE?

Writing history from below, Sumit Sarkar notes how tribal communities have always revolted often and violently in India. Instead of being primitive savages confined to the forest (that kind of tribal survives only in romantic imagination and tourist brochures), tribals are integrated into Indian society as the lowest stratum as agricultural labourers, coolies and so on. Commercialisation of forests, land grabbing and increasing immiseration saw many revolts such as Santal rebellion (1855), Munda rebellion (1895-1900) and the Alluri Sitarama Raju movement in Godavari region in 1922-24 to mention a few. Far from being sporadic or spontaneous, these movements revealed clear identification of targets (often landlords and moneylenders), novel modes of political communication, and consciousness of the interlinkages between local exploiters and alien rule. Writing about the market lootings in Midnapur when the prices of essentials soared in 1914-18, Swapan Das Gupta observes that the the adivasis selectively attacked cloth merchant-

cum-moneylenders rather than grain merchants for the former were more exploitative during hard times.

The nationalists approached tribals primarily as illiterate masses to be 'civilized' and enlisted into the mainstream. As with other lower caste groups, nationalists did not think of them as autonomous agents creating their own history or as groups which might have had agendas different from the Congress. This meant that at a practical level they were mobilised and demobilised as per the needs of the Congress. This was evident in the case of Midnapur adivasi rebellion between 1921-1923. The Congress began enlisting advasis in this region only around 1921 and successfully organised a strike against very low wages (they were paid 4 pice for carting wood up for 14 miles and 8 pice for 35 miles!). After intense struggle, a compromise was reached which allowed a Congress activist to monitor worker conditions in the jungles. The Congress undoubtedly channelised existing discontent among the adivasis and extended it against paddy exports and foreign cloth. But subsequently the struggle assumed its own dynamism during Non-cooperation and the adivasis took to looting select stores. The withdrawal of Non-cooperation meant that their struggle was denied external links; so when the adivasis rebelled again in 1922 for traditional jungle rights, they were acting autonomously and Congress only backed them indirectly.

The upshot of the above is that Congress' response to adivasis or tribals paralleled its response to caste differences. The tribals were not seen as preservers of distinctive world – view and values of their own; they had to be 'civilized' and enlisted into the mainstream. As such, when they acted as agents on their own initiative for issues and rights which were important for them, they appeared isolated.

This paternalism flowed into the Constitutional settlement where there were several protectionist measures so as to preserve and protect the interests of the Scheduled Tribes. Article 15 which bans discrimination on grounds of race, caste, etc., explicitly allows for some provisions to advance SCs and STs. Artilce 19(5) dealing with freedom of residence allows special restrictions to promote the interests of STs in some restricted areas. Similarly there are provisions for a special officer, national commission and special grants-in-aid.

3.6 SUMMARY

There was no single nationalist response to the multiple levels of diversity in India. Further all of these diversities did not become politically significant at the same time; they were slowly shaped and constructed as the basis of special or separatist demands over a period of time. On the caste and tribe question, the nationalists conceived their task primarily as one of civilising the downtrodden. As such the response remained moral and social but not political in the sense of empowering them for their own agendas.

In the case of religious diversity, nationalists were quite ambivalent in practice toward both secularism and communalism. Hindu revivalists urged that they were not against any other religion or community but implicitly conceived the Indian nation on the basis of Hindu ideals and symbols. Gandhi's religious tolerance was one response to religious diversity and perhaps a powerful response, given the living sense of the sacred in India. However, Gandhi's response was shaped by true faith and humility which cannot be assumed to be mass virtues. Finally Nehruvian response, stemming from an intellectual skepticism and fear of religious passions was also inadequate from the standpoint of lived faith.

It is necessary to appreciate that these responses were forged according to the imperatives of the national liberation movement. The nationalists often had to act according to their grasp of what was practically feasible. Despite the periodic drive for homogeneity, they measured up to the challenges posed by diversity. The Constitutional provisions for the protection of interests of SCs, Sts, OBCs and minorities owe a lot to the nationalist response to the diversities.

3.7 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the ways in which nationalists responded to caste and untouchability. Were these responses shaped by the upper-caste biases of the nationalists as Ambedkar or Periyar would claim?

2) How did the nationalists respond to religious diversity and communalism?

3) Critically analyse the main arguments of this unit regarding the adequacy of nationalist responses to different kinds of diversity?

UNIT 4   STATES IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL SCHEME

Structure

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The framers of the Indian Constitution created a federal state, structured essentially on the model of the Government of India Act, 1935, in recognition of the enormous diversity of the regions of this vast sub-continent. It was a highly centralised federation. However, political forces have worked towards reducing the Centre's grip over the states. And there is increasing realisation of the need for coordination between the two sets of government.

4.2   BACKGROUND

When we speak of 'States in the Constitutional Scheme' we mean by the 'state' a unit of the Indian state that is structured on the federal pattern as in the United States of America (USA). The federating states of the USA were independent states before the formation of the US federation in 1789. After the formation of the USA its units continued to be called 'states'. All the federations that were formed after 1789 did not call their units states. The units of the Swiss confederation are called 'cantons,' a French word meaning provinces. The Canadian federation calls its units 'provinces' whereas in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics they were called republics.

Before India became free and framed her republican constitution it was the territories under the rule of the native princes which were called 'princely states.' The territories within British India were divided into provinces. The Constitution of India removed this difference of status and organised India into four kinds of states A, B, C and D. After 1956 the units of the Indian federation came to be classified under two broad categories, alled 'states' and 'Union territories.' Subsequently, several Union territories were promoted to the status of states. Union territories may, therefore, be regarded as potential states. An understanding of the state system in India is focused broadly on three themes:

1) Identity and territorial integrity of the states.

2) Relation of the states with the Union of India.

3) Relation among the states.

4.3 IDENTITY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF STATES

Identity and territorial integrity of the states is of course the basic feature of the state system. Technically it would mean that the states which form the federation should retain their shape, name and character. In practice, however, this is always not so. Even in the world's classic federation, the USA, the identity and territorial shape of the states have changed a great deal over time – specifically between the formation of the federation (1789) and the civil war of the 1860s.

In India the years since Independence have seen many a great change in the shape, identity and character of the states. The main reason for this is that the British left India as a highly amorphous country. Its economy was fragmented and variegated. Its administrative units did not correspond to the cultural contours of the Indian population. Its administrative pattern was not uniform. The political leadership of independent India had to sort out these divergences which still persist. The reorganisation of states is yet incomplete. The Unit 5 deals with this story of reorganisation of states in some detail.

Constitution of new states, their mergers and the changes of their territorial boundaries have been facilitated by Article 3 of the Constitution which allows the Parliament to (a) form new states by separation of territory from any state or by uniting two or more states or parts of states or by uniting any territory to a part of any state; (b) increase the area of any state; (c) diminish the area of any state; (d) alter the boundaries of any state; an (a) alter the name of any state; after the President (i.e., the Union Government) has so recommended after consultation with the state legislature(s) concerned.

One aspect of the states' identity is that, unlike in the USA, in India, there is no double citizenship. There is only the citizenship of the Union.

4.4 UNION-STATE RELATIONSHIP

It is a common practice for the world's federations to lay down legal-political relationship between the Union and the states in a written and relatively rigid constitution. A federal

constitution is in the nature of a contract/treaty. Its terms may not be altered without the consent of both the Union and all or an overwhelming number of states. Secondly, the constitution divides power between the Union and the states. Thirdly, a judiciary supervises this division of power.

The Indian Constitution elaborately lays down this division of power in the Seventh Schedule under Article 246. Broadly speaking, the matters necessary to run a unified administration and areas of common interest of the states are placed in the Union List (List I) and the matters of particular interests of the states are placed in the State List (List II). There is a third list of subjects under a Concurrent List (List II) on which the Union and the states have concurrent jurisdiction.

The Concurrent List, it should be understood, does not mean that these powers are exercised by the Union and the states in cooperation with each other. There are other provisions in the Constitution of India enabling such cooperation. Nor does the Concurrent List mean that the Union and the states can exercise their authority on matters included in it subject to concurrence (i.e., consent) of each other. Concurrent subjects are those subjects on which both the Union and the states exercise their jurisdiction. In case of a conflict of jurisdiction on any Concurrent List subject, the Union's jurisdiction shall automatically prevail. The Concurrent List, therefore, covers a grey area in the Union-state relationship.

The subjects which are not covered by any of the three lists – the residual subjects – belong to the authority of the Union.

Generally speaking, the Union has power over all matters of defence, including the armed forces and their deployment; atomic energy and the minerals necessary for its production; war and peace; foreign affairs and foreign jurisdiction; extradition and citizenship; admission into, expulsion and emigration from India; pilgrimage abroad; railways; national highways; national waterways; maritime shipping and navigation; major ports; airways; post, telegraph and telephone; currency, coinage and foreign exchange; international and inter-state trade and commerce; banking, business corporations and insurance; establishment of standards of weight and quality; ancient and historical monuments; the Survey of India; census and inter-state migration; Union public services; elections to Parliament, to legislatures of the states and the offices of the President and the Vice-President; powers, privileges and immunities of each House of Parliament; constitution and organisation of the Supreme court and the High courts; taxes on income other than agricultural income; and taxes and duties on international trade

Generally speaking, the states have jurisdiction over public order and police without involving the Union's armed forces; officers and servants of the High Courts; prisons; local government; public health and sanitation; pilgrimage inside India; intoxicating liquors; relief of disabled and unemployable; burial and burial grounds; cremations and cremation grounds; libraries, museums, ancient and historical monuments other than those of national importance, roads, bridges, ferries and other means of communication outside the scope of the Union list; tramways, roadways and inland waterways outside the scope of Union functions; agricultural affairs and preservation of animal stock; ponds and prevention of cattle trespass; intra-state water resources; Land affairs; fisheries; courts of wards; regulation of mines and mining other than those necessary for nuclear energy production.

4.4.1 The Extra-ordinary Powers of Parliament

Governmental activities are conducted in terms of law. The primary focus of the division of power between the Union and states, therefore, falls on legislation. Executive powers of the Union and the states are co-extensive with their legislative powers. There is no doubt about the fact that the division of power between the Union and the states is heavily loaded in favour of the Union. This load has been increased by certain extraordinary provisions of the Constitution.

According to Article 249 of the Constitution the parliament may legislate on any subject, if the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), by a two –thirds majority declares such subject to be a subject of national importance. According to Article 250 the parliament may legislate on any state subject, for the whole or any part of the territory of India, during the operation of a proclamation of emergency.

According to Article 252 the parliament may legislate on a state subject for two or more states if their legislatures consider it desirable. On the other hand, as the Union may legislate on its jurisdictional subjects for the whole or a part of the country, there is no provision for the Union delegating its power to legislate to any state legislature(s).

In case of a declaration of constitutional breakdown in a state under Article 356 of the Constitution, not only the legislative functions of the state legislature but also its financial powers are taken over by the parliament. That is to say, the parliament passes its budgets, allocates fund for administration and controls taxation for the state government.

4.4.2 The Extra-ordinary Executive Powers of the Union

The executive powers of the Union and the states are coextensive with their respective legislative powers which, we have seen are heavily tilted towards the Union. The evfHkuanu lekjksg lfefr xecutive powers of the Union are, however, more than this range of powers by way of certain special provisions of the Constitution.

The executive power of the states are required to be so exercised as not to impede or prejudice the executive power of the Union. The most important of such powers is the appointment and removal of the governors of the states who may, as we shall see, become their real executive heads on occasions. The Union can give executive directions to the states toward that purpose. The executive power of the Union will also extend to the giving of directions to a state as to the construction and maintenance of means of communication declared in the direction to be of national or military importance and of the protection of the railways Article 257 according to Article 365 the failure of a state to comply with and give effect to such directions may entitle it to the declaration of constitutional breakdown by the Union.

4.4.3 The Governor's Role

The state Governor has a critical role in maintaining the status and autonomy of the states. The Governor is appointed by the President of India (i.e., the Union) and holds his/her tenure during the pleasure of the President. He is the agent of the Union and is normally expected to secure the Union-state amity. At times, however, his role may turn out to be a major factor of tension in the Union-state relation.

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The Governor is the executive head of the state and all functions of the state executive are carried out in his name and under his authority. He appoints a Council of Ministers to aid and advise him on his functions except when he is required under the constitution to act in his discretion. This exception is not there in the case of the President of India in whose case all ministerial advises are binding. The problem with the Governor is that his/her discretionary field is not clearly defined. Clause 2 of Article 163 says that if a question arises about whether a matter is required by the Constitution to be d ealt with by the Governor in his discretion the decision of the Governor taken his discretion is final. Clause 3 of the same Article says that such a question cannot be raised in any court . This means that the Governor has unlimited discretion if he/she wants to apply it.

On the other hand, the Council of Ministers is responsible to the elected state legislature. It has reason to claim to be representatives of the people of the state. Whenever the governor overrides the state council of Ministers, therefore, a suppression of democracy is alleged.

The problem becomes complicated by two special powers of the Governor: (1) the power to reserve bills, after they are passed by the state legislature, for the President's assent, and (2) the power to report a breakdown of the constitutional machinery. Should the Governor exercise these powers on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers? There is no clear answer to that. However, it can be assumed that a Governor can never expect his/her council of Ministers to report a constitutional breakdown in the state, and he/she must do it without the Council of Minister's advice. This cannot be said about the first power. If a state legislation is expected to be controversial, a governor may try to persuade the council of Ministers to advise him/her to reserve the bill for the President's assent. Exercise of these two powers by the Governor has created great bitterness in Union-state relations.

4.4.4 The Administrative Relations

Government is largely run by the bureaucracy. There are three kinds of bureaucracy in India: the state services, the central services and the all-India services. Whereas the first two services are filled up and controlled by the states and centre respectively, the all-India services are filled up and largely controlled by the centre though the officers are attached to the state cadre. Senior positions in the state governments are almost always manned by members of the all-India services, namely, the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service. However, members of the all-India services as well as the central services are recruited through the Union Public Service Commission while the members of the state services are recruited through the State Public Service Commission in each state.

There are two special kinds of bureaucrats whose status is constitutional: the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India and the Election Commissioners of India. They are appointed by the President of India. The Comptroller and Auditor-General examines the accounts of both the Union and the state Governments. The Election Commission supervises the elections at the central and the state levels. This allows some control of the Union over the government accounts and the election processes in the states.

4.4.5   The Financial Status of the States

Generally speaking, all taxes and duties collected by the states go to their coffer and are appropriated by the states. They include such stamp duties and such duties of excise on medicinal and toilet preparations as are mentioned in the Union list that are levied by the Union but collected and appropriated by the states where they are levied (Article 268). The revenues and taxes collected by the Union, from the items mentioned in the Union list, however, are appropriated in two ways. The taxes on sale and purchase of goods and taxes on consignment of goods other than newspapers of inter-state nature are levied and collected by the Union but assigned to the states where they are collected and distributed among those states according to the principles laid down by Parliament Article 269). All other taxes and duties under the Union list are levied and collected by the Union and distributed between the Union and the states according to the manner prescribed by the Finance Commission or, until the Finance Commission is constituted, by the President (Article 270).

There are two items mentioned in the Concurrent list, namely, (1) Stamp duties other than duties or fees collected by means of judicial stamps, but not including rates of stamp duties, and (2) fees in respect of any matters in respect of the matters in the concurrent list, but not including fees taken in any court, which belong to concurrent jurisdiction of the Union and the states, Their proceeds are retained by the Union and the states respectively. The Union may collect any duty or tax from matters not mentioned in any of the lists and retain their proceeds.

For a long time the Finance Commission used to make recommendation only on non-plan expenditure of the governments. Since the ninth Finance Commission they are making recommendations on plan expenditures too.

4.4.6   Tension Areas in Union-State Relations

 It has been noticed that the Union-state conflicts relate mainly to division of financial resources between them, the role of the Governor, particularly in giving assent to legislations by the state legislatures, appointment and dismissal of the Council of Ministers and recommendations of President's rule on the ground of 'constitutional breakdown'. Most of these are political questions and, for long, the Supreme court declined to intervene in such disputes. In 1993, however, in the case of S.R. Bommai and Others vs. the Union of India, the Supreme Court decided that the relevance of material contained in the report of the Governor recommending the President's rule in a state is subject to judicial scrutiny. In any case, the state legislature cannot be dissolved until after the Parliament debates and approves of the declaration of constitutional breakdown. In 1998, in the case of Uttar Pradesh the Supreme Court ordered a floor test of the strength of the parties claiming the right to be appointed to the Government.

For a long time the states have complained about their meagre financial resources that made them rely heavily upon the grants-in-aid by the Union as well as loans sanctioned by it. The 80th amendment to the Constitution effected in the year 2000 sought to remove part of the imbalance by making more fund available from the Union coffers to the states. But the principles by which the Finance Commission divide the state allocations have not satisfied the states. The rich states complain that they are deprived of their legitimate share of the Central transfers, the poor states complain that they are not getting enough.

The states still do not have an unlimited power to borrow from the market. A state without the consent of the Government of India may not raise any loan if there is still outstanding any part of the loan which has been made to the state by the government of India or by its predecessor government, or in respect of which a guarantee has been given by the government of India or its predecessor Government {Article 293(4)}. The states dependence on the Union Government is heavy. The small states of north-east India depend on the Union Government for even the non-plan expenditure to the extent of 90% and more.

4.5   INTER-STATE RELATIONS

The Constitution envisaged a relation of peaceful coexistence, if not amicable co-operative relations among the member states of the federation. If there arises any dispute between the Union and a state or a group of states or the Union and a state or a group of states on the one side and one or more states on the other; or between two or more states, the Supreme Court of India can be approached under its original jurisdiction for adjudication (Article 131). There are two specific mechanisms prescribed for resolution of inter-state disputes outside the judicial process however:

1)   Parliament may by law provide for the adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters or, or in, any inter-state river or river valley (Article 262).

2)   If at any time it appears to the President that public interest would be served by the establishment of a Council charges with the duty of – (a) inquiring into and advising upon disputes which may have arisen between states; (investigating and discussing subjects in which all or some states , or the Union and one or more states, have a common interest; or (c) making recommendations upon any subject and, in particular, recommendations for the better coordination of policy and action with respect to that subject – it shall be lawful for the President by order to establish such a Council, and to define the nature of the duties to be performed by it and its organisation and procedure (Article 263).

The Inter-State Council has discussed the desirability of controlling the power of the Union to declare a constitutional breakdown in a state under Article 356 of the Constitution and has recommended the restriction of this power through amendment of the Constitution.

Parliament has the power to set up tribunals to decide inter-state river disputes and it can, by legislation, exclude the jurisdiction of any court in the matter. Such tribunals in the past have not been entirely successful as they do not have the judicial authority to enforce their decision. On the other hand, under the River Waters Disputes Act, 1956, the Supreme Court can direct the Central Government to fulfil its statutory obligation.

The most difficult point of inter-state conflict is the border disputes between the states arising out of historical and cultural factors. Occasionally such conflicts have led to violence as in the dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra. The constitutional mechanism to solve the dispute is provided by Article 3 of the Constitution which vests the power of altering the boundaries of states only after receiving the views of the concerned states. Parliament is not obliged to respect the views, but to disregard them may be politically disastrous.

A third mechanism for achieving centre-state and inter-state coordination in regard to development planning was established by an act of Parliament – the National Development Council consisting of state's Chief Ministers and Union cabinet ministers to finalise development plans after they are framed by the Planning Commission of India.

4.6 POLITICS AND STATE RIGHTS

Much of the autonomy of the states, their rights against the Centre as well as against each other depends upon politics. The Central Government can persuade the state Governments to accept a certain point of view if both the Governments are under the control of the same party. The massive states reorganisation of 1956, the partition of Gujarat and Maharashtra in 1960, the partition of Punjab in 1966 and the reorganisation of north-east India in 1971 were possible because the Congress party was in power at the Centre and at the concerned states at the relevant times.

When different parties are at the Centre and at the states, ideological and political conflicts often create tension between the Centre and the states as well as among the states. Since 1959 a number of state governments have been superseded chiefly because they were run by parties other than the one that ruled the Centre. The grossest cases occurred in 1977, when the Janata Party government at the Centre dissolved as many as eight state governments government run by the Congress Party. In 1980, on the other hand, the Congress-run central government superseded as many state governments run by the Janata Party. After that, however, the frequency of such supersessions decreased and, in 1993, the practice got severely restricted by the Bommai case judgement of the Supreme court of India.

In 1989 one-party hegemony (of the Congress Party) was decisively over. Except for the period of 1991-96 the Central Government came to be controlled by coalitions in which regional parties played major roles. Consequently, central intervention in state affairs also fell substantially. Two major complaints of the states, however, persist: (1) the Centre is accused of putting party men at the gubernatorial positions in the states to serve its own political agenda, and (2) the Centre discriminates against some states and favours some in regard to financial support on party considerations.

4.7 SUMMARY

The Constitution of India provides enough provisions regarding their the relationships between the states, and the states and the union. The organisation on of states into different federal units give them distinct political identity. Recognisation of the state has made the state separate identities, the issue of their re-organisation remains alive. Despite the clear division of power between the states and thereon, the arrangement of the states in the constitutional scheme is titled in favour of the centre. The economic disparities, cultural differences and political factors keep the issue of the relations between states, and states and union intact.

4.8 EXERCISES

1) To what extent did the Constitution envisage the autonomy of the states in the Indian federal structure in regard to the legislative division of power?

2) What is the extent of executive control of the Union over the states in India?

3) Examine the role of the Governor in Union-State Relation.

4) Examine the financial status of the states in the Indian federation.

5) Examine the tension areas in the Union-State relations.

6) What kinds of inter-state conflicts are envisaged in the Constitution of India? What are the mechanisms prescribed for solution of such conflicts?

UNIT 5 DEVELOPMENT OF STATE SYSTEM

Structure

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The State System in independent India emerged within a broadly federal framework. It is true that the term 'federal' does not occur in the Constitution of India. In fact, very few federal constitutions of the world use this term specifically. The Unites States of America is acknowledged to be the oldest and a classical federal constitution. It does not use the term federal or federation. The USA is a 'union of states.' So is India (according to Article 1 of the Indian Constitution). Both countries are organised in a federal structure. That means, essentially, that in both the countries, as well as in all federations, there are two levels of government, that power is divided between the two by a written constitution and that there is an independent judiciary to supervise that division of power.

5.2   DYNAMICS OF INDIAN FEDERALISM

Text books on the Indian Constitution usually try to establish a historical linkage between the Indian Constitution and the Government of India Act, 1935. It will, however, be wrong to see

the Indian federal set-up of today as a replica of the 1935 Act. The Government of India Act, 1935, was based on the principle of devolution of power from the British sovereign through the Governor-General. Provincial autonomy that was sanctioned by that Act was severely circumscribed. It had come as an administrative arrangement within the British empire with sovereignty being undoubtedly vested in the foreign sovereign. The present Indian Constitution vests the sovereignty decisively in the people of India. In fact, the premier Indian political party, the Indian National Congress worked under that Act for only about three years, and that too only at the provincial level.

The other significant feature of the Indian federation of today is that the shape of its component units has been changing. This, however, is not unique to the Indian Constitution. Although, in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared that the United States is 'an indestructible union of indestructible states,' the shape of the states of that country was continuously changing up to the civil war of the 1860s. That process is continuing in India. As you have read in Unit 4, under Article 3 of the Constitution of India Parliament has power to change the shape of a state, split it or merge it with another but only after taking the view of the legislatures of the concerned states. Of course Parliament is not bound by such views.

The main reason why the shape of the states of the USA- went on changing for nearly a century was the annexation of territories from the native people of America during this period. In India a somewhat similar process caused the change in the territorial shape of the country as well as its units of government. Broadly speaking this process was the result of the British colonial rule.

5.2.1 Annexations and Territorial Arrangement of British India

It should be noted that British sovereignty on India was not technically established until the 1858 proclamation of British Queen Victoria taking over the territorial possessions of the British East India Company after the dethronement of the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Jaffar. Till that time the British controlled parts of the Indian territory under the authority of the Delhi ruler. However, administration of such territory was completely autonomous of Delhi's authority. It was rather under the control of British parliamentary enactments.

Until 1765 British presence in India was mainly through leases and Zamindaris. In 1661 the British had got hold of Bombay as a dowry from the Portuguese royalty to the English king Charles II. In 1765 the East India Company got the dewani of the Bengal suba from emperor Shah Alam. After the fall of Tipu Sultan Madras and the neighbouring territories were annexed. After the third Anglo-Maratha war of 1803 they came to control the districts of Agra and the territory of Delhi. In 1836 the Nawab of Oudh was made to cede the Benares area which was joined with the conquered districts and the territory of Delhi and Agra to form the North Western Provinces. Oudh itself was annexed in 1856 and joined with Bengal. It was constituted as a Chief Commissioner's Province in 1856. In 1858 Delhi was transferred to Punjab. In 1877 Oudh was merged with the North Western Provinces. In 1912 Delhi was separated from Punjab as the imperial capital and a Chief Commissioner's Province.

In 1826, after the first Anglo-Burmese war, Assam was annexed. Sind was conquered in 1842 and the Punjab territories in 1859. Meanwhile, in 1853, Berar was annexed from Hyderabad,

but, in return of the services of the Nizam in 1857, was returned to him. In 1861 the Central Provinces was constituted by uniting the lapsed Bhonsle (Maratha) kingdom of Nagpur and territories transferred from the North Western District. In 1903 the Nizam was made to cede Berar again and it was joined with the Chief Commissioner's Province of the Central Provinces that had been formed in 1861 with territories mostly annexed from the Marhatta rulers. The last annexation was of Oudh in 1856. In 1858 Queen Victoria promised not to annex any more territories of the Indian Princes. By 1886, however, Burma was annexed as was a part of the territory of Afghanistan.

Simultaneously, the British attention fell on the frontiers of the Indian mainland. In the eighteenth century they occupied the Andaman and Nicobar islands from the Dutch and, in 1872, they were constituted as a chief commissionership. By 1886 Burma (Myanmar today) was annexed. In 1897, after the second Anglo-Afghan war, territories were annexed from Afghanistan and constituted as a Chief Commissioner's province. In 1901 the frontier territories were separated from Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province was constituted under a chief commissioner. In order to avoid confusion of names the North Western Provinces and Oudh was renamed the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. Having annexed the territory of Kashmir (including Jammu) from the Sikhs, however, the British sold it out to Gulab Singh and it became a princely state.

5.2.2 Amorphousness of the British Empire

Having conquered Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka) from the Dutch the British administered it as a part of the Madras presidency till 1803. They ruled Burma as part of British India till 31 March 1937 after which it became a separate Crown Colony. Even the distant Arab port town of Aden was made a part of the Bombay Presidency after its annexation in 1839 and a Chief Commissioner's Province in British India in 1932, to be separated as a Crown Colony in 1935. In 1947 the British partitioned British India into India and Pakistan leaving the rest of India into 566 princely states and two 'tribal areas' beyond the north western and the north eastern frontiers of British India free to join either of the countries. 554 princely states and one tribal area in the north east became parts of independent India. Subsequently the small French and Portuguese colonial possessions in the sub-continent joined India. In 1974 Sikkim, an Indian dependency since the British days, joined India.

The external boundaries of British India were never clearly demarcated. In 1902 the British enforced the Durand Line with Afghanistan splitting the tribal region lying between them. Afghanistan never acknowledged the legitimacy of the border. In 1914 they drew the Macmahon Line on the north eastern borders with Tibet, which China never acknowledged, while the western part of the northern border was left undefined. (After Independence Pakistan has been having problem with Afghanistan on the Durand Line and India has problem with China with the Macmahon Line). Some of these border territories were never administered by the British.

5.2.3 Centralisation of Government

The early administration of British possessions in India was organised in the form of Presidencies – properties of the President of the Board of Control of the English East India Company – Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Though Madras was the oldest of these Presidencies, Bengal was the biggest – encompassing united Bengal (i.e., including today's Bangla Desh),

Bihar and Orissa. The governing authority on these Presidencies was vested in three Governors. The Regulating Act of 1773 declared the Governor of Bengal as the Governor-General of British India. By the Charter Act of 1833 civil and military authority of the Governors of Bombay and Madras was transferred to the Governor-General. Legislative powers were returned to the Governors of Bombay and Madras by the Indian Councils Act of 1861. However, separate military commands in Bombay and Madras were abolished only in 1893. Meanwhile, in 1853, a Lieutenant-Governor was appointed for Bengal separating the direct administration of Bengal from the Governor-General.

At the turn of the 19th century Lord Curzon concentrated much power in the hands of the Governor-General. However, in 1909, the Morley-Minto Reforms ushered in a decentralising trend which was confirmed by the report of the Decentralisation Commission in 1912. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report carried on the decentralisation further and introduced an amount of responsible government in the form of diarchy at the provinces. Provincial autonomy was formally established by the Government of India Act, 1935. But it had several shortcomings.

The British administered British India by three kinds of authorities under the Governor-General. There were Governors appointed by the British Crown for major provinces working under the authority of the Governor- General. There were the Lieutenant-Governors appointed by the Governor-General but exercising authority almost similar to that of the Governors and the Chief Commissioners for the backward and the special areas who were appointed by the Governor-General but treated as hardly more that officials. The backward regions of British India were excluded from the jurisdiction of the representative legislative bodies that were created in 1919 and 1935. In such tracts administration was thin. For the princely states and the tribal areas the Governor-General appointed Political Agents without direct administrative power.

5.3   THE POST-COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

5.3.1   Constitutional Arrangement in Independent India

It fell upon the Constituent Assembly of India to organise this loose administrative-political structure within a rational framework. The immediate task was integration of the princely states. The Constituent Assembly created four kinds of States – in place of Provinces and Princely states. The major provinces of the British days that were left in India either in full (Bihar, Bombay, the Central Provinces and Berar, Madras, Orissa and the United Provinces, renamed as Uttar Pradesh) or in parts (Assam, East Punjab and West Bengal) were renamed as Part A States, some of the former princely states being merged with Punjab. The major princely states that joined India were constituted as Part B States. The smaller princely states that joined India were merged and constituted as Part C States along with some of the old Chief Commissioner's Provinces. The extremely backward Andaman and Nicobar Islands were constituted as a Part D State. The executive heads of the Part A States were designated as Governors. The executive heads of the Part B states were designated as Raj Pramukhs. They would be ruled like the Part A States with legislatures and Councils of Ministers. The executive head of a Part C State would be either a Chief Commissioner or a Lieutenant-Governor. Parliament could create legislatures and Councils of Advisers/Ministers in such states. The Part D State of Andaman and Nicobar would be governed by the President of India through a Chief Commissioner.

Special administrative arrangements were made for the backward tracts under Schedules V and VI of the Constitution. The hitherto un-administered Naga Tribal Area and the North Eastern Frontier Tracts were placed in the Sixth Schedule, as Part B Tribal Areas, to be directly administered by the Central Government through the Governor of Assam as his agent. The Part A Tribal Areas got Autonomous District Councils while the Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule were granted special provision for protection of tribal interests. While the Sixth Schedule was confined to Assam, the fifth Schedule was spread over mainly the central Indian states.

5.3.2 Origins of Linguism in India

One of the consequences of the prolonged process of British annexation was the need for continuously refashioning the territorial units of the Indian empire. Several new acquisitions were constituted into Chief Commissioner's Provinces and territories were transferred between Chief Commissioner's Provinces or between Chief Commissioner's Provinces and Governor's/Lieutenant-Governor's Provinces. These administrative boundaries cared nothing for the traditional cultural boundaries until 1904.

In 1904 Lord Curzon decided that the size of the province of Bengal was too unwieldy. He, therefore, decided to partition it. The criterion for partition would be the religious division of the Indian population. In 1905 he created a Muslim-majority province of Eastern Bengal and Assam and a non-Muslim majority province of Western Bengal. It split the Bengali-speaking population down the middle and produced a strong anti-partition movement – that actually lifted the Indian national movement to a new height. The partition was annulled in 1912 but a composite province of Bihar and Orissa was carved out of the former Bengal. The imperial capital was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi.

In 1936 Bihar and Orissa were separated as two different provinces and a new province of Sind was carved out of the province of Bombay largely on consideration of the religious-communal composition of the region and partly because of its lack of contiguity with the province of Bombay. In 1937 the North-West Frontier Province was granted a legislature.

Meanwhile, the anti-partition agitation in Bengal inspired linguistic aspirations on other parts of India like the Andhra region of the Madras province and Orissa. The 1920 Congress Constitution organised the party units on the basis of language and, in 1930, the Madras session of the Congress adopted the demand for linguistic provinces. While acquiescing in the creation of Sind the All-Party Conference (1928) acknowledged that Sindhi was a distinct language.

5.3.3 Language and State Boundaries

The trauma of Partition of British India, however, made the Constituent Assembly hesitate to grant linguistic states immediately and the post-partition boundaries of the former British provinces were retained. In 1953 the Andhra agitation burst out resulting in the fast by death of a Gandhian leader, Potti Sriramalu. The state of Andhra was created in the same year. This was followed by the appointment of a States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) in 1955. The SRC recommended conversion of the four kinds of states into two categories States and Union territories and merger of the erstwhile Part B state of Hyderabad with Andhra. These two recommendations were accepted. Territorial adjustments were made to the benefit of Kerala (earlier called Travancore-Cochin), Madhya Pradesh and Mysore. Kerala and Mysore were promoted to

the status of states as were Rajasthan (a conglomerate of former princely states created in 1952) and Jammu and Kashmir. Other border adjustments were made between neighbouring states too.

The demand for linguistic states was not satisfied in 1956. Agitations in Bombay led to its partitioning between Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960 and of Punjab into Panjab and Haryana in 1966, while a part of its territory was joined with Himachal Pradesh. Territorial adjustments continued and are not yet over.

5.3.4 The Ethnic States

1963 saw the emergence of what may be called 'ethnic states' with the creation of Nagaland. The Nagas speak about 25 languages. In 1970 an 'autonomous state' of Meghalaya was created with the autonomous tribal districts of United Khas-Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills. In 1972, through the North Eastern Areas Reorganisation Act, 1971, Meghalaya was promoted to the status of a full state with some non-tribal areas joined with it. The former Union territories of Manipur and Tripura were promoted to the status of full states too while two Union territories were carved out of Assam to form new Union territories: (1) the former centrally-administered North-East Frontier Tracts, with the name of Arunachal Pradesh and (2) the Mizo Hills District with the name of Mizoram. In 1986 Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh became full states. In 1987 Goa earned this status.

In the year 2001 three new states were created: Chhattisgarh, carved out of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand carved out of Bihar and Uttaranchal carved out of Uttar Pradesh. While the first two have a tribal base, the current majority of the population is predominantly non-tribal. Uttaranchal has virtually no tribal presence. These states may appropriately be called hill states. Regional, ethnic and linguistic demands for statehood still persist in different parts of India.

5.3.5 Reasons for Statehood Demand

What could be the possible reason(s) for such proliferation of statehood after Independence? One reason certainly is the desire for correction of the territorial arrangement created during the colonial period on purely administrative ground by the ruling power. India never had a centralised government of the kind the British created before. In fact, India was not even familiar with concept of territorial jurisdiction until the advent of British power. Pre-British political boundaries were based essentially on ethno-cultural linkages. After the departure of the British such old ethno-cultural linkages tend to reassert themselves as nationalities.

Closely related to the British departure is the explosion of democracy in India. By one stroke universal adult franchise was introduced in India with two exceptions of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the North-East Frontier Tracts of Assam (In 1971 the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and, in 1977, the Frontier Tracts had become a Union territory and people become voters). This unleashed democratic aspirations for self-government.

The process of democratisation through the Constitution was boosted by the process of land reform which greatly weakened, if not totally eliminated, the traditionally dominant big landlords and brought economic power to the middle and small landowners. Agriculture and land being a state subject this new class looked up to the states for delivering them the goods and tried to

capture their control. The process of green revolution unleashed a wave of prosperity among this new class which consolidated their grip in the states and insisted on their greater autonomy.

This new consciousness gave the people an awareness of the widespread regional disparities prevailing in the vast sub-continent due to geographical and historical reasons. During the early British period the three Presidency towns of Kolkata (Calcutta), Mumbai (Bombay) and Chennai (Madras) got the benefits of British trade and commerce as major ports. They also got the benefits of early industrialisation. The united Punjab got the benefit of irrigation works undertaken by the British rulers. Subsequently, particularly, in the twentieth century, industries spread to some other British towns like Ahmedabad, Nagpur and Jamshedpur. Some of the cities of the advanced princely states, like Baroda and Bangalore, developed still later. Development was in fragments and unevenly spread. In the post-independence period too development planning remained uneven at least until the Fourth Five-Year Plan. Meanwhile, the green revolution in agriculture started in selected places like north western India. The areas neglected by early planning, like north-east India, became the centres of poverty and protest.

Even the developed regions had their own complaints. Thus Punjab bore two grudges with the economic scenario. It protested against levy on crops, charges on electricity and water supplied from the major irrigation projects and the absence of the freedom to trade with foreign countries in their agricultural products. It also complained about the lack of industrialisation of the region due to the non-availability of investment in industry of the region. A more or less similar demand is now working behind the movement for a Harit Pradesh in western Uttar Pradesh.

Developmental work, following intensification of administration, spread education and political consciousness, brought about a new social revolution. A new group of literati came to lead the respective communities. Self-government for them would mean more jobs, even as politicians, more power for the people and their community/regional leaders and more fund for developments. This aspect gets revealed by the fact that, though a Union territory status was enough for region to attain and maintain its political identity from the neighbourhood, a statehood would give them power. Thus Manipur and Tripura in 1972, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 1986 and Goa in 1987 attained statehood from the status of the Union territory. Delhi achieved a special status among the Union territories in 1991. Its attainment of full statehood is a burning question now.

5.4 STATEHOOD AND POWER

5.4.1 The Horizontal Problems of Statehood

Awareness about state autonomy has produced several political problems, both horizontal, that is, among the states and vertical, that is between the Union and the states. In fringe areas and cities of most of the states live substantial population of linguistic (and religious) minorities. Their relations with the majority groups are not always happy. In some of the states of north-east India the inter-state borders contain rich forest resources on which the neighbours advance claims. Sharing of river water by states watered by big rivers have created enormous problems. Finally states reorganisation have occasionally changed the entire profile of a state creating revenue imbalance as in the case of Bihar after the separation of Jharkhand.

5.4.2 The Union-State Relations

The issue of power haunts the Union-state relations in the country too. Roughly, this problem may be treated under the following rubrics:

1) Ideological-political: In 1959 the first communist state Government in India – Kerala – was superseded because of ideological incongruity with the Union Government. In 1967, when a number of state governments came into existence, the Union-state relations became extremely strained with rapid supersessions of the state Governments. In 1977, when the Janata Party replaced the Congress at the Union Government, governments in eight states were superseded by one stroke. In 1980, when the Congress returned to the Union government, eight Janata Party governments were dismissed at one stroke.

   Gradually, however, as the single-party dominance came to end, and strong regional parties have come into existence. They tend to return to power through elections after their dismissal causing embarrassment to the Central Government. Parties have come to realise the futility of such power game. In 1993, in the Bommai case, the Supreme Court severely restricted the scope for such supersessions.

2) A related issue is what the states consider to be unnecessary intervention of the centre in the affairs of the states. Reservation of bills passed by the state legislatures by the Governors for the President's assent has created irritation among the states. In the late seventies the Union's decision to post its own security forces in the Union-run industries in the states created similar irritation.

3) But the most sustained conflict between the Union and the states relate to finance. The states' continuous and major complaint about the centre is that it has more money than it needs and more stingy about sharing its resources with the states than what is necessary. Further, when the centre shares money with the states, it does so inequitably. First, there is a complaint that the centre is step-motherly about the Opposition-ruled states. Second, the principle of division of money among the states is not equitable. The rich states claim that, as they have developed faster than many other states and they contribute more revenue to the centre, their share in central allocations should be proportionate to their performance and contribution to the centre. The poor states claim that, as they have been victims of a long period of deprivation, their distress should be adequately remedied and they should be granted subsidies through higher allocation.

5.4.3 Constitutional Amendments

Creation of new states and/or alteration of state boundaries, under Article 3 of the Constitution, do not require constitutional amendment as such. Whatever change is required to the provisions of the Constitution is effected through the Reorganisation Act itself. An exception was, however, made in the case of the large-scale reorganisation of states in 1956 when the seventh amendment to the Constitution was effected. It involved change of names of the states, transfer of territories, splits of existing Part A States, merger and split of Part B States, abolition of the categories of Part B and Part C States, conversion of Part D State of Andaman and Nicobar Island into a Union territory, conversion of several Part C States into Union territories, redesigning of the administration of Union territories, reallocation of seats in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) for the new states and certain related matters.

However, change in the Union-state relations has caused several amendments since 1954 (the Third Amendment Act). All these amendments, except the Forty-Second Amendment Act, were in the financial sphere. Though agriculture and industry other than defence industries and industries declared to be of national importance was originally left in the states' sphere, the third amendment transferred trade and commerce in production, supply and distribution of the products of any industry and imported goods of the same kind where their control by the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient to the public interest, food stuffs including edible oil seeds and oils, cattle fodder including oil cakes and other concentrates, raw cotton and cotton seed, and raw jute to concurrent jurisdiction of the centre and the states. By the sixth amendment (1956) the centre was given the power to tax sale and purchase of goods under inter-state trade and commerce. By the forty-sixth amendment (1982) the centre was given the power to tax sale and purchase under inter-state trade and commerce. These amendments indicated the expansive character of agriculture and animal husbandry requiring greater central intervention in their trade. The eightieth amendment in 2000, on the other hand, was the first attempt at forcing the centre to share with the states its enormous financial resources to an extent greater than before. But as you have studied in Unit 4, its authority in respect of division of financial resources among the states remains undiminished.

The Forty-Second Amendment Act (1976) effected a large number of changes in the Union-state political relations. It enabled the Union Government to deploy any of its forces or any other force subject to its control or any of their units in any state in aid of civil power and control their powers, jurisdiction, privileges and liabilities (Para 2A of the Union List). It also transferred a number of state subjects to the Concurrent List, namely, education (Concurrent List 25), forest (Concurrent List 17A), Protection of wild animals and birds (Concurrent List 17B) and weights and measures except establishment of standards which was already in the Union List (Concurrent List 33A).

These trends indicate enhancement of the centre's power over the years. Yet one hears fewer complaints from the states about the centre's excessive power now except occasionally of a 'step-motherly treatment' of the Opposition-ruled states. The political balance has changed in favour of the states.

5.5 SUMMARY

The state system in India has developed over a period of more than century. Having occupied various parts of the country, the British introduced measures to develop the state system in India. The Government India Act of 1935 was a culmination of such effects. Though the Constitution of Independent India has been affected by this Act, it is not the replica of the Act. There are enough provisions in the Constitution of India regarding different organs of the state system, nature of relations among various states and the States and Union. The arrangement of these relations can be altered according to provisions of the Constitution.

5.6 EXERCISES

1) Trace the method of British annexation of India.

2) Trace the evolving pattern of territorial arrangement of India under the British.

3) How did the Constituent Assembly of India arrange the territory of independent India?

4) Trace the reorganisation of states in independent India. What are the consequential problems of the reorganisation on inter-state relations?

5) How is the Union-State relation evolving in India? What, according to you, are the main reasons for demand of state autonomy?

6) What are the Constitutional amendments which shaped the Union-State relations in India?

UNIT 6   ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Structure

6.1   INTRODUCTION

Election is a device through which a modern state creates among its citizens a sense of involvement and participation in public affairs. A good electoral system is the bedrock of genuine representative government. Much depends on how the system operates in practice, whether competent and honest administrators free from political bias conduct elections efficiently and impartially. The absence of general confidence in the verdict of the ballot may destroy the faith of public in the democratic process. Stressing the importance of electoral process, Pollock observed, "Unless public elections are conducted with accuracy and efficiency, not only the public services are discredited but the whole democratic system is endangered."

India is a constitutional democracy with a parliamentary system of government, and at the heart of the system is a commitment to hold regular, free and fair elections. These elections determine the composition of the government, the membership of the two houses of parliament, the state and union territory legislative assemblies, and the Presidency and vice-presidency.

6.2 ROLE OF ELECTIONS IN DEMOCRACY

Nowadays, elections have emerged as an instrument of choice all over the democratic world. Elections serve as the basic mechanism for both electing and replacing ruling elites and for providing a regular and systematic succession in government. They help to determine how a country is governed and at the same time select who will exercise state power. Elections are also the principal mechanisms by which citizens hold governments accountable, both retrospectively for their policies and more generally for the manner in which they govern. Elections reinforce party activities and intensify political awareness of the people. They educate voters and grant legitimacy to government.

Although elections are considered as one of the core institutions in democratic polities, their misuse is not uncommon. Elections produce different outcomes in different systems of government. Leaders of all kinds, from military dictators to civilian autocrats, recognise the power and importance of elections in obtaining legitimacy to govern. Military or civilian leaders willing to run the country through undemocratic means, use elections as a tool for their continuation in power. These leaders make major efforts to manipulate elections.

However, in spite of all the shortcomings and inconsistencies of an electoral system, elections can decide important matters in any polity. Only elections establish that legitimate political power flows from below. Elections, then, are essential for democracy, but only when they are free and fair and devoid of irregularities and malpractices. Electoral malpractices not only negate the voting right of the people but also hamper the effort to institutionalise democracy.

Electoral corruption is a major type of political corruption. It thrives in a society in which the degree of political and administrative morality is low. The necessity of a transparent electoral system is one of the most important prerequisites for present day democratic practice in both developed and developing countries. Electoral corruption negatively influences the consolidation of democracy. Governments, claiming to be democratic, manipulate elections to cling to power. Electoral malpractices are the main source of misunderstanding between the ruling and opposition parties in many states and have often led to political crisis. In India, Jammu and Kashmir is the classic example in this regard.

6.3 ELECTION MACHINERY

Democratic practices are sustained and strengthened through elections. The authority vested with the conduct of elections should, therefore, be competent, effective, independent and impartial. The makers of the constitution of India had given the country an unified authority, Election Commission (EC), independent of the central and state governments, for organising elections to the Union and state legislatures. The powers of the EC are essentially administrative and marginally adjudicative and legislative. Its triple powers have so far been exercised without ever being objected to by the judiciary. It was initially envisaged to be a single member Commission. The EC was enlarged in October 1993 with the appointment of two ECs (Election Commissioners). The President appoints the CEC (Chief Election Commissioner) and ECs. The Tarkunde Committee in 1975 and the Goswami Committee in 1991 suggested that the President should make appointment to the EC on the advice of a Committee comprising the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister, and the Chief Justice of India.

In the first three decades after independence, EC's role was peripheral because there was little malpractice and violence. Towards the end of eighties, Mandal and Mandir issues emerged on the political scene and the politics of consensus collapsed. Politicisation on caste and communal lines took the centre-stage. Electoral process was vitiated and the violence, rigging, intimidation of voters and misuse of governmental machinery became common. The situation called for prompt reforms in the electoral process. However, despite expression of serious concern by politicians of all hues, no substantial reform was effected. The EC had no option but to resort to the use of its constitutional and legal powers in the interest of free, fair and peaceful election. It has fought many battles in the apex courts of the country against forces inimical to the healthy democratic development. The EC unhesitatingly ordered repolls at polling stations and whole of constituencies if the original poll was vitiated. Elections were countermanded because of booth capturing, rigging and violence on a massive scale, in several constituencies over the years. The model code of conduct is being strictly enforced by the EC. The election law is also being implemented effectively for disciplining the candidates and parties. The effective enforcement of election law and model code of conduct by the EC had salutary effects in the conduct of elections since 1990s. The credit for improving the functioning of election machinery in the country is mainly attributed to T.N. Seshan, former CEC.

6.4 ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND PROCESS

Elections are part of a larger political process, which includes nominations, campaigning, and the actual voting. In brief, all those means whereby a person becomes a member of an elected assembly can be termed as the electoral process. W.J. Mackenzie has laid down four conditions for free and fair election, namely, an independent judiciary to interpret electoral law; an honest competent, non-partisan administration to conduct elections; a developed system of political parties, well enough organised to put their policies, and teams of candidates before the electors as alternatives between which to choose; and a general acceptance throughout the political community of certain rules of the game, which regulate the struggle for power. No developing countries can claim to meet these conditions fully. However, India comes closest to meeting them in comparison to others. It can rightly boast of an independent judiciary and a non-partisan election administration. Although India cannot claim to have a developed system of political parties, there is a general acceptance of certain rules of the game, which has gained deeper roots with time.

Elections have acquired a central place in the Indian political system. The campaigns are marked with intense political debates, symbolic processions and increasing use of electronic technology by major political parties. Visual symbols acquire greater importance in India due to widespread illiteracy. Voters identify the candidate with the help of the symbols allotted to them. Issues in form of slogans become critical at times like *garibi hatao* (remove poverty) in 1971, *loktantra bachao* (save democracy) in 1977, stable government in 1980, corruption in terms of Bofors scandal in 1989, mandal-mandir controversy in 1991. Argument over ideology or policy issues are debated during campaigns as all parties make almost similar promises to eradicate poverty and unemployment, combat corruption, preserve national unity, etc. Despite poverty and illiteracy the people have displayed maturity of judgement through their native intelligence and common sense in choosing, and also changing the government according to their choice.

6.5 ELECTION IN INDIA: AN EXERCISE ON MASSIVE SCALE

Elections are the great public ceremonies of Indian life. In India, the elections are massive spectacles mobilising millions of people into the political process. They are, thus, not only great festivals providing entertainment and excitement for virtually the entire population but have also acquired what Albinski and Pettit have termed as "a sacramental or commemorative aspect" and has become "a conspicuous symbol of nationhood and social purpose." In the words of Morris Jones and Biplab Das Gupta, "Elections in India provide the occasion for the widest degree of popular participation; they constitute the most important single arena for genuine competition between political groups; they are the principal agency through which recruitment to a significant part of the political elite is affected." The elections tend to be complex events in India since they involve individual and collective decisions and directly affect the total political and social process. Unlike most of the new states in the developing countries, elections in India have been central, not peripheral to the system.

6.6 VOTING PATTERN

The General Election is considered as a sacred process that not only ratifies the principle of democracy generally but it strengthens the pillars of Indian democracy as well. The voting pattern shows that the percentage of female voters who cast their votes has significantly increased from 46.63 per cent in the third General Election to 55.64 per cent in 1999 election. A look at the results of the last five General Elections reveals that there is a decline in the performance of the national parties taken together both in terms of total number of seats won as well as their vote share. Regional parties gained at the cost of national parties during this period. This is one of the factors that have contributed to federal coalition governments in the recent past. All the regional parties put together could get only 27 seats in 1989 elections. They improved their tally to 51 in 1991 and 129 in 1996. But there was a decline in seat share to 101 in 1998 and subsequently an increase 158 in 1999. There was a corresponding increase in their vote share also. In 1989 their vote share was 9.28 per cent of the total valid votes polled. But it increased 26.93 per cent in the 1999 polls. National Parties always got a higher percentage of seats compared to their vote share. Regional parties and independents were the losers who could get lesser percentage of seats compared to their vote share.

Elections are political processes, which provide a link between the society and the polity and between the traditional social systems and evolving political structures. Therefore, the elections must be analysed within the context of the total political and social system. Elections perform different roles in different political systems. They may contribute to political development in some, to political decay in others. They may sometimes be used as veiled disguises for authoritarianism. In established democracies, there are institutional procedures for system maintenance and also the instruments for support building, interest aggregation, peaceful and orderly transfer of power, recruitment and training of leaders, and above all for an increasing democratisation of the political system. Thus, the elections are devices for legitimacy, identification, integration, communication, political education, participation, socialisation, mobilisation, conflict resolution, political choice, and political control. Elections induct an element of accountability

into a political system and make it possible for the citizens to exercise a genuine and meaningful degree of political choice and control. This, in turn, makes the system itself a democratic and effective instrument of governance.

6.7   DETERMINANTS OF ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR

Election studies show that a combination of factors determines the electoral behaviour. These factors include mainly religion, language, region, caste, tribe, etc. In Punjab the religious, linguistic and regional factors have been used by the Akali Dal to garner votes. The regional and linguistic factors were used to mobilise votes in Tamil Nadu by the DMK, AIADMK, in Andhra Pradesh by the in Telugu Desam, in Assam by AGP. With increased democratisation and politicisation, the political parties have tried to exploit the caste factor for election purpose, which in turn enables elite group of castes to get inducted into the political process. In fact, caste is the most commonly used factor of mobilisatiom. It does, however, not mean that all the castes or even an entire caste becomes politicised or mobilised to influence the political system.

The caste associations in India began much before independence as agents of Sanskritisation seeking to secure educational, service and other facilities to raise the status of their caste in social hierarchy. But their post-independence role has become much more important and complicated since now they combine the roles of pressure groups in economic and political field as well. The caste associations have made people conscious of their rights and privileges. Their most important contribution lies in making the illiterate masses participate effectively in politics. Through this process, politicisation of caste has reached a stage where not only is the caste regarded as one of the main issues for deciding in favour of a candidate by the voters but caste is also one of the most important variables in the distribution of election tickets and formation of ministries. Thus, the caste connections of leaders, command over their caste men and the ability to form coalitions of castes for the purpose of political gains came to play significant roles. With the introduction of universal adult franchise, the dalits and other backward castes became conscious of their potential power due to their sheer numerical size.

Caste solidarity has acquired tremendous importance. People tend to vote either for a party with which their caste or sub-caste is identified, or for a respected member of their caste, irrespective of his/her party affiliation. What Paul Brass had observed in 1965 in the context of state election is now relevant in the context of national election; "The role of caste in elections is easily the most discussed aspect of contemporary Indian political behaviour." The interaction between caste and electoral politics has resulted in traditionalisation of politics, on the one hand, and politicisation of caste, on the other. According to Rajni Kothari, "The alleged casteism in politics is thus no more and no less than politicisation of caste. By drawing the caste system into its web of organisation, politics finds material for its articulation and moulds it into its own design. In making politics their sphere of activity, caste and kin groups, on the other hand, get a chance to assert their identity and to strive for positions." In the democratic process politics has penetrated into the remote villages of India. Political consciousness and participation have increased among all segments of the society awakening them to the power of their votes in determining the fate of political leaders. Thus, at times electoral process has been the route to social mobility as in the case of Yadavs in UP and Bihar. Awakened to its political weight by force of numbers, the community has dominated the political scene in the states since mid

1980s. The logic of electoral politics has also compelled the political parties to broaden their social or caste base. Thus, anti-high caste parties like the DMK and BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) had to co-opt the higher castes to make their regional identity more inclusive, while the upper castes and urban parties like the BJP have to reach out to the middle and lower castes and rural periphery to challenge the Congress dominance.

The acceptance of universal adult franchise and extension of political power to the common man by the Indian constitution, irrespective of caste, community and sex was a revolutionary step. There have been changes of government both at the Centre and in the states several times through the election process. By political participation one may refer to those legal activities by citizens which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and policy decisions.

The robustness of democratic institutions depends on three interrelated phenomenons. First, there must exist a cadre of political activists who are committed to democratic principles and compete among themselves for capturing political power within the confines of democratic rules of the game. Second, there must be available an institutional structure that facilitates articulation of divergent public policies and promotes smooth transformation of inputs into appropriate systemic outputs. And lastly, there must exist a generalised commitment to democratic values and norms on the part of the general public.

The most fundamental reality of the Indian society is the overwhelming poverty. A vast multitude of Indians is unemployed and underemployed. The rate of literacy is very low. The illiteracy among the dalits and the poor is almost total. It is this vast ocean of humanity living in the rural India, which constitutes the basic reality of India. It is this majority of population living below and just above the poverty line which has the major share of votes in the Indian elections. Poor, illiterate, superstitious with a sense of belonging only to the caste or religion, and with no access to proper communication, except occasionally the government run broadcasting system, this enormous human wave is being driven to the polling station, every now and then to cast its sovereign will.

It is mainly on this section of the population that the outcome of the election really depends. The election thus becomes an occasion when their consent is manipulated not to promote their interest but to sustain a political system that expects them to surrender their sovereign right. This is clearly reflected in the class nature of the electoral slogans as well as the performance of the parties once they come into power. The 'socialistic pattern' benefited the private sector more; and nationalisation of banks really meant more capital becoming available to the big business houses.

The dominant social groups often infringe upon the rights of the dalits, lower backwards and other disadvantaged groups. The most common method adopted is a simple one of voting by proxy; the labourers leave the choice to the landowner, who advises and persuades them not to go to the booth as their votes would be cast. In case they are undecided and look like voting for someone other than the choice of the landowner, they are prevented from voting. Such practice has been going on almost since the beginning of election in India, but more openly and on a larger scale since the sixties, with the emergence of the rural elite of landlords and kulaks as an influential lobby at the state politics.

The political parties and their leaders too all along have adopted a policy of non-interference in the rural sector so as not to annoy the land owning classes, without whose help and feudal vote banks, a candidate could not hope to win. By and large, this forms the basis of the voting pattern in the rural India. The feudal patron-client relations have not yet been replaced, though there is a trend towards their erosion in certain parts of the country. This manifests in the social life as a close nexus between class, caste and citizenship and strengthens the operation of vote banks and vote contractors in the Indian electoral politics. Role of caste and religion are very important in this context.

6.8   CASTE AS A DETERMINANT OF ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR

Caste has always played a decisive role in the electoral politics in India. While the higher caste Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs have dominated the politics of several parts of India, the middle castes like Jats, Marathas, Yadvads, Reddies, Kammas, Vokkaliggas, etc., emerged powerful caste groups as a result of land reforms and Green Revolution. In the recent past even dalits, especially in North India have become an important and decisive caste group. The rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh is the most important example of increasing role of dalits. The caste groups, infact, have come to known as the "vote banks" of political parties in the light of their support to the parties.

Caste loyalties are to be exploited by the respective caste elites for their class interests. At the time of elections when it becomes more a question of number game, the caste groups seek to mobilise the support of not merely their own caste members but also those of others. Caste plays its role both in both ways — in the unorganised way and in the form of caste association caste. According to some scholars caste plays a secular role in Indian democracy. It has absorbed and synthesised some of the new democratic values, and has lost its ritual significance. In the democratic process caste affects the democracy and gets itself affected in turn.

Rudolph and Rudolph say that there are three types of mobilisation on the basis of caste: vertical, horizontal and differential. Vertical mobilisation is the marshalling of the political support by traditional notables in local societies that are organised and integrated by rank, mutual dependence and the legitimacy of traditional authority. Horizontal mobilisation involves the marshalling of political support by class or community leaders and their specialised organisations. Differential mobilisation involves the marshalling of direct or indirect political support by political parties and other integrative structures from viable but internally differentiated communities through parallel appeals to ideology, sentiment and interest.

Even the communists in India used caste idioms for mobilising the class of agricultural labourers in Andhra Pradesh, on the ground of caste-class correspondence. The functioning of the various political parties proves the vital role of the caste. In the selection of the candidates, formulation of campaign strategies and mobilisation of votes on the basis of caste show that political parties show the significance of caste in political mobilisation. The coming together of various middle and lower castes on the basis of the common interest of the peasantry class has helped the communist to further consolidate themselves.

6.9 DRAWBACKS OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The working of Indian electoral system has witnessed several drawbacks and malpractices. The discrepancy between the votes cast for a party and the seats won in parliament, the multiplicity of political parties, personality cult in party system, exploitation of caste and communal loyalties, role of muscle and money power, misuse of governmental machinery, fraudulent practices like booth-capturing, intimidation and impersonation of voters are important drawbacks of Indian electoral system.

Election malpractices range from the physical capturing of booths to the organisation of youth wings of parties or goon squads who could target and terrorise particular communities before the poll to prevent them from voting. Even the poll staff is either bribed into active connivance or intimidated into passive acquiescence. The menace of booth capturing has been in vogue since the second general election of 1957, especially in Bihar. The phenomenon gradually spread over the country in different forms and dimensions.

The rising need for the muscle power in elections necessitated more input of money too. Earlier voters used to be bribed individually, then it was found to be more convenient to buy musclemen who could ensure victory by capturing booth or intimidating voters rather than buying individual voters. This has led to progressive criminalisation of politics and the emergence of politician-underworld nexus. Gradually, the criminals themselves have started contesting elections instead of helping others. At times, the politicians found it necessary to politicise the bureaucracy. This can be gauged from the scale on which most of the high officials are changed with the change of a government. This is done to condition the bureaucracy to act in favour of the ruling party during elections. The official machinery is used to collect information on political rivals. The official machinery come handy in hiring crowds, intimidating targeted sections of voters, creating local tensions, conditioning staff for poll duties, enrolling additional voters or removing certain names from there, etc. They also, in turn, allow the bureaucracy to make money so that they remain vulnerable. In the process significant sections of bureaucracy get incorporated into the politician-underworld-bureaucracy nexus. In its efforts to cleanse the electoral process, the EC has put a ban on transfers and promotions after the elections are announced. Although significant, the measure is of limited value as the final dispositions of the bureaucracy are usually made much in advance. Other practices of misuse have also been banned under model code of conduct that has come to be more strictly enforced since T.N. Seshan days.

Electioneering tends to be an expensive exercise. In a vast country like India this is more so because the electoral constituency is usually very large both in terms of size and population. With mass illiteracy, a candidate is required to make extensive personal contacts with the voters, which involve enormous expenditure. One important reason for the elections to have become so expensive in our times is the growing distance of political parties from the people. Transport, publicity and maintaining the campaigners involve enormous amount. The desire to win an election at any cost and the increasing reliance on the muscle power in elections have necessitated unbelievably enormous expenditures collected through dubious means, by the political parties and their candidates.

The gap between expenses incurred in an election and legally permitted limit on expenses is also increasing with time. Ceilings on campaign expenses being low, black money in form of donations to election fund of political parties or powerful leaders have come to be an established fact. It is estimated that 90 per cent of all election funds comes from the big business houses in expectation of special favours or patronage. This not only eliminates men and women of ability and integrity from electoral contest for lack of financial support but also promotes criminalisation of politics.

6.10 ELECTORAL REFORMS

The need of electoral reforms was felt quite early in India. The various committees and commissions appointed by the parliament, government and opposition parties have made attempts in this regard. First such major effort for electoral reforms was made in 1971, when a Joint Parliamentary Committee on Amendments to Election Law was appointed under the chairmanship of Jagannath Rao, which submitted its report in 1972.

In 1974, Jayaprakash Narayan as president of the Citizens for Democracy (CFD) set up a committee under the chairmanship of Justice V.M. Tarkunde for electoral reforms. This committee popularly known as Tarkunde committee was asked to suggest measures to combat among other things the various forms of corrupt practice like the use of money and muscle power, misuse of official machinery and the disparity between the votes polled and the number of seats won, etc. Tarkunde committee submitted its report in February 1975. On the basis of this report, J.P. launched the people's movement against corruption and for electoral reforms and presented the People's Charter to the presiding officers of both Houses of Parliament on March 6, 1975. Urging the Parliament and assemblies to be more responsive to popular aspirations, the charter demanded that the unanimous recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms be implemented without delay.

The Janata Party after assuming power in 1977 constituted a cabinet sub-committee on electoral reforms headed by the then Union Home Minister Charan Singh. At the same time, the CEC S.L. Shakdhar made significant suggestions on various issues ranging from election expenses to booth capturing. An agreement to reduce voting age from 21 to 18 years was also reached. But the Janata Party government fell before it could initiate any electoral reform.

The National Front government under V.P. Singh in January 1990 formed another committee on electoral reforms headed by the then Law Minister Dinesh Goswami. The committee did laudable and prompt work and submitted its report in May 1990. On the basis of the proposals therein, the government introduced four bills in the Parliament to give effect to its recommendations. But this government also fell before these bills could be enacted.

The Narasimha Rao government convened a special session of the Parliament to get two bills; the Constitution Eighty- Third Amendment Bill 1994 and the Representation of the People Second Amendment Bill, 1994, passed. However, the bills were withdrawn before introduction. The United Front coalition government succeeded in getting the Representation of the People Second Amendment Act enacted in July 1996. The important provisions of the act are as follows:

1) Candidates will not be allowed to contest more than two seats at a time.

2)   Non-serious candidates will be deterred from contesting parliamentary and assembly elections through a ten-fold increase in the security deposit from Rs. 500 to Rs. 5000.

3)   Elections will not be countermanded because of the death of a candidate. In the case of a candidate of a recognised political party, the party will have the authority to nominate a replacement within seven days. No such replacement will be allowed in the case of an independent.

4)   The campaign period is reduced from 21 days to 14 days.

The reforms though minimal to begin with can pave the way for more through and comprehensive overhauling of the electoral machinery and process. The following measures can be suggested for electoral reform.

6.10.1   Change in the Electoral System

An electoral system must be truly representative. However, there is a wide gap between the votes polled and seats won in present system where no single party has ever won a majority of votes in any Lok Sabha election but has been able to capture absolute and even two third majority several times. Over the years, the system has come under severe criticism. Opinions have been expressed to change it to a system of proportional representation. L.K. Advani and C.P. Bhambhri advocated proportional representation way back in 1970; the Tarkunde committee recommended a variant of the German system in 1975. Former CECs S.L. Shakdhar and L.P. Singh have argued for a combined system of voting in which 50 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies would be filled by direct voting and the remaining on the basis of proportional representation. Tarkunde committee had also suggested combining the present Indian system with a German list system.

6.10.2   Restructuring the Election Commission

One of the basic proposals of those advocating electoral reforms since long had been that of making Election Commission a multi-member body. The Tarkunde and Goswami committees advocated three members EC. Most of the CECs have opposed it on the ground that quick decisions are sometimes required in electoral matters, which may be impeded by multi-member commission. With the 1993 Constitution Amendment Act and the 1995 Supreme Court judgement, multi-member commission has become an accomplished fact. However, the manner in which the ECs are appointed and the provision of majority decision under Art. 324A raise the suspicion that the executive may appoint as many ECs as would constitute a majority and would thus control the commission's decision. A statutory requirement of consulting the Chief Justice of India and the leader of the opposition prior to the appointment of the CEC and ECs can ensure a non-partisan character of the EC. A ban on all post-retirement appointments by the government will eliminate the tendency and possibility of the CEC and ECs pleasing the government by going out of way.

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6.10.3 Eradicating the evil influences of Money and Muscle Power

To check the increasing influence and vulgar show of money, law should fix reasonable ceiling on election expenses and strict compliance of such law should be enforced as was done during T.N. Sheshan's tenure as the CEC. State funding of elections, which has been recommended by all the committees on electoral reforms, should be introduced to curb the menace of money in elections. To prevent growing criminalisation and violence there is an urgent need to implement the EC's proposal of keeping out persons with proven criminal records from electoral context. Model code of conduct should be enforced strictly. Gradually, ways and means must be found to implement the voters' right to recall as well as the right to reject candidates.

The electoral process cannot be cleansed merely by legal measures. The electoral process is influenced and determined by the political culture of the political system, which cannot be reformed by legislative acts. The enlightened citizens who are prepared to uphold political norms and punish those who violates them can be an effective instrument for clean electoral politics. Bolstering the intermediary political and civic institutions, whose collapse has accelerated electoral malpractices, can also be effective in removing the ills of electoral process. However, the strong political will and people's initiative is needed to get rid the electoral of from several defects from which it is suffering.

6.11 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the role of election in ensuring people's participation in the political system and strengthening democracy. Election can also weaken democracy, if polls are not free and fair. Therefore, our constitution makers have provided for impartial election machinery, free from executive control to conduct elections for Union and State legislatures and President and Vice-President. Elections in India are an exercise on massive scale involving millions of voters, poll personnel, security men etc.

Caste, community, religion, language, region, etc., are the main determinants of electoral behaviour. However, caste plays the most dominant role in election. Different political parties nominate candidates on the basis of caste composition of the concerned constituency and voters are mobilised on the basis of caste. Even after election caste is given due consideration in ministry formation. Thus, Indian election cannot be understood without properly understanding the role of caste in election.

Elections in India have been marred by the evil influences of money and muscle power. This has led to criminalisation of electoral politics. Earlier criminals used to lend outside support but now they themselves have entered in the electoral arena and have become not only members of the house but even have become ministers. Thus we have a new phenomena in Indian politics 'tainted ministers.' To check the rot, several committees and commissions have been appointed for electoral reforms. These committees have suggested several measures; some of them have been adopted also. But still a lot has to be done to stem the rot. However, law alone cannot clean the electoral system. Vigilant public opinion is also required. People have to be sensitised about the malaise of the electoral process. Only then, free and fair poll can be conducted, which will lead to strengthening of democracy in India.

6.12 EXERCISES

1) Critically examine the role of election in democracy and evaluate the role of Election Commission of India in conducting free and fair poll.

2) What are the important determinants of electoral behaviour in India? Critically discuss the role of caste as a determinant of voting behaviour.

3) What are electoral reforms? Discuss the various efforts made for electoral reforms.

4) Explain the increasing role of money and muscle power in election. What measures can be adopted to curb its menace?

5) Explain the politician-underworld-bureaucracy nexus and its impact on the electoral process in India.

UNIT 7 POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

Structure

7.1   INTRODUCTION

Party system in a democracy normally refers to the pattern of interaction and competition between political parties. In India the pattern of interaction and competition among political parties has given way to the multi-party system. This kind of characterisation of the party system is, however, more accurate as of now than that existed a few decades ago. What existed then was the impeccable hegemony of the Congress Party and this was well characterised by Kothari and Jones as a 'dominant party system' that is a multiparty system, in which free competition among political parties occurred but it was the Indian National Congress which enjoyed a dominant position both in terms of the number of seats it held in the parliament and the state legislative assemblies, and in terms of its immense organisational strength. Kothari coined the term the 'Congress System' and Jones called it a 'Congress Dominated System'.

Enormous changes have taken place in the party system in recent years. These changes started taking place from 1967 onwards but these have become much more pronounced since the late eighties and early 1990s. The party system has moved away from a one party dominated system to a multi-party system. It is also referred to as a federalised party system or a coalitional party system. This party system is marked by the presence of a dwindled Congress Party, a significant but inadequate growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and an enormous increase in the strength of the regional and state parties in national politics. We shall, in this unit, concern ourselves mainly with the party systems that had emerged and developed at the state level in the Indian union. But before doing so, we look at regional and state parties in brief since they have grown enormously in recent years and play a crucial role in shaping the party system in many of the Indian states.

7.2   REGIONAL AND STATE PARTIES

The question that one confronts in the beginning is how to define a regional and a state based party? Though the definition provided by the Election Commission on regional parties is accepted

widely in it is the academic circles, the Commission does not use the term regional parties. Instead it uses the term state parties. It classifies political parties into three categories — national, state and registered parties. Its definition of state parties is the most elaborate. In this definition a party to be called a state party must have been engaged in political activity for at least five years and must have won either four per cent of the seats in a general election or three per cent in a state election. In addition it must have had the support of six per cent of the votes cast. In its definition of a national party, it says that a party which is recognised as a state party in four or more states is a national party. A registered party is a party that is neither recognised as state or a national party but is registered with the Election Commission. Such parties are also termed as unrecognised parties.

The definition as provided by the Election Commission of a regional party is not very satisfactory. Since the definition takes into consideration the past performance of a political party, it is not accepted as a proper definition by the academicians. They consider those parties as regional parties whose bases and activities are restricted to a particular state and rooted in both regional aspirations and grievances. The support base of a regional party is limited to a particular state because it identifies itself with the region's culture, language, religion, etc. It also presents the regional perspective vis-à-vis the centre and other states. These parties use 'region' and 'language' effectively for electoral benefits. A political party, to be recognised as a regional party must satisfy three specific criteria. First, a regional party restricts its area of action to a single region which, in the prevailing Indian situation means a state. Secondly, the parties of this kind typically articulate and seek to defend a region based-ethnic or religio-cultural identity. And thirdly, by their very nature, regional parties are primarily concerned with the local or state level grievances.

There is a tendency among some scholars to include among the regional parties those parties which have an all India perspective but are confined to one state like the Forward Bloc(FB) in West Bengal or the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Maharashtra. Oliver Heath and Yogendra Yadav consider those parties as regional parties whose social bases are restricted to one or two states. The fundamental problem in this definition is that it does not take into consideration the ideology of parties. This definition takes into consideration only the social base of a party and its area of operation.

7.3   PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIAN STATES

State party systems in India have developed in close connection and interaction with the national party system. Closeness of relationships between the state party system and the national party system has been termed as the combination of the state party systems by some observers in the recent years. This is natural considering that India consists of different states. The changes in the national party system have affected the state party systems, and in turn transformation in the nature of party competition at the state level had affected the national party system substantially. The second development, however, is more pronounced in recent years because of the spectacular growth of the regional and state parties in Indian politics. In this section we shall make an attempt to see the transformation that has taken place in the state party systems in the recent times.

7.3.1 The Era of Congress Dominance

The party system in India before 1967 has been as a system of Congress dominance. It has been also referred to as the "Congress Dominated System" or the "Congress System". Till the fourth general elections which were held in 1967 state party system in India, like that of the national party system, was dominated by the overwhelming presence of the Congress Party. The Congress Party dominated in almost all the states. But the domination of congress was not uniform in all states. The Congress, for example, had to face the toughest competition in the former princely states that acceded to the Indian Union after 1947 whereas in other states it almost had an impeccable hegemony. It ruled almost all the states except Jammu and Kashmir where the National Conference had a domineering presence. Kerala was also an exception because in the second general elections in 1957, the CPI emerged victorious and formed a government along with its allies for two years till it was dissolved arbitrarily in 1959.

A quick reference to some data will help illustrate this point. The Congress was such a dominant force that it secured comfortable majorities in almost all the elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies in 1952, 1957, 1962. Though it never secured more than 48 per cent of the votes in the Lok Sabha elections (the highest being 47.78 in 1957), it always secured comfortable majority in terms of seats (364 seats in 1952, 371 seats in 1957 and 361 in 1962). In the State assemblies, except for a few, it secured comfortable majorities almost in all the assembly elections. It secured 42.2 per cent of votes and 68.4 per cent of seats in 1952, 44.97 per cent of votes and 64.9 per cent of seats in 1957 and 43.65 per cent votes and 61.3 per cent of seats in 1962. Electoral data thus indicate that the performance of the Congress in the Assembly elections was slightly poorer than the Lok Sabha elections. This was because of the nature of resistance offered by the opposition which included the state and regional formations. Opposition to the Congress for the assembly elections was much more severe than that of the Lok Sabha elections.

Let us briefly refer to this position of dominance across some of the bigger Indian states while referring to its performance in the assembly elections. In Uttar Pradesh assembly elections between 1952 and 1962, the party secured between 47.9 and 36.3 per cent votes. It captured between 390 to 249 seats, out of a total 430 seats. In Bihar, in the same period the party secured between 41.4 per cent to 42.1 per cent votes but between 72.2 per cent and 58.1 percent seats. Similarly, in West Bengal, the Congress secured between 38.9 and 47.3 per cent of votes and between 63 per cent to 62.3 per cent seats. In Andhra Pradesh, after the state was formed it secured between 41.7 per cent to 47.3 per cent votes in 1955-57 and 1962 and 187 to 177 seats (out of a total 300). In Tamil Nadu the party enjoyed a dominant position in the assembly elections of 1957 and 1962. It secured between 45.3 per cent and 46.1 per cent votes and captured between 67.4 per cent to 73.6 per cent seats. In Maharastra the party secured 48.7 per cent to 51.2 per cent of votes in 1952 and 1962. Thus it is clear that the Congress Party enjoyed a dominant position in the electoral politics of the states in the Indian Union, even though it was hardly able to secure the majority of the votes. In fact, it won a majority of seats in the assemblies of all the states on the basis of plurality of votes against a fragmented opposition.

7.3.2 The Breakdown of Congress System: 1967-1989

The dominance of the Congress in the states started crumbling from the mid of 1960s; the fourth general elections of 1967 marked the intensification of this change. The party system that emerged in the states after and continued till 1989 may be referred to as a bipolarised one in which a

depleted Congress Party was confronted with a united opposition in most of the states. The following pattern of bipolarisation was seen in the states for the general elections in the period from 1967-1989. In Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, the competition was between the Congress and the BJS/BJP. In Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal the competition has been between the Congress and Left. In Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Goa, a Congress-regional parties led alliance emerged, though the BJP also gained substantially. In the North-Eastern states the contest was mainly between the Congress and a variety of regional parties or their alliances. In Tamil Nadu, competition has been mainly between the DMK and the AIADMK. Finally in seven major states-Orissa, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat and Karnataka-the Congress retained preponderance. One can, however, add that even in these states opposition grew stronger as we shall notice later.

So far as the assembly elections are concerned, the following pattern of bipolarisation emerged after 1967. One may note that the votes of the Congress party declined much more drastically in the assembly elections than in the parliamentary ones. In Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, the non-Congress votes consolidated in favour of the BJS/BJP (Bharatiya Jana Sangha/Bhartiya Janta Party). The latter emerged as the second most important party. In Tamil Nadu, the principal contest was between the Dravidian parties. In Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Goa, a Congress–Regional party bipolarisation came into existence. Similarly in the North-East, a Congress-regional parties bipolarisation came into existence, though in this case the Regional parties were very unstable. Finally, in the seven states — Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka-Congress remained almost dominant.

Let us have a look at how these changes occurred. We shall refer mainly to the party systems that we witness in the state assembly elections. It has been noted earlier that the Congress had never secured more than 50 per cent of the votes either in the parliamentary or assembly elections except in some states but has always secured huge majorities in terms of seats. This is indicative of the fact that though significant opposition to the Congress existed at the state level due to fragmentation in their ranks and because of the rule associated with the "first past the post system," the Congress always emerged victorious in terms of seats. The 1967 election in fact put an end, at least for a temporary period, to this disunity in the opposition. The post-1967 period saw the emergence of anti-Congress alliances in state after state and this altered the nature of the contests particularly for the assemblies. These developments resulted in the defeat of the Congress in as many as eight out of sixteen states of the Indian Union. There was also a marked decline in the vote share of the Congress party in the parliamentary elections from 44.72 in 1962 to 40.7 per cent in 1967. In the legislative Assemblies, the decline was from 43.65 per cent to 39.96 per cent. As a consequence, the percentage of seats came down from 61.3 per cent to 48.5 per cent. The states entered into a bipolarised system, the principal contenders being the Congress and almost a united opposition in many of the prominent Indian states. This system continued almost till the end of the 1980s though on occasions (for example, in 1971 and 1972) the Congress was able to restore its predominant position at the central and to a lesser extent at the State level.

We also note that in the early 1970s the Congress was able to make a comeback after 1972 for a brief period. This position was soon lost by the party in the late 1970s. Let us have a brief look at the nature and pattern of party competition in some of the leading Indian states since the 1970s. This will help illustrate the point better. In Northern India, in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress,

from the assembly elections of 1974 onwards was never able to secure 40 per cent of the votes; not even in the elections of 1985 that were held after the parliamentary elections of 1984 in which the Congress recorded a landslide victory. One or the other parties like BJS/BJP, Janata Party/later the various factions of the Janata Party, Lok Dal etc., challenged the hegemony of the Congress. In 1974, the BJS increased its share of votes to 17.1 per cent and secured 61 seats in the Assembly. In the 1977 elections, the Congress was routed by the Janata Party. Through the Congress Party returned to power in 1980, it managed only 37.7 per cent of the votes. In 1985 the Congress could hardly manage 39.3 per cent of votes, though it secured the majority of the seats. The Lok Dal could wrest 21.3 per cent of votes and 84 seats.

In the West, in Maharashtra, strong challenge to Congress hegemony came in 1978 and later from the mid of the 1980s. In the 1978 assembly elections the Congress led by Indira Gandhi was routed. In the 1985 election though it secured a majority, it was the ICS and which that together captured around 24 per cent votes. Gujarat also moved closer to a bipolarised system one from the late 1960s. In the 1970s, the Indira Congress was challenged by the NCO [Indian National Congress (Organisation)] and the Janata Party in the election of 1985. In both the elections that were held in the 1970s, the NCO had secured more than 23 per cent of the votes though its seats tally was not very impressive in 1972. The Janata Party secured little less than 20 per cent votes in 1985 with only 14 seats in the 182 member assembly.

In central India, in Madhya Pradesh, the largest of the Indian states, the Congress was challenged by the BJS/BJP in 1972, 1980 and1985. It was challenged by the Janata Party in 1977. The BJS secured 28.7 per cent votes in 1980, the BJP secured 30.3 per cent and in 1985 it could secure 32.4 per cent votes. In the 1977 State assembly elections, the Janata Party had secured 47.3 per cent of votes and had formed the government with 230 members. In Bihar, between 1972 and 1985, the Congress never secured more than 35 percent votes except in 1985. There was a considerable challenge to it from the BJS/BJP, NCO, JNP, Independents, Lok Dal etc. In the south, in Tamil Nadu, the party competition since 1967 narrowed down to a two party competition, first between the Congress and the DMK and then between the DMK and AIADMK. In Andhra Pradesh, the Congress' popular votes share had started declining from the 1978 elections and entered into a bipolar competition from 1983 onwards. In West Bengal, the Congress lost its hegemonic position from 1967 onwards and saw bipolarisation from the elections of 1971. Thus in the country as a whole barring a few marginal states, that remained effectively under the control of the Congress, a bipolar system of party completion emerged. To a large extent the breakdown of the Congress system was the mair factor behind these developments.

7.4   TOWARDS FRAGMENTATION OF STATE PARTY SYSTEMS: 1989 ONWARDS

The party systems at both levels – national and states moved towards a fragmentation from the late 1980s or more particularly from the 1990s. What are the features of these fragmentary systems? At the national level there has been an end of the one party dominance and the movement towards a multi-party system; as you have read earlier this trend started in 1967 at the state level. However, the systems that exist in the states are different from the national level. Many states have moved towards a two party system and probably this is the most prominent feature of party competition at the state level.

At the national level in recent years competition has narrowed down to two different alliances, one led by the BJP and the other by the Congress. The 'Third Front' has petered out. At the state level the nature of competition differs. The competing parties differ from state to state but in most of the states it is a two party system. In many states it is a multi-party system where the important contenders are the Congress, the BJP and state or regional parties. In some of the states, the competition is primarily between state or regional parties, though national parties also occupy a significant space in those states. Now, let us turn to the reasons behind the emergence of this kind of systems in the states. There are multiple causes but the most important of them are the decline of the Congress in the states, the spectacular growth of the BJP particularly in the Hindi heartland and some other states and thirdly, the growth to prominence of regional and state parties. As mentioned earlier these trends had started much before the 1990s. Let us have a brief look at all these developments which preceded trends of the 1990s in brief and then turn to the salient features of the party systems that have emerged in the states since 1989.

The Congress Party had started declining since the late 1960s in the states but this decline became much more prominent in the late 1980s. We have seen earlier that the Congress that had enjoyed dominance at the state level for more than two decades gradually started declining after the death of Nehru. The decline of Congress became more spectacular after Indira Gandhi assumed the leadership of the party. There are numerous explanations for this. Zoya Hasan, for example, has argued that the Congress decline has complex causes and the central cause was the inability of the party to maintain the political bases of its coalition. It is true that the party's ability to mobilise voters at the lower level during the elections — whether at the state assembly or at the parliamentary elections declined significantly in the late 1980s and in the 1990s. Thus, the Congress became a much reduced force at the state level since the late 1980s.

The share of votes and seats, the Congress captured in the Lok Sabha and more particularly in the Assembly elections in the states sharply declined in the last decade of the twentieth century. Its performance in the Assembly elections in some of the prominent states will help illustrate the point. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, the biggest of the Indian states, the Congress remained a much reduced force with its vote share declining from 15.08 per cent in 1993 to 8.96 per cent in 2002. In Andhra Pradesh, the largest of the South Indian states, the Congress returned to power in 1989 but it lost in the 1994 elections and remained in opposition till of 2004. In Bihar, the votes of the percentage of the Congress slumped from 24.78 per cent in 1990 to 11.06 per cent in 2000 and the seats from 71 to 23 in the same period. Similarly, in Maharashtra it lost its hegemony in the 1990s completely. In 1990, it secured 38.17 per cent votes and 141 seats but this dropped to 27.20 percent votes and 75 seats in 1999. In Tamil Nadu, the Congress had lost its dominant position much earlier to the two regional forces, the DMK and the ADMK. Similarly in West Bengal, its decline was much more rapid in the late 1990s due to the split and the subsequent formation of the Trinamool Congress. In the 2001 elections, it could manage only 7.98 per cent vote and 26 seats against 39.45 per cent votes and 82 seats in 1996.

The expansion of the BJP in recent times has been much more dramatic than the decline of the Congress. The expansion has mainly been due to the decline of the Congress, the aggressive mobilisation strategy based around the ideology of Hindutva which it adopted from the late 1980s and its strategy of alliance formation. At the national level in the Lok Sabha, it increased its seats from a 2 in 1984 to 182 seats in the 1998 elections that catapulted it to the position of a ruling party. In 1999 it secured the same number of seats, though, along with its allies, it was

able to consolidate its position as a ruling party. However, this onward march of the BJP was halted in the 2004 general elections.

In the assembly elections the performance of the BJP in the 1990s was equally spectacular. It increased its share of votes and seats in some of the prominent Indian states. In Bihar it increased its share of seats from 39 and votes from 11.61 in 1990 to 14.64 per cent of votes and 67 seats in 2000. In Uttar Pradesh, in the 1990s its vote share and seat share remained almost the same (over 170 seats and 33 per cent votes) though it declined in the 2002 elections. In Gujarat, it increased its vote share from 26.69 per cent in 1990 to 44.81 per cent in 1998 and further to 49.85 per cent in 2002. This increase was also evident in many of the other Indian states. In some other states, it was able to form governments either alone like in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh in 1990 or in alliance with others like in Maharashtra with the Shiv Sena in 1995.

The third interrelated development that has taken place in the recent times is the expansion of regional and state parties largely at the cost of the Congress in the states. As a result, they have increased their presence in the national legislature since the 1996 elections and due to this they have come to play a very crucial role in the making and unmaking of governments at the central level. Election data indicate that these parties have secured an increasing presence in the Lok Sabha. In 1991, the regional parties (including some state parties) occupied 56 seats whereas in 1996 they came to occupy 137 seats, 161 seats in 1998, and 188 seats in 1999.

The increase in their strength in the state assemblies in recent years is much more remarkable. In 2002, in as many as twelve states of the Indian Union, regional parties (including state parties) occupied a prominent position in the state legislatures. Not only have these parties increased their presence in the state legislatures, but also formed governments at the state level in some of states in the 1990s. The Shiv Sena (SS) for the first time came to power in Maharashtra along with its ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1995. The Assam Gano Parishad (AGP) similarly returned to power for the second time in Assam in 1996. The National Conference (NC) came to power in 1996 with a large majority in Jammu and Kashmir. The Dravidian parties, the DMK and the AIADMK alternated power among themselves in Tamil Nadu in the 1990s. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) returned to power in 1995 and remained in office till 2004. The Akali Dal (AD) also formed a government in the state of Punjab in 1997 along with its ally, the BJP. Thus these parties were increasingly successful at the national and state level in the 1990s.

It is due to these interrelated developments that the party systems in the states had undergone significant transformation in recent years more particularly from 1989 onwards. From a system that was Congress — dominated (like that of the national party system) it has become fragmented (with features of bipolarity). In this fragmented system, the competition is primarily between two parties whether national or regional but — there are others who occupy a significant position in the party politics of the states. The competition at the state level in recent years and the party systems that has emerged as a result may be classified into four main categories. To the first category belong states like Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. These states are essentially two party states in terms of vote and seat share. Included in this category are West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Maharastra and Punjab which are essentially bipolar states. In these states either two alliances or one-party opposed by an alliance of two or smaller parties dominate party politics.

In the second category belongs to those states like Karnataka, Bihar and Orissa where there are three or more poles though it appears that in future it will drift towards a bipolar system either due to alliances or due to splits in existing parties. Thirdly, there are states like Uttar Pradesh where a four-cornered contest exists between the BJP, Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Indian National Congress. The fourth category belongs to those states in which a bipolar or two-party system exists but there is also an increasing growth of a third party. The third party may not be strong enough to capture large number of seats but has a significant vote share.

7.5   SUMMARY

In this unit we have principally analysed the party systems that emerged and developed at the state level in the India since independence with a focus on the transformations which has taken place recently. We confined our discussion to the broad features of the state party systems. We have also dealt with regional and state parties in brief since they have grown a great deal in recent years, and are playing a crucial role in shaping the party system in most of the Indian states.

We have noticed that the supremacy of the Congress party that existed for a few decades after independence at the centre and the states has come to an end. The party system changed from one party dominant system to multi – party system at the national level, a system that is noticeable by the presence of a dwindled Congress party, a significant but inadequate expansion of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and an enormous increase in the strength of regional and state parties in national politics. The changes started taking place since 1967 onwards but have become much more pronounced since the last two decades. Parallel to these changes at the national level, significant changes have taken place in recent years at the state level. From a system that was dominated by the Congress it has transformed into a fragmented (essentially with features of bipolarity). In this fragmented system the competition is primarily between two parties whether national or regional. There are indications that this fragmented system will stay and the possibility is that more and more states will move towards a bipolar part system.

7.6   EXERCISES

1)   State party systems in India have developed in close connection and interaction with the national party system. Discuss.

2)   Briefly analyse the era of Congress dominance.

3)   Examine the developments towards the multiparty system in India. Give an example.

UNIT 8 PATTERNS OF DISSENT AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN INDIAN STATES

Structure

8.1 INTRODUCTION

A large number of people are not satisfied with the existing pattern of relations. They find the economic, social, cultural and political aspects of these relations unjust and one-sided. People have protested in different states of India against such patterns of relations. The protest of people have taken the form of protest movements. In this unit you will study patterns of dissent and some protest movements in Indian states.

8.2 MEANINGS: DISSENT AND PROTEST

The history of human civilisation is marked by "dissents" and "protests" within human relationships and human groups and also between civil and political society. Dissent means disagreement or withholding assent. It has a negative connotation i.e. a dissenter is a non-conformist. During medieval period dissent was considered as sacrilege. However, in democracy it acquired a new meaning carrying the notion of radical and hence not conforming to the values that are either "authoritatively" allocated by the state or practiced by the civil society. Protest is something more than dissent. It emerges out from dissent and is a concrete form or expression of disapproval or objection. Protest and dissent are inseparable so much so that without dissent protest does not have any meaning. If both dissent and protest form the basis of human organisation into a group and with its own goal, leadership, certain degree of motivation and political communication,

it takes the shape of a movement. Movements entail collective action to transform and change the status quo. In a democratic society, such kinds of movements are referred to as "social movements" in general and since the later part of the twentieth century as "new social movements". These movements build upon various themes such as ecology, gender, human rights and so on, present a kind of pattern that requires incisive analysis. The protest is expressed against any form of domination and discrimination. The protest movements are movements against unjust and unequal order in social, economic, political or cultural form.

8.3   PROTEST MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The protest movements are forms of social movements. Some scholars like Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes differentiate between the social and political movements. The former are meant to change the patterns of relations in the social domain, and the latter are related to political aspects. But some scholars like Ghanshyam Shah argue that there is no difference between social and political movements; both are used synonymously. The study of social movements seeks to focus on political sociology, that is, the study of politics of the masses, their aspirations and demands, articulation of their problems, the modus operandi in asserting their demands outside the institutional framework and their occasional efforts at overthrowing the existing state power. Political scientists had largely ignored this area of study for greater understanding of political processes. The recent emphasis on social movements indicates a marked shift from positivism, institutionalism, constitutionalism and state-centricism perspectives towards a holistic understanding of social conflict and change.

The components of a social movement are the ideology, programmes, strategy, objectives of social change leadership and patterns of mobilisation. Social movements are usually specific to culture, history and social structure. Issues and strategies of movements are relative to societies and to their history. For instance, quest for freedom may become the central issue for the struggle of a collectivity in one society, in one period; the same quest may emerge in another society in another period. The mission in the movements is to reject or alter the past and present forms of norms and values of society to have a better society. The idea of 'social transformation' or 'change' is at the core of social optimism, and therefore, challenges the fixed notions of values, norms, power and hierarchy in the society. It aims for social optimism by 'deconstructing' the critical conflictual aspects.

The state perceives the protest and social movements as a challenge to its legitimacy of governance. So the immediate response of the State is negative and suppressive. If the intensity of the movements is high, the state uses various strategies and tactics to diffuse collective action by soft paddling and leniency involving dialogue and negotiation and appeasing and co-opting the participants. Rajni Kothari maintains that the transformation of the state is to be achieved through the transformation of the civil society through grass-roots model of mass politics as against the parliamentary or presidential or party model of mass politics. The role of the centrally coordinated decision making of the state must change to a more participative, operating in concert with other centers and institutional spaces in civil society. The State must wriggle out from the dominant interest and classes and maintain autonomy to effectively act as a mediator in conflicts and stresses of civil society. And, the concept of movement to be embedded in the

notion of going beyond the nation-state syndrome of statehood, in particular the national security state syndrome.

Ghanshyam Shah classifies movements into revolt, rebellion, reform and revolution to bring about changes in the political system. Reform seeks to change in the part of the system and does not challenge the political system per se; revolt poses a challenge to political authority, aiming at overthrowing the government; rebellion aims at attacking the existing authority without any intention to seize state power and in revolution, a section or sections of the society launch an organised struggle to overthrow not only the established government and regime but also socio-economic structure which sustains it, and replace the structure by an alternative social order. T. K. Oommen believes that social movements provide the stage for confluence between the old and new values and structures. M.S.A. Rao also offers a typology that movements as reformist, transformatory and revolutionary. David Baylely divides 'coercive public protest' into legal and illegal protest further, each category subdivided into violent and non-violent protests. Another classification may be grassroots and macro movements, or on the basis of issues around which participants get mobilised.

8.4 CHARACTERISTICS AND PATTERNS OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS

There has been a spurt of protest movements since the 1970s in different states of India. These movements have been identified as the new social movements by some scholars. They are new in the sense that they have emerged in new context, Gail Omvedt identifies the main characteristic of these movements as apolitical, with new organisation and leadership aiming to change the relations of dominance and subordination. But all protest movements can not be termed as new social movements, since they still raise the issues which are related to the traditional economic and social relations.

In almost all states of India there are some characteristics and patterns of protest movements. The principal patterns can be identified as follows:

1) Disenchantment with the formal political institutions,

2) Increased violence within the civil society

3) Failure of state to deliver public good and services

4) Emergence of new social and political forces, and

5) States' response in the form of coercion, accommodation and repression

Mass movements or protests are largely have got subsumed in the popular culture being promoted as the 'globalised culture'. The Marxist scholars attribute it to the 'multilineal character' and 'all pervasive hierarchy' of the Indian society. However, some scholars criticise this and say that the protest movements are the result of the clash between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. The revolution of rising expectations of people is not met with political justice and hence there emerges a gap between 'political instability' and 'disorder'. Rajni Kothari argues that there is a need for 'direct action' in such kind of 'parliamentary democracy', so that the state gets transformed. Thus, the transformation of the state is to be achieved through the transformation of the civil society and not the other way. The role of the centralised state must decline to the extent that it operates in

concert with other centers as well as other institutional spaces in civil society. The state should be enabled to regain its autonomy from dominant interests and classes; it should be gradually made to wither away as an instrument of class and ethnic oppression but enabled to survive as a mediator in conflicts and stresses that will continue to take place in civil society. There is also a need to move beyond the nation — state syndrome of statehood.

8.5   EXAMPLES OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS

There are large number cases of dissent and protest movements in several states of India. These movements include those of all sections society. Some of these want to change the pattern dominance and subordination; some want to reinforce their dominance by demanding more concessions from the state; some challenge even the notion of nation-state.

8.5.1   The Naxalite Movements

Different shades of naxalite movements express protest against three sources of exploitation i.e. the unequal and exploitative economic relations, the oppressive caste system and the Indian states. According to them the exploiting classes in collaboration with imperialist forces and using the feudal-capitalist ideologies exploit the poor people. The solution to the problem lies in overthrowing the existing political, social and economic system. They profess the use of violent means in achieving their goal. The naxalites have been against participating in elections. But some of them have changed their attitudes about elections and have participated the elections.

The naxalite movement, which started by Kanu Sanyal and Charu Mazumdar in Naxalbari area of West Bengal in 1967 spread into several states in some years. The principal states among these are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. But naxalites do not have wide spread social base in these states. They have strong pockets of support there. The main naxalite organisations are Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKs), the Marxist Coordination Committee (MCC) and the People's War Group. The naxalites have mobilised people on issues like increase in agricultural wages, land to the tiller. In Bihar, particularly, they have combined their struggle against class discrimination with the steuggle against caste oppression. They have targeted their class enemies with violence, including kidnapping.

8.5.2   The Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM)

Chhattisgarh, a region in Madhya Pradesh till 2000, and thereafter a state, is more known by its liberation front (Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha), a protest movement exposing the interface between governance and civil society, than by anything else. This movement informs us that the relationship between some sections of civil society and the government is not always reciprocal or complementary, and that it may well be conflictual. The deep fault lies within civil society, which exists between dominant and subaltern groups. Society is deeply conflictive and hierarchically organised sphere, wherein the "haves"— rich and upper caste groups – form the social basis of the State, while the other groups – "have-nots" – are oppressed both by the state and the dominant groups. It is this oppressed group which protests and challenges both sets of interest i.e. the interest of the dominant group and the state – in the form of a "social movement". The Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha clearly brings to light the rather truncated civil society, the top aligning with the political society. The Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha has thrown up an alternative,

in the sense of how a social movement can engender a new method of transforming society and shaping it in the modern mode.

The struggle of the workers in Chhattisgarh is rooted in the development and modernising project that denies them their basic rights and exploits them with pain and misery. It was with the establishment of the Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP) that new development took place in the socio-economic arena. The plant recruited only 10 per cent of the total 70,000 workers who were asked to perform casual manual work under hazardous conditions. The payment of wages to the daily casual workforce was erratic and much below the prescribed minimum wage. Even All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) that took the issue of low wages and exploitative work conditions failed to address the problems of casual workers. During this time, Shankar Guha Niyogi, who joined BSP (1961) as an engineering apprentice at the coke oven plant, founded the Blast Furnace Action Committee with 16 members and launched the struggle against the management by organising a number of strikes on the issue of remuneration. This was beginning of the first phase of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha.

Very soon, within seven years Niyogi was thrown out of BSP management on charges of conspiracy and thereafter he decided to live with the people and organise them politically. He organised people at Bastar to fight against the middlemen profiting from the sale of meat by the villagers to urban areas but it was at Danitola that he began to mobilise quartzite stone mineworkers, under the banner of AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress) and established contacts with political activists at Dalli Rajhara, the headquarter of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha. In fact, Danitola became the site for his experiments in 'trade unionism with a difference'. Niyogi was subjected to repeated coercion and harassment by the police, was imprisoned, exterminated from some of the districts of Chhattisgarh, and subjected to calumny. He, nevertheless, managed to institute a spectacular movement "New Chhattisgarh for New Delhi".

It was during the last days of emergency that around ten thousand workers of Dalli Rajhara revolted against the local trade union leadership of the AITUC and INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress) on the issue of equal bonus for regular as well as contract labour. The contract labourers of BSP were discriminated against even regarding payment of bonus hence they formed labour organisation under the leadership of Banshilal Sahoo. Meanwhile, Niyogi, after his release from jail, started organising the workers at Dalli Rajhara to support the strike and got Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh (CMSS) registered in Indore. CMSS put forth an 18-point charter before the management mainly pertaining to increased wage payments, better working conditions and some job security. Initially CMSS met with success but in due course of time sufferance repression of management and police measures were taken by the management and police. However, in November 1977 the workers of Dalli Rajhara, Danitola and Hirri went on strike for 56 days and consequently the management conceded to their demands. CMSS was euphoric, as it had achieved success for the first time without the backing of the trade unions. It managed to raise the daily wage from Rs 3.50 to Rs 7.00 and subsequently to Rs 80.00, the highest daily wage in the country. But Niyogi, not content with the improvement in wages, wanted to radicalise the movement beyond trade union activities also included social reforms in his activities. He launched the anti-liquor movement as for most of the workers liquor consumption. The anti-liquor campaign, largely led by women, achieved a great measure of success as liquor shops were closed, people were discouraged from visiting them and social sanctions were imposed on those who did. This movement heralded a change in most of the

aspects of life and work of the labourers: Issues such as environment, appropriate technology, gender relations and the abolition of exploitative work conditions were to be considered by the movements. In fact, in 1978-79, the people of Dalli Rajhara formed the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM), a federation of about twenty organisations.

With the formation of CMM, the domain of the struggle expanded and by 1990s, it had developed into a well-organised trade union. However, in its initial formation stage it marked the culmination of a struggle that had recognised that any movement for workers needs to integrate both their living and working conditions. CMM held that the union must move beyond focusing on just economic issues and to encompass other spheres that touch the life of the working classes. The movement sent an important message, that "where governance fails to deliver justice to the people, the people through the process of struggle, establish the preconditions of justice for themselves. Ineffective governance was challenged by the mobilisation of civil society to secure the basic conditions of life and dignity for its inhabitants". CMM organised Rajnandgaon Kapda Mazdoor Sangh in 1984 in the Bengal Nagpur Cotton (BNC) Mills and met with success. It carried on the work of unionising labourers in Bhilai under the leader ship of Niyogi.

On the whole, by 1990s the experience of mobilising the miners had been successful and Niyogi turned his attention to other areas in the region that were marked by the exploitation of workers. CMM by now had transformed itself into a mass movement. For instance, on October 2, 1990, Niyogi called a meeting of workers of Bhilai but the BJP government in the State banned the meeting. The meeting was then shifted to Rajpur where about thirty thousand people participated, including workers from Delhi and Calcutta as well as tribals from Abujmar. The rally was a colossal success. Within a year Niyogi was arrested on the ground that he had not presented himself for the court hearings. Soon he was released but started receiving death threats. It was in September 1991 that Niyogi had met the President, the Prime Minister, and the Opposition leaders, petitioning against the high-handedness of the industrialists. Barely 10 days after his return from Delhi (September 28, 1991), Niyogi was shot dead in Bhilai. CMM, however, did not cease to exist. It focused on two main issues: carrying out an agitation against the MP High Court's decision to set aside the conviction and death sentence on Niyogi's assassins, and furthering Niyogi's concept of "Sangharsh aur Nirman" by paying attention to all aspects of the lives of the marginalised. CMM has now expanded its constituency from workers to also cover marginal farmers. CMM continues with its work of mobilisation by organising massive rallies on Martyr's Day (July 1) and Shaheed Diwas (September 28). It has also expanded its struggle to fight against all forms of injustice, with the Nyayaagrah Movement being initiated for just this purpose. It has undertaken the job of providing basic amenities to the people such as education, health, rehabilitation of slum dwellers, establishment of Shahid Garage, release of bonded labourers, securing women's rights, conscious raising programs, struggle against mechanisation, environmental protection programs and participation in elections. It is this creative aspect of the movement that sets it apart from other civil society organisation – pressure groups that work within the framework provided by the State or social movements that deal with single issues.

8.5.3 The Self-Determination Movements

Self-determination movements express dissent against the existing arrangement of relations between the principal political unit and its constituent units. In relation to the nation-state, certain nationalities, and in relation to the dominant nationalities the smaller nationalities question the

existing relations. They feel that such an arrangement was unjust and detrimental to their interests. On the contrary it favoured the dominant groups. In order to change this type of relations, the smaller nationalities start self-determination movements. Such movements may assume the form of autonomy movements demanding separate political unit from the existing dominant unit with due respect to the sovereignty of nation-state. They may also question the sovereignty of the nation-state and demand establishment of their own sovereign state. Various states in India have witnessed the rise and fall different forms of self-determination movements at different point of times. The principal examples of demands in various states for the formation of separate states within the parameters of Indian constitution include the formation of Telangana state, Vidharbha, Harit Pradesh, etc. Recently in 2002 three new states were created as a result of movements which demand their formation. These states are Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. The demand for creation of sovereign states has come mainly from the North-East, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. Earlier such demand was made in the Tamil speaking areas of south India. It is important to note here that all self-determination movements in these regions do not advocate sovereign state for them; they would like to have a suitable rearrangement of federal relations within the framework of Indian constitution.

The movements which challenge the sovereignty of the Indian nation-state are also called the insurgencies. Some of them get support of the masses. They target the institutions and organisations which are identified with the nation-state or central government, or even the social groups which are perceived to be patronised by the central government. The response of the state to these movements included accommodation of a group of leadership and weakening them, dividing the insurgent groups or use of coercion.

Use of coercion has given rise to the related problem, i.e., the human rights violation. The security forces have used repressive measures against the insurgents and their supporters. Many times the innocent persons have also been targeted by the security forces. This has prompted the human rights groups to demand protection of the human rights of the insurgents and the people. As the security forces have also been attacked by the insurgents, the latter also demand that their human rights should also be protected from the insurgents.

8.5.4   Anti-Development Movements

Development based on the modern scientific approaches has not been sustainable. It means that for the development — setting up modern institutions, industries, dams etc., the natural resources have been used in such a way that they can not be retained. Apart from the depletion of natural resources, development has also caused miseries to human being. On the one had it has led to the displacement and migration of people from their traditional habitat, on the other hand their traditional knowledge has been made redundant. People — the civil society, NGOs, grass root organisations, have responded to the encroachment by development and modernisation in different fields- against construction of big dams, deforestation, etc. They have demanded that development should be sustainable; it means that the natural resources and traditional knowledge should be used in such way that natural resources are not totally depleted and the traditional knowledge is retained. Such development is known as sustainable. There has been reaction for and against development. It is opposed by the people who feel adversely affected, by intellectuals, Gandhians, NGOs sympathetic to the affected people, and by the states where the affected people reside. Conversely, industrialists, the foreign funding agencies like World Bank and IMF extend their support to such development. Most important examples of Peoples'

protest against development include Narmada Bachao Andolan and the environmental movements. Narmada Bachao Andolan which has continued for more than three decades in different forms has got strong opposition and support. The construction of Sardar Sarovar Dam, which is opposed by the Narmada Bachoa Andolan is supported by different Gujarat governments, politicians, and the World Bank, but it has been opposed by Narmada Bachao Andolan, people, politicians and governments in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattishgarh. The attitude of the central government has been ambivalent dictated by the political considerations.

8.6   SUMMARY

To sum up, dissent means withholding consent or showing disagreement. When dissent takes the form unorganised or organised activity is becomes a protest. There have been protest movements in different states of India. These protest have been against the real or perceived discrimination or unequal social, economic, cultural or political relations. Protest movements also form some kind of social movements. In Indian states there have been various kinds of protest movements. Different shades of Naxalite movements, Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, self-determination movements and anti-development movements, which have been discussed in this unit provide an understanding to the patterns of dissent protest in India states.

8.7   EXERCISES

1)   Discuss the relationships between the social movements and protest movements.

2)   Write a note on the Naxalite movements.

3)   Analyse the Chhattisgargh Mukti Morcha.

4)   Compare the self-determination movements and anti-development movements.

UNIT 9 DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND REGIONAL DESPARITIES

Structure

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Development emerged as an overarching and ensemble concept in the twentieth century and it was considered the rationality and legality of the age. But today, there are very few who accept it uncritically and without reservations. It is worth noticing that more often than not development was used to serve vested interest as every dominant group tried to interpret it to justify its ends. Consequently at the end of a long saga of narratives and discourses development emerged as a protean concept meaning different things to different people. For example development that promised freedom and emancipation from all types of tyrannies for all, in its inception had become inimical to human freedom at the end of the last century. In between these two extremes development changed its meanings many times serving different purposes ranging from the reason of the state, legitimiser of the regimes, as component of vision of a good society and above all, as shorthand terms for the needs of the poor and needy (Nandi 2000: 145). In this unit you will study about the developmental issues and regional disparities in India.

9.2 MEANINGS OF DEVELOPMENT

Development means different things to different people. Similarly issues of development have varied according to the meanings of development. In this sub-section you will study about the developmental issues according to different meanings of development.

9.2.1 Western Meaning

During the age of the Empires development meant discovery of new territories in search of market for their finished products and raw materials for their industries and their subsequent colonisation. It also meant spread and imposition of the European culture, civilisation and political power over other communities in other parts of the world. In achieving these goals they used both temptation as well as brute force. But as far as the colonies are concerned this was the beginning of the age of degradation, distortion and dependent development. Hereafter development symbolised the plunder and plight of the people in the colonies. This process continued till the end of World War II when some new meanings and interpenetrations were assigned to the concept 'development'. An important dimension of these new meanings and interpretations was the realisation of the need for the generation of data on the per capita real income as the basis for distinguishing developed countries from the underdeveloped ones. The following factors were identified by a committee for asserting the low level of development in the developing committies.

- Apparent lack of desire within the poor nations for material wealth and entrepreneurship;

- Poor system of governance and law;

- Low levels of literacy; and

- Inhospitable culture for development etc. is responsible for low levels of development in the developing countries.

As opposed to this, the committee also outlined the road map of the development "as the western path of development as the only path for rest of the world" to follow. Though it emphasised on development for peace, yet in reality peace and development meant hegemonisation and proselytisation as far as the poor countries were concerned. Now the development itself became a commodity for trade and export and in the process it inevitably meant war. The experiences of world history show that when development is transported and implanted into an alien culture it alienates the people and degenerates into social engineering, manipulations, manoeuvres and malpractices. When development neglects the internal dynamism and gets regulated through exogenous forces to fulfil the external demands it degenerates into underdevelopment. Hereafter, western modes of development penetrated at all levels and waged a war against the alter modes of existence and survival. It was different from the development undertaken by the Empires primarily because, though development had so far dominated people and also exploited them in many ways, yet it never forced them to snap their organic ties with their immediate socio-cultural milieu and physical environment. But hereafter the only mediating links between human beings and environment was through technology and market. Consequently, development meant Pax Economica which in tern meant Pax Americana or scarcity and war. It was founded on the fundamental assumption of spreading the culture of scarcity among opulence, which was also the hallmark of the development school of thought under Pax Americana.

9.2.2 Development as Underdevelopment

The aggressive approach adopted by the western powers particularly the United States of America and its Brettonwood institutions like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Funds (IMF) towards the development did not go unchallenged. Though these western powers graduated from strong to stronger positions under the cold war and they also pontificated their success stories of development for peace world over, yet there emerged some theoreticians who championed the cause of the victims of the aggressive Pax Economica/Pax Americana. Unlike the aggressive western development theoreticians these scholars had serious limitations of inadequate and incoherent data and records. They had an undaunting task of assembling the facts and figures that were mostly qualitative, sporadically spread over a vast range of social-cultural and politico-historical spaces. These had a strong over tone of oral traditions, customs, values and cultural interpretations. Moreover, unlike the western development theoreticians who had to concentrate on the growth rates and per capita incomes, these had to focus on the misery, squalor and plight of the people mostly in the colonies. Though their voice of resentment was global in its application, yet most of the scholars that articulated these views most vehemently were from Latin America, Africa and Asia. Therefore, they were also called a Latin American and African School or Dependency School or Underdevelopment School.

As a result of all these the world got divided into two diametrical opposite poles i.e. the developed and the underdeveloped world. Though these are distinct in the characteristics, yet both share common historical experience and emanate from the one and the same processes. Some of the important characteristics of an underdeveloped economy are as follows:

1) *Transition to Peripheral Capitalism:* Most of the colonies in the tropical, subtropical and equatorial areas were subjected to specialisation in the export of primary products. Most of the products included in this category were related agriculture and mining activities. Structures of production relations in the colonies revealed that most of the owners were from the mother countries while large part of the blue colour workers were from the colonies. Countries such as Brazil specialised in the production of Coffee and Rubber, Malaysia in the production of Rubber and Tin, India in the production of Jute, Tea and Mining products etc.

2) *Extraversionism:* Though the colonies specialised in the production of the primary and semi-processed goods in the secondary sector, these products had limited demands in the domestic market. Large share of these products were produced to meet the external demands. Thus, the colonial economy was always regulated through the forces of world market.

3) *Hpertrophism:* It was imperative on the part of the mother country to create institutions in the colonies for the purpose of governance and uninterrupted supply of raw material and distribution of the finished products. Disproportionate growth of tertiary sector was done to achieve this objective. Subsequently service sector constituted the second highest share of employment after agriculture in the colonies. This resulted in the tertiarisation of the colonial economy and society.

The most significant contribution of the dependency school was in identifying the processes of underdevelopment and also the possible remedy for the same. They believed that there is no reprieve for the underdeveloped countries so long as they remain part and parcel of the modern

world system and continue to trade on the basis of unequal exchange. According to them the principal contradiction at the world level is between imperialism and the colonies and the possible remedy is revolutionary anti-imperialist struggles in the colonies. Moreover, they also emphasised that the national liberation movements in the colonies should simultaneously target the comprador bourgeois and world imperialism in order to overcome their underdeveloped status. Though there was a lot of merit in their articulations, yet unfortunately the happenings of the world history in the decades after 1980s gave a major setback to these postulations and they were compelled to look for non-revolutionary alternatives to social change. Subsequently development needed to be defined in new terms.

9.2.3 Development as Freedom

Twentieth century has been one of the most eventful times in human history. Humanity experienced rising hopes and abysmal despairs and dejections at one and the same time. It underwent a series of revolutionary as well as counter-revolutionary changes with in a short span of time. Science opened new vistas of possibilities in human endeavour but at the same time some of its inventions placed human destiny in a state of utter helplessness and desperations. We are faced with scientific as well as religious fundamentalism. In a nut shell, our balance sheet of gains and loses become a matter of interpretations and positions. However, there are at least two clear agendas that emerged out of the upheavals of the last century.

Astronomic rise in secular uncertainties is the first and most important out come. Today the developed as well as the underdeveloped worlds are gripped in the fear of uncertainties and risks. This is possibly one of the reasons that both science and religion have adopted aggressive positions as both accept use of force as legitimate means to assert ones claims.

Secondly, freedom has emerged as the minimum condition for the existence of every one. Freedom is considered one's ontological necessity and a birthright. People are ready to pay any price for their freedom. It is considered a minimum condition for one's social and individual survival. It is the talisman of modern times. People are no more contended with their head count alone they are demanding listing their names as their fundamental right. Fight for identity, democratic participatory governance has become the private rhetoric. It has reconstructed the content and power of legitimacy of every social phenomenon. Development as a policy and strategy has been influenced by these shifts more than anything else.

People everywhere want development to base itself as a minimum guarantee to their democratic rights and freedom they enjoy. A.K. Sen is one of the ardent protagonists of this view. In his book Development as Freedom he mentioned, "Expansion of freedom is viewed…as the primary end and principal means of development" (Sen: 2001.XII). He further adds that "……the removal of substantial unfreedom …here constitutes development" (Sen: 2001.XII). According to him development and freedom are inconceivable without each other. In his own words "development can be seen…as a process of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy" (Sen: 2001.3). He also tries to liberate development as a concept from its limited uses , per capita income and growth rate etc., that the social scientists particularly the economists have attributed to it. He prefers to use it in a broader sense by putting an integrated approach involving economic opportunities, political freedom, social justice, transparency in governance and protective security not only against the economic risks but also against illiteracy, diseases social

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conflicts (Sen: 2001.XII). Development requires removal of the major sources of unfreedom such as "poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systemic social deprivations, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states" (Sen: 2001.3). He expressed regrets at the existing global situations where unprecedented opulence of a tiny minority of population and countries is taking place at the cost of even elementary freedom to a vast majority of nations and their population. In another words economic development alone does not guarantee freedom and democracy. On the contrary, removal of poverty and providing adequate public facilities, social care, organisational arrangements for health care particularly epidemiological programmes; education facilities and effective institutions for the maintenance of local peace and order etc. are the other essential requirement for the success of both democracy and development. He also established deep inter-connections between freedom and development for two reasons:

- *Evaluative reasons:* the assessment of development has to be done in terms of whether the freedom people have is increasing; and

- *Effective reason:* whether the freedom people enjoy is reinforced and guaranteed through a sustainable agency.

Thus, development and freedom find new meanings in his formulations.

9.2.4 Development as Sustainable Development

Development, which has been claimed by different scholars as indispensable particularly for world peace, freedom, democracy and modernisation etc. belied all these claims. On the contrary, it symbolised ever increasing social inequalities, regional disparities, displacement of people and spread of disease and hunger globally, apart from putting humanity on the path of a long war against the environment and cultural pluralities. Therefore, a new set of scholars questioned the entire process and concept of development. They criticised the scholars from the underdeveloped school for their lop-sided treatment of development. While acknowledging their contribution they accused them of being circulationist in their arguments in favour of market relations at the expanse of the class relations and modes of productions. They were equally critical of the development school for advocating the interests of a tiny minority while remaining myopic to some larges issues concerning development.

Recently there has been inclusion of some more issues in the ongoing process of development which has been criticised from one more angle. The most significant of these issues are related to environmental degradation, ecological crises and socio-ecological disasters. Though critiques of the modernisation and on going processes of development had been in the offing for some time, yet it was primarily the contributions made by M.K. Gandhi in India and Max Horkhiemer and Theodor Adorno in the west which were most significant in the first half of the last century. While Gandhi criticised it on the moral and ethical grounds, Horkhiemer and Adorno were critical of the entire enlightenment project and the rationality paradigm, which they thought provided the basic impetus to the success of the western path of disaster embedded into development. But the most significant critique of development came from the Club of Rome in 1971. It was a concern from a group of scholars cutting across all disciplines about the on going development. These scholars felt that growth within limit can only insure safe and proper

development and unlimited growth like the present one is neither desirable nor sustainable both from the social and environmental point of view. Moreover, this in tern is also disastrous as far as the future of human well-being is concerned. Some other scholars like Schumacher also joined the issues later on. He reiterated the views expressed by Gandhi and emphasised on the need to build an alternative model and mid-set to the existing megalomaniac mind-set and value system. According to him the answer to the crises situation created by the existing giant industrial empires and global trading cartels lies in accepting and appreciating the Small is Beautiful. To achieve this Economics will have to liberate itself from the narrow considerations of profit maximisation and embrace the moral, aesthetic and other human values as the bases of economic endeavours.

The decade of the 1980s as also significant in the history of development because so far most of the critiques of development were made by the individuals at the local or regional levels but hereafter it came to be realised at the world level that the cost of development is increasingly out weighing its advantages. Ecological disasters like global warming, ozone layer depletion, emission of nuclear radiation and other types of pollutions have crossed the tolerance limits and if unchecked the future of humanity itself is at stake. It was felt imperative that so far development and its critiques have taken into consideration only human well beings and they have turned a blind eyes to other partners in the entire development process namely the environment. First major and concerted efforts at the Global level was made after constituting a Commission on Global Environment under the auspices of the United Nations popularly known as Stockholm Conference on Environment. The proceedings of the conference were subsequently published in reports entitled "the Brundtland Commission Report" and also "Our Common Future". It is from this conference that the concept *Sustainable Development got* its currency and was accepted as the most fundamental contribution to overcome the crises that were created by the ongoing development. The gist of the concept 'Sustainable development' in the report was in these words: *"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the abilities of the future generations to meet their own need, improved living standard for all, better protected and managed ecosystem and a safer, more prosperous future"*.

Hereafter development was seen not only in terms of economic but also environmental costs. It was felt that development must adhere to minimum environmental standards and safety norms. This was on of the serious critiques of development as far as the developed world was concerned primarily for two reasons. Firstly, critiques of development made by the third world scholars so far were dismissed by the developed world as an anti-west propaganda or at best a strategy adopted by the underdeveloped south to fight and get more concessions form the developed north. Moreover, they also accused the underdeveloped school for creating an artificial divide between the north and south blocks without taking to its logical conclusions. Lackadaisical attitudes of the underdeveloped school proved to be counter-productive because on the hind site it worked as a much-needed adhesive force in uniting the highly heterogeneous developed world against the deprived third world.

Secondly, for the first time the developed world also felt threatened from the increasing environmental risks for which they alone were incapable to handle. Though, ever increasing depletion of resources was becoming the key issue in the sustainability of modern ways of life, yet more serious than this was the ecological and environmental crises that were resulting from the reckless exploitation and use of natural recourses on the one hand and environmental

degradation like global warming, green house effects, ozone layer depletion etc. on the other. These crises were so serious that, they have not only placed a question mark before the on going processes of development but the future of human civilisation itself was also at stake. And it was indiscriminate in its effects irrespective of the rich and poor nation and population. Hereafter the developed world was compelled to think about alternative strategies of development and the concept of Sustainable Development was found to be the most appropriate to achieve that end. Hence, Sustainable Development was projected as the legitimate and ethical alternative to development. Subsequently, the United Nations Environmental Programmes (UNEP) convened many conventions on the theme world over. The Kyoto Convention on Climate and Earth Submit at Rio-de-Janero Brazil were most significant in this respect. The net result of these efforts was that the UNEP succeeded in outlining certain fundamental principles to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, in order to strengthen its project the UN Convention on Sustainable Development also identified a list of Social, Environmental, Economic and Institutional indicators to achieve the target (Butola 2004).

It is well over fifteen years since the publication of the Brundtland Commission Report and over a decade after the Earth Submit but the objectives envisaged in both of these remain illusive as far as their translation into practice is concern. There are various reasons for its failure but the most significant one is the adamant attitudes of the developed countries towards their consumption pattern and indiscriminate use of resources which has virtually sealed the practice of this concept. The continuing reluctance of the developed countries towards the degrading environment has placed a serious challenge before many in the world. The most vulnerable one are those who derive their livelihood as well as meaning of life and identity from their respective environment. As a result, the development has also been interrogated from the point of views of identity, deteriorating economic conditions and rising regional disparities.

9.3 DEVELOPMENT AS REGIONAL DISPARITIES

The experiences of the ongoing development activities at the local, regional, national and global levels suggest that development is essentially a differentiating activity. Scholars have suggested in the past that development in its initial stages results into regional and social divergences, it creates imbalance and inequalities but over a longer period of time these inequalities get reduced. It was argued that strong backwash effects and equally strong pull factors remain active in the initial stages of development but subsequently the trickledown, spread effects tend to remove the inequalities and development ultimately leads to even and all round development. Some of the factors responsible for the divergence convergence processes of development are:

9.3.1 Diversity as the Cause of Regional Disparities

It is argued that there are regions that enjoy certain relative advantages over others in terms of their natural resource endowments. Apart from these the relative advantages may also include rich resource base, favourable climatic conditions and easy accessibility in terms of its geographical location etc. It is agued that over time the relative advantages enjoyed by the developed region will reach a saturation point and there after it will remain no more lucrative and profiteering for the entrepreneurs to continue in their usual ways by restricting enterprises to developed regions

only. On the contrary, they will have to move towards the backward regions in search of market, resources, labour force and investment opportunities etc. This will increase the interaction between the developed and the backward regions and consequently the backward regions will also benefit from these changes and ultimately succeed in bridging the gap and balanced development will be a possibility.

9.3.2 Historical Advantages

It is believed that the division of the world into developed and underdeveloped parts or core and periphery is largely due to the historical processes which were set into motion with the onset of modern world system and capitalism. It is largely due to the replication of the capitalist structure at different levels that different regions have performed differently as far as their development is concern. There are not only developed core and backward peripheries at the global levels but also developed regions and backward peripheries with in the backward region and the structure continuously gets reproduced at subsequently levels. The legacy of colonial rule and particularly the regional and structural distortions that were introduced by the coloniser is largely responsible for inter and intra regional disparities in the colonies.

9.3.3 Diseconomies of Scale verses Agglomeration Advantages and Regional Disparities

Economic is all about profit maximisation. An entrepreneur always moves from regions of lower to higher economic opportunities. Economic opportunities may be in the form of rich resource base, ideal social and political climate, better accessibilities to market and raw material sources but it can also be in the form of availing certain agglomeration advantages. Meaning thereby, economic activities tend to concentrate at a few places in the vicinity of other economic activities in order to take advantages from the associatedness with other activities. Advantages like intra and inter sectoral flow of good, commodity and services along with innovation, diffusion and adoption of technology leading to ever increasing division of labour can accrue from the agglomeration. Apart form this proximity to market can also come due to similar reasons. Along with this often it is observed that a particular economic activity fails to come up at a particular place for want of a minimum critical and threshold limit to market, labour and other basic requirements. Hence areas which can meet the threshold limit attract development activities than those which fail to do so.

There are scholars who believe that lack of capital resources and rate of technological innovations, their diffusions and gestation period etc. contribute in the development as well as backwardness of a region. Regions that show positive performance towards these indicators develop faster than those are slow in their response. Differences in these, result into consolidation of regional disparities. There are some scholars who believe that lack of enthusiasm among certain culture groups regarding the use of modern technology and their reluctance to venturing into new enterprises has depressing impacts on the development impetus among some countries. As a result they remain at the low level of development. India is a classic case of the paradox of development and disparity. The next section discusses the development and regional disparities with reference to India.

9.4   DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN INDIA

9.4.1   Colonial Impact

India has a long history of colonialism, the foreign domination and experiencing dependent development. Owing to its precarious position within the British colonial power it was subjected to colonial exploitation as well as disarticulations in its economic, social and regional structures. Uneven development was deeply entrenched into the very process of social formation and its remedy also lay in the structural transformation. Though India fought a prolonged struggle against the colonial domination, yet it also avoided addressing the issue of structural transformation. Consequently nothing much was expected after the independence of the country. In place of taking such a radical step India pursued a path of mixed economic development. This resulted into further consolidation of regional disparities and uneven development. Though regional disparities are pervasive and they are well pronounced in every aspects of our social life, yet the most significant articulation of these is found in the process and level of human development in India. Regional disparities in Human development epitomises the totality of social inequalities and regional disparities in India.

9.4.2   Levels of Regional Disparities in Human Development

Welfare and well-being of its citizens is the sole aim of development in any country. Human development is "*a process of enlarging the range of peoples 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*". Thus human development constitutes the core of every development project. Though most of the countries including India remain committed to this aim irrespective of differences in their approaches to achieve the desired objectives, yet the real issue of human development continues to remain a matter of intrigue as far as its translation into practice is concern. There are certain regions which show high levels of human development while there are others that occupy the last position in the scale of development. India is a classical example in this respect. The following table shows ranking of Indian States/Union Territories on the scale of development.

Regional Disparities in Human Development in India

States/Uts	Value	Rank
Chandigarh	0.674	1
Delhi	0.624	2
Kerala	0.591	3
Goa	0.575	4
Andaman & Nicobar Is.	0.574	5
Pondoicherry	0.571	6
Mizoram	0.548	7
Daman & Diu	0.544	8
Manipur	0.536	9

Lakshdweep	0.532	10
Nagaland	0.486	11
Punjab	0.475	12
Himachal Pradesh	0.469	13
Tamil Nadu	0.466	14
Maharashtra	0.452	15
Haryana	0.443	16
Gujrat	0.431	17
Sikkim	0.425	18
Karnataka	0.412	19
West Bengal	0.404	20
Jammu & Kashmir	0.402	21
Tripura	0.389	22
All India	0.381	
Andhra Pradesh	0.377	23
Meghalaya	0.365	24
Dadra Nagar & Haveli	0.361	25
Assam	0.348	26
Rajasthan	0.347	27
Orissa	0.345	28
Arunachal Pradesh	0.328	29
Madhya Pradesh	0.328	30
Uttar Pradesh	0.314	31
Bihar	0.308	32

***Source** :* National Human Development Report 2001; Planning Commission Government of India, March 2002, New Delhi.

From the above table the following conclusion can be arrived at:

- Smaller states and union territories have recorded higher levels of human development than the larger states. This is indicative of the fact that in a largely state-sponsored and development-oriented economy like India, the large size as well as population of the administrative unit prove to be a deterrent as far as human development is concerned.

- States and union territories that have experienced development of basic infrastructure in the field of education and health facilities through the activities of voluntary organisations, non-governmental organisation and Missionary etc. have recorded higher levels of human development.

- Economic development is considered to be the basic requirement for better human development. But the experiences of different states of India indicate that in order to attain

higher levels of human development mere economic development is not sufficient. States that show remarkable performance in the field of industrial and agricultural development have failed to register significant achievements in the field of human development.

- Certain communities may be laggard in terms of showing economic development and consequently form the geographical as well as the economic periphery of the country but they are very much part of the core as far as human development is concerned.

- There is a long way to go before India can match with other south Asian counties in terms of human development.

- To improve its current low position among the community of nations India will have to concentrate on development in the major states like UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam and Andhra Pradesh, etc.

- For the larger state the Kerala model of development could be improvised to the state specific requirements.

- The lower position of high-tech states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka is an eye opener to the policy planners as well as advocates of privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation. In other words technological superiority and excellence is no guarantee for human development. On the contrary, rich socio-cultural capital as well as vibrant and vigilant civil society can be a definite guarantee for the same. This is at least evident from the example of Kerala.

9.5 SUMMARY

To conclude, it can be said that the concept development assumes different meanings to different people in varying contexts. It has served various purposes at different point of time. But its use as the basis of state policy and ideology during the age of empires and particularly under the hegemony of American imperialism had proved detrimental to human progress, social well-being and environmental sustainability. Unilateral approaches to development practiced so far by the dominant world powers have resulted into division of world into to opposite camps along with displacement of people and degradation of our environment. Development for hegemonic control has also resulted in increasing social inequalities and inter-regional disparities. These are some of the entrenched cost of development that country like India can ill-afford to neglect. Prolonged uneven development among different regions and states of India has posed a serious challenge before its unity and integrity. Therefore, it is imperative to address the issues related to development in right perspective and in the interest of common good.

9.6 EXERCISES

1) Identify the major developmental issues according to different meanings of development.

2) What conclusions do you draw about regional disparities in India?

UNIT 10   AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION AND LAND REFORMS

Structure

10.1   INTRODUCTION

India has witnessed enormous agrarian transformation in the post-independence period. This has occurred due to the policies introduced by the state, which included land reforms, community development programmes, Green Revolution and several welfare schemes. As a result of the agrarian transformation a set of new classes and have emerged in rural society, while old groups or classes have either disappeared or have got transformed. The agrarian transformation has affected politics in India to a significant extent. This unit discusses the agrarian transformation in India and reasons for this transformation including the impart of land reforms.

10.2   LAND REFORMS

10.2.1   Zamindari Abolition

The first attempt to bring about the agrarian transformation was by the implementation of land reforms by states in India. Immediately after independence zamindari abolition bills or land tenure legislations were introduced in a number of states as UP, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Madras and Assam. Land reforms in India may be divided in to two phases. The first phase of land reforms started almost immediately after independence. It focused on institutional reforms and lasted till the early sixties, aimed at abolition of the intermediaries like zamindars and jagirdars. It provided ownership of land to the tenants or the security of tenure to tenants, reduction in rents and conferment of ownership rights on tenants. Another feature of this phase of land reforms was ceilings on landholdings. Apart from achieving these goals, the land reforms of this

phase also aimed at community development programmes and cooperatives. The origin of the second phase can be traced to the middle of late sixties. This phase marked the beginning of the Green Revolution in India. Green Revolution attempted to introduce technological changes in certain states of the country, where favourable conditions for such change existed. Some of these states were Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It introduce dHYV (High Yielding Varieties of Seeds), new technology like tractors and irrigation facilities, etc. The main focus of the second phase has been technological reforms. The land reforms i.e., zamindari abolition and Green Revolution have brought tremendous changes in the agrarian sector. It has affected not only the ownership pattern but also impacted discernible changes in social structure, pattern of dominance and the complexion of politics. The first phase of the land reforms especially the abolition of land reforms, were result of the impact of the peasant movements in the pre-independence period. Leaders like NG Ranga and Charan Singh played very decisive role in it. The second phase of land reform were implemented by the Indian government to make India self-sufficient in food production.

A major problem faced at the time of implementation of zamindari abolition act was the absence of adequate land records. By the year 1956 the intermediaries (zamindars and jagirdars) were abolished through a peaceful democratic method without use of coercive method. Because mostly the zamindars had sided with the British during the freedom struggle so they were an isolated class. The abolition of the zamindari changed the status of nearly twenty million tenants who now became landowners. The compensation paid to the zamindars in exchange of the acquisition of estates was generally small and it varied from area to area.

The zamindari abolition Acts in different parts of the country suffered from many weaknesses. In UP the zamindars were permitted to retain land under their personal cultivation. Personal cultivation was so loosely defined that it included even those who only supervised land personally or even through a relative or provided only capital or credit. This was not in conformity with the Kumarappa Committee report on agrarian reforms. The committee appointed by the Congress Party in its report in 1949 had held that only those could be said to be doing personal cultivation that put in a minimum amount of physical labour and engaged in actual agricultural operation. To undermine the full impact of the zamindari abolition the zamindars resorted to other obstructionist technique. Various techniques were used to delay the passage of such bills by the state legislatures. Then the landlords took recourse to litigation to delay implementation of the zamindari abolition laws. The collusion between the zamindars and the bureaucracy made the implementation of zamindari abolition even more difficult. The zamindars could put resistance through all the three arms of the government executive, legislature and judiciary. In spite of all these obstructionist measures resorted to by the landlords the objective of zamindari abolition was achieved except for some pockets of Bihar within ten years of independence.

Only half of the land at the time of Independence was under zamindari system but the practice of tenancy existed even in the other half of the area, which were under the ryotwari system. Another important component of land reform–tenancy reform was also implemented not without hurdles. The legislations aiming at tenancy reforms passed by legislatures of different states and the methods of their implementation differed immensely because of different political and economic situation prevalent in different parts of the country. Apart from these differences tenancy reform legislations all over the country shared some common objectives. The manner of their implementation also led to the emergence of some broad features. These reforms aimed at three

main objectives. The first objective was to provide security of tenure to those tenants who had cultivated a piece of land without break for a fixed number of years. The exact number of years differed from region to region. Another objective of the tenancy reforms was reduction of rents paid by tenants to a just level. This ranged between one fourth to one sixth of the value of the produce of the leased land. Yet another objective of the tenancy reforms was to give to the tenants the ownership right over the land they cultivated. That is why the second plan envisaged that very small landowners could resume self-cultivation over their entire land. This provision was made to safeguard the interests of very small landowners but with the connivance of the bureaucracy it was misused by big landowners for their benefit. The big landowners transferred their lands in the name of their relatives and others to get the tag of small landowners and evict the tenants exercising the right of resumption given to small landowners. The big landowners had indulged in dilatory tactics in both the enactment and implementation of the legislations to get enough time to evict the tenants from their lands who could have benefited from the law. The thing that compounded the problems of the tenants was that most of the tenancies were oral without any records. Such tenants could not benefit from any legislation in their favour. In spite of all these limitations of tenancy legislations succeeded in providing security and even permanent occupancy rights to a substantial proportion of the tenants. The Operation Barga launched by the Left Front government of West Bengal in 1978 aimed at the objective of a time bound registration of share-croppers to give them occupancy rights and a crop division of 1:3 between the landowner and the sharecropper. A remarkable aspect of the Operation Barga experiment was that it involved the targeted beneficiaries to neutralise the negative role played by revenue officials and thus making tenancy reforms a great success.

Another important component of the land reforms in the first phase was imposition of ceilings on the size of landholdings. The objective of fixing land ceiling was linked with more equitable distribution of landholding. The idea of fixing a ceiling on landholdings and distributing the surplus land among the landless was faced with stiff opposition everywhere. It was seen as a threat to the right to property. Even the tenants who had benefited from the zamindari abolition and had become landowners opposed this next step of the land reforms. N.G. Ranga, Secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Party had sent a letter signed by hundred members of parliament criticising the idea of ceilings on landholdings to Nehru. Leaders who were not very enthusiastic about this idea dominated state legislatures. That is why they caused the delay in passing legislation for this purpose. Both the inordinate delay in the passage of such legislation and the nature of the legislation undermined its impact. It succeeded in releasing little surplus land for distribution among the landless. Ceiling laws could not deliver much because of its major shortcomings. One such shortcoming was that in India more than seventy per cent of the landholdings were less than five acres while the ceilings fixed by the states were very high. Another problem was that initially the ceilings were imposed on individuals not holdings among family members and relations and save themselves from ceiling laws. Another provision in this law was that if the size of the family was more than five members then the ceiling limit could go up at times even by hundred per cent as was the case in Bihar. The second plan recommended that certain categories of land could be exempted from ceilings. This recommendation led to most of the states giving exemptions of different kinds. These exemptions included tea, coffee and rubber plantations, farms used for cattle breeding, dairy and efficiently managed farms on which heavy investments had been made. The intention was not to hinder capitalist farming. But the idea of efficiently managed farm was so vague that it was used by very large number of landlords to get themselves declared efficient farmers and flout the provisions of the ceiling laws. Even the long delay caused

in first getting the legislation passed through state legislature and then in implementation to a very large extent defeated its purpose. The landowners used this delay to either sell their lands or transfer them in the names of family members or relatives. At times they even resorted to benami transfers. The landowners used this delay to evict the tenants from their lands. The ineffectiveness of the ceiling legislations is borne out by the fact that while the ceiling legislations were passed by most of the states by the end of 1961 till the end of 1970 not a single acre was declared surplus in large states like Bihar, Mysore, Kerala, Orissa and Rajasthan.

10.2.2 Cooperative Societies

Another important component of the first phase of land reforms was to encourage setting up of the cooperative societies in agriculture. It could be termed as cooperativisation of agriculture. Many of the top leaders of the Congress Party including Nehru and Gandhi along with the leaders of the Socialist and the Communist Parties were convinced about the benefit of cooperativisation. They shared this view that it would lead to major improvement in agriculture and which would also be beneficial to the poor. Cooperativisation constituted an important component of the fist phase of land reforms. But the goal of cooprativisation was also faced with the problem. Like in the case of land reforms there existed no consensus in favour of it among the peasantry. The Kumarappa committee on Agrarian Reforms set up by Congress Party in 1949 recommended that the states should be empowered to enforce the application of varying degree of cooperation for different types of farmings. The family farmers could use cooperative societies for marketing, credit and other matters.

The first five year plan recommended that small and medium farmers should be encouraged to group themselves in to cooperative farming societies. Another recommendation of the same plan was also that if majority of the occupancy tenants and landowners owing at least half of the land in a village wanted to enter into cooperative arrangement of the village land, their decision should be binding on other residents of the village also. The second five year plan declared that its objective was to provide sound foundations for the development of cooperative farming so that substantial portion of land could be cultivated on the lines of cooperative within a period of ten years.

In the field of cooperativisation China was the model because it had achieved dramatic results in agricultural production and extension of infrastructure through cooperativisation. In the middle of 1956 two Indian delegations consisting of the leaders of the cooperative movement, members of parliament bureaucrats with experience in the field of cooperatives and technical experts were sent to China to gain from their experience. The Nagpur Resolution of the Congress Party in 1959 underlined the twin needs of village panchayats and village cooperatives. This resolution also emphasised that these institutions should have enough powers and functions to discharge the functions allotted to them satisfactorily. This resolution aimed at achieving the goals of joint cooperative farming within and period of three years. The programme of cooperativisation was subjected to severe criticism both in the press and on the floor of the parliament. Apprehensions were expressed that this programme was a step towards ending private property and would lead to expropriation of the landed classes. Even senior Congress leaders like N G Ranga, C. Rajgopalachari and Charan Singh accused this programme of being totalitarian. They were of the view that Communist programmes were being imposed on India. To allay such apprehensions Nehru assured in the parliament no coervice method was going to be used to implement the

programme of cooperativisation. The strong criticism of the 1959 Nagpur resolution of the Congress Party weakened the resolve of the Congress to go ahead with the intent of the original resolution. A climb down was reflected in the Congress proposal put forward to set up service cooperatives all over the country within a period of three years and leaving the idea of setting up farm cooperatives in the cold storage. Even the objective of setting up service cooperatives did not succeed. State Congress leaders did not evince much of interest. The plan was finally abandoned in 1959. The third five year plan further watered down the objective of cooperativisation. So far as cooperative farming was concerned, it aimed at setting up ten pilot projects in every district. It also made it clear that cooperative farming had to develop through the community development movement. It could come about with cooperation in credit, marketing, distribution and processing. It is obvious that the third five year plan did not have any concrete plan of action on how to achieve the goals of cooperativisation.

The cooperative movement in India cannot be called a success. As far as joint farming was concerned two types of cooperatives had come up. The first type of cooperatives had come up to avoid the provisions of ceiling and tenancy laws. The influential members of big land holding families gave bogus membership to agricultural labours and ex-tenants to keep the management of the cooperatives in their hand flout the provisions of land ceiling and tenancy legislation and at the same time benefiting from financial assistance, improved seeds, fertilizers made available by the state. Another type of cooperative farms was where poor quality of land was made available to poor landless labour and dalits. These lands had non-existent irrigation facility. These were government sponsored cooperative farms. They lacked initiative and motivation. They proved to be an expensive affair without any commensurate returns.

Service cooperatives did not do that badly. Yet, they faced some major shortcomings. They re-enforced the hierarchical structure of the rural economy. The office bearers of these cooperatives invariably came from families that not only controlled land but also trade and money lending. By capturing the key positions in these cooperatives these influential families could corner the benefits like agricultural inputs and credits. The rural notables used the funds of the credit societies for their business and some times even for money lending. These institutions were virtually taken over by the dominant sections of villages. The benefit of these organisations was not reaching the poor in the countryside. The cooperatives insisted on giving loans against land as security. This virtually ruled out the benefit of credit to landless but enterprising farmers. The report of the All India Credit Review Committee, 1969 and the Interim Report on Credit Services for Small and Marginal farmers by the National Commission on Agriculture in 1971 confirmed the virtual exclusion of the landless and only nominal benefits reaching to small and marginal farmers. One of the major weaknesses of the Cooperative movement was bureaucratic nature of its approach to the problem. The cooperative societies resembled any other government department at state, district or block level. Even the officials of this department were amenable to pressure and influence from local notables. Another defect that plagued the cooperative credit societies was the recovery of loans. Surprisingly the defaulters were not only the poor and small farmers but also the well to do farmers.

10.2.3 Bhoodan Movement

Bhoodan {land-gift} Movement launched in April 1951 by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. The purpose of this movement was to appeal to the landowning classes to donate their surplus land to the

poor. But the method adopted for this purpose by the movement was completely different from the one used in the abolition of Zamindari. Inspired by Gandhian technique the Sarvodya Samaj of Vinoba Bhave used the ideal of non-violent method of social transformation in to Bhoodan movement. The Vinoba Bhave and his band of followers traveled through villages on foot requesting the large landowners to donate one sixth of their land as bhoodan for distribution among the landless. Although the movement claimed to be independent, yet it enjoyed the support of the Congress Party. The All India Congress Committee had urged the Congressmen to support the movement.

Vinoba Bhave's experiment of Bhoodan started in 1951 Pochampali village in the Telangana region of Andhra. The choice of Telangna was significant because that area still felt reverberation of the armed peasant revolt led by the Communist Party of India. After its considerable success in Andhra the movement shifted to the northern part of the country. In north Bhoodan was experimented in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In its initial years this movement achieved considerable amount of success in receiving land gift and distributing them. But after the initial years of success the movement lost its vitality. A problem faced by the Bhoodan movement was that a good part of the land donated was simply not fit for cultivation. There were no takers for such land.

In 1955 Vinoba Bhave's experiment took another form, the form of gram-dan (village-gift). The idea had its origin in Gandhian belief that all the land belonged to God. This movement was launched from a village in Orissa. In gram dan villages the movement declared that all the land was owned collectively or equally. The movement was very successful in Orissa. Later on it was launched in Maharashtra, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The movement was particularly successful in tribal areas of the country where class differentiation had not yet appeared and there was very little disparity in ownership pattern. By the sixties both bhoodan and gram-dan had come to an end.

Many critiques dismiss the movement bhoodan and gram-dan as utopian. There is another charge against the movement that it stifled class-consciousness of the poor and the landless and served as a brake on the revolutionary potential of the peasants. It seems that a proper assessment of the Bhoodan and Gramdan movement is still to be made. The remarkable thing about this movement was that it aimed at the goal of equitable distribution of land not through government legislation but through a movement involving concerned people. And it did so without use of any violent or coercive method but by appealing to the good sense of big landowners. Apart from the considerable success this movement achieved, it also succeeded in creating sufficient propaganda and agitation for redistribution of land.

10.2.4 Green Revolution

The Green Revolution has been the main plank of the second phase of the land reforms. After independence in the rural sector the main focus was on institutional reforms in agriculture. By the late fifties and early sixties benefits from land reforms was reaching its limit. Around this time Nehru realised the need of technological solutions. The New Agricultural Strategy of picking up select areas with certain natural advantages for intensive development with package programme. The Intensive Agricultural District Programme was launched in the third five year plan. This

programme picked up one district from each of the fifteen states on an experimental basis. In spite of these traces of the New Agricultural strategy the big push to it came only in the middle of the sixties. India was faced with chronic food shortage. The country had to resort to import of food grain from America under an agreement called PL480. In Bihar and UP there existed a famine like situation. In this kind of background some critical breakthrough in agricultural science showing promises of higher growth and possible solution of the food shortage launched India on the path of Green Revolution. The New Agricultural Strategy received wholehearted support from Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, Food Minister C. Subramaniam and Indira Gandhi who succeeded Shastri after his sudden death as Prime Minister.

The areas with assured irrigation and other natural and institutional advantages were provided with critical inputs like High Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Farmers in these areas were also given agricultural machinery like tractors, pumps–sets and tube–wells at convenient terms. They could avail the facility of soil testing agricultural credits and guidance from agricultural universities. Apart from providing these facilities to the farmers the government also set up an Agricultural Prices Commission in 1965. The purpose of this commission was to promise sustained remunerative price to the farmers. In this way the package of public investment, institutional credit, remunerative prices and easy availability of technological help made agriculture a profitable proposition. This New Agricultural Strategy or the Green Revolution led to phenomenal growth in agricultural production. Between 1968 to 1971 food grain production rose by 35 per cent. Very soon India buried its begging bowl image and by the 1980s emerged as a country not only with buffer food stock but also as a food supplier.

There has been a criticism of the Green Revolution that it further accentuated regional inequalities by focussing on areas that already had some advantages. Scholars like G.S. Bhalla are of the view that over a period of time the benefits of Green Revolution have gone to all agrarian classes in varying degrees. Its benefits are also no more limited to any particular region of the country only. Another charge against the Green Revolution was that it was making the rich richer and the poor even poorer. Daniel Thorner and Wolf Ladejinsky both confirm this charge. According to them while inequality increased the poor including small farmers and landless labour benefited from the Green Revolution.

10.3 IMPACT OF LAND REFORMS: AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION

10.3.1 The Kulaks

Land reforms, especially the Zamindari abolition and Green Revolution had enormous impact on the agrarian transformation. On the one hand these accelerated the agriculture growth; on the other, entire pattern of the relations in agriculture underwent transformation. The latter was reflected in the rise of a class of economically and politically powerful groups in several parts of India. They came to be popularly known as Kulaks or rich farmers. L.H. Rudolph and Sussan Rudolph categoried them as "bullock capitalists". These groups emerged to control the political affairs in several states, and from the 1990s they have become influential in the national politic as well. In terms of the caste composition, they belonged to the intermediary castes like Jats,

Yadavs, Lodhs, Gujars, Kurmie, etc., in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan; Marathas in Maharastra; Lingayats and Vokaliggas in Karnataka; and Reddies and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh. They have been identified as the OBCs in the states inhabited by them. Having become the owners of land following the Zamindari abolition, they benefited from the modern technologies and inputs through Green Revolution. The land reforms made them the most powerful groups in the agrarian society in many regions of the country. The emergence also resulted in the decline of the erstwhile dominant groups. The developments, however, did not benefit the socially and economically vulnerable groups – dalits and the lower backward classes. The welfare measures like the poverty alleviation programmes, etc. have been mainly the populist measures. Besides, these have been hampered by large scale corruption. Nevertheless, due to the spread of education, awareness and impart of the ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and mass media, there has been the assertion of dalits in certain including the rural areas states like Uttar Pradesh. The emergence of the Bahujan Samaj Party is an indication of this.

Kulaks or rich farmers have made their presence felt through their political parties and non-political organisations. The first example of such attempt was foundation of the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) by Charan Singh. In the late 1970s and 1980s – the organisation like the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) in North India, Shetkari Sangathan in Maharastra and Karnataka Ryat Sangha in Karnataka played important role in articulating the interests of Kulaks.

10.3.2 The Small Farmers and Landless Labourers

In the 1960s and 1970s large part of the country witnessed the emergence of the movement of the small farmers and landless labour. This movement started from Naxalbari in West Bengal and very soon spread to different parts of country like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa till the end of the 60s. In 1970 a land grab movement of the landless led by the Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India was witnessed in Gujarat, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Although these movements could not achieve much yet they succeeded in attracting the attention of the countrymen towards agrarian question. The Left front government introduced land reforms in West Bengal during its tenure. This ensured the security to the tenants and land to the tiller. In 1970 while addressing Chief Ministers conference on land reforms the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi held that the cause of discontent in the countryside was the failure of the land reforms to meet the expectation of the people in the countryside. Reduction in ceiling limits was the main proposal discussed in this conference. Most of the Chief Ministers rejected this proposal. Then this matter was referred to the Central Land Reforms Committee. This committee made quite a few recommendations in 1971. The 1972 Chief Ministers' conference approved some national guidelines for reforms in India. The national guidelines made a departure from the history of ceiling legislation in India. It reduced the ceiling limits on all categories of lands. Family, not individual was taken as unit for the purpose of ceiling. Preference was to be given to landless labourers, particularly belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in distribution of surplus lands. The compensation this time was much below the market price. The landowners again went to court and indulged in other deceitful methods to undermine the ceiling laws. Nevertheless, in the 1970s the ceiling legislation moderately succeeded in its objective of collecting and distributing surplus land. Another good thing was that the major-beneficiaries of the ceiling laws this time were the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

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10.4 SUMMARY

In this unit we have discussed the agrarian transformation in India, which has been result of the impact of land reforms mainly the zamindari abolition and land to the tillers. The agrarian transformation is best seen in the rise of the class of Kulaks in parts of the country. The landless labourers and dalits did not benefit from these in most parts of the country. The Kulaks came to wield considerable influence in the politics of several states, and since the 1990s of the country. In some parts of country, the agrarian transformation has resulted in the increased participation of dalits in politics.

10.5 EXERCISES

1) Explain the relationships between land reforms and agrarian transformation.

2) What were the limitations of land reforms?

3) Write a note on the role of Kulaks in politics.

UNIT 11   INDUSTRY AND LABOUR

Structure

11.1   INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the industry, labour and issues related to them in context of states. By the virtue of being the units of the Indian federation the states in India enjoy considerable political autonomy to pursue their own policies in the areas of industrial relations. Myron Weiner says that distribution of power between center and states is the cornerstone of Indian democratic system. State governments manage State public sector enterprise and play an important role in shaping industrial relations and labour policies. The state governments also have a voice in the national government. The Chief Ministers of states are members of National Development Council, which plays an important role in shaping economic and social policies of the country. Although state governments are not officially represented in the union cabinet, Prime Ministers so far have taken care to give every state its share of representatives. The central government is dependent on the state governments for carrying out its important decisions. They function as regulatory authority over industrial enterprises, small business. While all this may be true but this is also true that for quite some time after independence the central government has enjoyed a position of preeminence and has used centralised kind of authority in shaping the course of development of the country including its industrial and labour policy. According to Sanjay Baru at the time of independence a national capitalist class had come into existence. This class was definitely in a position to influence the policies of the central government to its advantage. By the seventies a powerful class of regional capitalists had emerged and it started asserting itself in a big way. The disintegration of the Congress as a dominant party and the emergence of powerful regional parties have created conducive atmosphere for their growth. The New Economic Policy launched since 1991 has also given newer roles to the state governments in shaping their economic

conditions. In fact, reforming Indian economy without the cooperation of state governments is unthinkable because many items on the agenda of reforms happen to be part of the state list in the constitution of India. The state governments are now wooing capitalists of all variety national, regional and multi-national to invest in their states. But states are not evenly placed on the scale of industrialisation. India had inherited regional imbalance and in spite of decades of planned development this problem has further accentuated in the context policy of liberalisation. The country witnesses the phenomenon of the migration of labour from backward region to developed regions giving rise to different kind of issues.

11.2 INDUSTRY

11.2.1 National Industrial Policy

At the time of independence India had inherited a backward economy. What was worse was that a few states were industrialised and richer, while others subsisted mainly on agriculture and were poor states. The port towns of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras had emerged as centers of industrial activities. This created job opportunities. Educational institutions and other facilities also came up in these centers. These developments led to emergence of some consumer industries, which in turn led to emergence of merchant capitalist class with surplus to invest in industry. These factors gave these areas a head start. The country had to aim at having rapid development but the growth was not to be achieved at the cost of justice. As envisaged in the Directive Principles of State Policy it had to ensure adequate means of livelihood to all its citizens and also that operation of economic system should not result in concentration of wealth in the hands of few. Self- reliant growth was another goal. It also aimed at balanced development of the country.

The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 provided for what came to be known as mixed economy. Public and private sectors were to exist side by side. Even foreign firms were allowed to operate. The economy had to function within governmental planning and control. Public monopoly had to be established over manufacturing of arms and ammunition, atomic energy and railway. The government reserved the right to start new enterprise in coal, iron steel and other minerals, ship building, manufacture of aircrafts and telephone and telegraph equipments. In 1955 at its Avadi session the Indian National Congress declared the establishment of socialistic pattern of society as its goal. In spite of this commitment by the Congress Party the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 did not mention any thing about nationalisation. Actually this resolution reaffirmed India's commitment to mixed economy. In the projected model public and private sectors were not only to coexist they also had to complement each other. Private sectors were to be encouraged and given all possible freedom within the objectives of planning. An important part of the strategy was rapid development of heavy and capital goods industry under public sector. The shift in favour of heavy industry was to be combined with promotion of labour intensive small and cottage industries producing consumer goods. This aimed at tackling the problems of unemployment.

11.2.2 States in the National Industrial Policy

It is obvious that the path of development chosen by India after Independence assigned very important role to state not only at national level but also at the regional level. State governments also had to play important role in establishment of public sectors and controlling private sectors.

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Almost all the states set up State Electricity Boards, State Transport Corporations, State Financial Corporations and State Tourism Corporation. Many states set up cooperatives for farmers. Some states set up Textile Corporation and Khadhi Boards. At the instance of Planning Commission the institute of Public Enterprise had compiled some information regarding State Level Public Enterprises. According to it information, on March 31, 1986, there were 636 State Level Public Sector Enterprises functioning in 24 States with investment to the tune of Rs 10,000 crores. If investment in State Electricity Boards and State Transport Corporation is added, the total investment stood at 25,000 crore. In 1977 this figure stood at 950 crore. In this way it is obvious that State Level Public Sector witnessed a growth of 20 percent between 1977-86. On March 31, 2000 the total investment in State Level Public Sector Units was to the tune of 1,62,063 crores. Gujrat, Maharashtra, Karnatka, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Punjab accounted for 63.6% of the total investment in all the State Level Public Sector Units.

11.2.3   States and Economic Reforms

Faced with a situation of loss making public sector units and inelastic source of revenue the states have no choice but to reform. In spite of this the state governments do not exhibit uniform attitude towards reforms. Many state governments are still following the pre-reform mindset. Some of the states have realised the need of reforms. Orissa government reformed its State Electricity Boards and Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnatka sought to create investment friendly climate. On the basis of per capita income, literacy state, domestic product states have been classified as forward and backward states. The list of forward states include Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnatka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh . The list of backward states includes Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa and Bihar. N.J. Kurian indicated that in the post-reform period two thirds of investment proposals were concentrated in the forward regions. A clear cut bias in favuor of forward states can be seen even in matters of financial assistance distributed by national and state financial institutions like IDBI, IFCI, ICICI, UTI and ISDBI. The forward states cornered 67.3% of financial assistance distributed by these institutions till March 1997. Even within the category of forward states Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh appropriated 51% of the total assistance. This is obvious that the reform process has favoured the forward states as they have succeeded in attracting the lions share of investment proposals and financial assistance. This would further accelerate the growth process in the forward states while the backward states face the prospect of growth retardation.

A few of the Indian states are showing zeal for reforms. These states are Andhra Pradesh, Karnatka, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. States like Haryana,Punjab, Rajasthan, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal have lagged behind in carrying out state level reforms. Karnatka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are showing keenness to improve physical and legal infrastructure to attract investors. The southern states are also well administered states.Several American and European companies have located their back office operation in Banglore, Chenai and Pune.

N. J. Kurien is of the view that better-off states are able to attract considerable amount of private investment, both domestic and foreign, to develop their development potential because of the existing favourable investment climate. This investment climate includes better socio – economic infrastructure. The backward states fail to attract private investment due to poor infrastructure. The poor condition of infrastructure can be attributed to lack of resources. The

lack of resources is due to lack of development. Kurien calls it a vicious circle. Economic reforms can not correct this gross infrastructural disparities between states. The liberalisation process means lesser role for public sector investment for this process. The private sector may not be expected to be of much help because its main concern is profit making.

Bad governance also contributes to economic backwardness. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are unique example of serious breakdown of law and order, corruption. Kidnappings for ransom has become a big industry forcing entrepreneurs to run away from these states. These states are riddled with neglect of infrastructural facilities like roads and electricity. The administration is both inefficient and highly corrupt. These states are not showing much interest in economic reforms. These states not only fail to attract investors actually there has been a flight of capital more particularly from Bihar.

11.2.4 States and Industries

At the time of independence a national capitalist class had come into existence. The Marwari enterprise had acquired a base in such far off places as Calcutta, Madras, Hyderabad and Kanpur. Gujarati enterprise was well settled in Bombay, although Parsi enterprise was localised in western India. By the 1960s, after almost two decades of industrial development, most private investment was controlled either by multinational companies or by the Marwari, Gujarati and Parsi enterprise which had made best use of the opportunities that came along. Obviously there was concentration of economic power in the hands of a handful of business houses that was not in consonance with the stated goals in the Directive Principles of State Policy. There was a realisation about this which led to passing of a new legislation to curb this tendency. In some parts of the country mobilisation to curb the growth of monopoly capitalists acquired a regional dimension. In Maharashtra the state government was biased against Parsi and Gujarati capitalists. The state government encouraged businessmen from the state in both newly emerging sugar industry and conventional textile industry. Even in Uttar Pradesh the Charan Singh government in 1969 demanded nationalisation of sugar mill industry owned by non-local on the ground that they had not reinvested the surplus they had made from their investment into the industry. A regional capitalist class existed in states like Maharashtra, Gujrat, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. This class entered the sugar mill industry in these states in a big way. This was not the case with states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where a regional capitalist class was not present. In these states national big business survived or in some case such industries were nationalised. D. Banerjee and A. Ghosh are of the view that central and state governments have effectively supported capitalist enterprise in states like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra Karnatka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh where a powerful regional capitalist class existed. In these states this class played an important role in politics together with the class of rich peasantry. They are also of the view that private enterprise did not receive big support from the central and state governments in eastern part of the country because of weak presence of an indigenous capitalist class. K. N. Raj establishes a relationship between agricultural growth and industrialisation. Even Krishna Bhardwaj is of the view that regions showing industrial vitality are those, which show promising agricultural growth. Sanjay Baru holds that apart from historical factor and differences in agricultural growth some other factors have also played important role in inter–state differences in industrial growth. According to him some states have been more supportive in case of local enterprise than others. The decision of central government about locating public sector enterprise has also affected this development because the location of such

industries leads to growth of dependent industries. This is also true about investment decision by national big business.

The regional capitalists are first generation in business. Generally their business is confined to their state of domicile. This class has sprung from different background. Some of them come from agricultural families. Others have there capital coming from trade and commerce. Many of them come from the families of professionals gainfully employed in India or abroad. They have entered diverse type of industries ranging from textiles, cement, sugar, chemicals, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, electronics, steel and engineering goods. While in 1950s and 1960s in states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab large scale manufacturing units were set up either in public sector or by national big business houses like Birla, Thapar, Shriram etc. The 1980s onwards a big share of investment opportunity has been grabbed by regional capitalists. They have entered industries like cement, sugar, pharmaceuticals and electronics in a big way.

The national big business houses had supported and funded the Congress Party hence they were in a position to influence the policy of the Congress Party. The national big houses kept doing so for four years after the independence. The regional capitalists faced discrimination at the hands of Congress ruled central governments. This was also true about national financial institutions like Industrial Development Bank of India and Industrial Finance Corporation of India. These financial institutions at the national level also favoured national big business. The regional capitalists had easier access to state finance corporations and state industrial corporations. They developed bonds with regional parties to get political support and entered in to collabouration with foreign investors to take on the national big business.

Many of the states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Karnatka and Tamil Nadu have pretty active capital market. A very large number of capital issues are subscribed here. The emergence of stock exchanges in Andhra Pradesh, Karnatka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Delhi indicate towards a vibrant capital market in these states. The success of regional capitalist class has become possible because of the supportive role played by the state governments and also the state level leaders. The bias of a highly centralised Congress Party of the Indera-Rajeev era in favour of national business class also pushed the entrepreneurs in states towards regional political parties for support. With the decline of the dominance of the Congress Party a phase of coalition has emerged. In this phase powerful regional leaders have started staking claims for important ministries and these leaders are receptive to the demands of regional business. The onset of the New Economic Policy seems to have galvanised the regional capitalist class. In Andhra Pradesh the fast track private power projects like Spectrum and G V K Power have been set up by regional business houses. The increasing importance of the regional business is also being felt in associations like Confederation of Indian Industry and Associated Chamber of Commerce.

11.3   LABOUR

11.3.1 Labour and States

State level public sectors together are much bigger employer than public sectors under the central government. Nearly 7.3 million workers are employed by state governments. While the number of people employed under central government is 3.4 million. Employment in central government has grown only marginally while state governments have added another million. As

the State governments also manage many public sectors at the state level they play important role in shaping both industrial relation and labour policies. State governments play an important role in settling industrial disputes and running social security schemes for workers. In agricultural sector also state governments play major role in fixation and implementation of Minimum Wages. In cases of private sector units deciding to close down or retrench the labour, permission of the concerned state government is to be taken in advance. Public sectors at the state level have been vehicles for creating jobs. A big chunk of the resource allocated to many states is spent in paying salaries to oversised bureaucracy leaving little for the services the state governments are supposed to provide. There seems to be an urgent need for downsising the bloated bureaucracy. Many of the states are not doing enough to improve the quality of the work force. India has also witnessed the phenomenon of migration of labour from one part of the country to another part in search of employment. This at times has given rise to parochial movements in some of the states to protect the interest of local labour. From the time of independence there was a realisation among the planners that India had abundance of labour force. This is why a labour-intensive technique was considered both natural and desirable.

According to a 1981 census data agricultural labour constituted 26.3 per cent of the total labour force.According to Second Labour Enquiry published in 1960 more than 85 per cent of the rural workers are casual, serving any farmer ready to engage them. Nearly 15 per cent of agricultural labourers are attached to specific landlords. More than half of workers do not possess any land and even rest of them own only very little of land. Another fact about them is that they predominantly belong to scheduled caste scheduled tribe and other backward classes. In 1948 Minimum Wages Act was passed. This Act asked every State government to fix minimum wages for agricultural labour within three years. Only in a few states of India agricultural labour get the minimum wages notified by the government. These states are Kerala, Punjab, Haryana and Western U.P. Even in these states discrimination persists against female labour. They do not get notified minimum wages. Awareness and organisation has pushed up wages closer to minimum wages in some states. In those states where agricultural labour is not organised labours' bargaining power is weak. There continues to be a wide gap between actual wage received and minimum wage fixed.

In August1981 a states' Labour Ministers'Conference was held on the question of minimum wages under the Minimum Wages Act. It was decided that minimum wages should not fall below the poverty line. It was further decided to link minimum wages with the consumer price index. A notification of the central government directed the state governments in 1998 not to fix the minimum wages in the unorganised sector below Rs 40. Only Haryana, Punjab, Mizoram, Manipur, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh adhere to this rate.In most states minimum wages were fixed between 1995-96. The range of variation in minimum wages between the states is very large. In Haryana where it is highest it ranges between Rs. 63.12 – Rs. 64.12 in Punjab between Rs. 58.07 – Rs. 60.62. In Andhra Pradesh it is Rs. 16 – Rs. 42.40 and in Bihar it is between Rs. 27.30 – Rs. 39.70.

An irrational practice that has existed in rural India for centuries is the practice of bonded labour. The system grew out of extreme poverty and helplessness. The labour who needed food grains during the lean agricultural season or needed money on special occasions like marriage or medical treatment etc. The wages were low and interest on borrowed money so high that they could never pay back. Once a landless labours borrowed money he and his descendants were doomed to perpetual slavery. The Bonded labour system was abolished by Bonded Labour

Abolition Act 1976. As per information available with Ministry of Labour from the State governments as many as 2,51,424 bonded labour were identified and released up to March 30, 1995.

11.3.2 Industrial Disputes

Industrial disputes result in stoppage of production. These disputes affect national income. They also cause inconvenience to consumers. In the case of industrial labour state governments together with central government play an important role in settling conflicts between capitalists and labour. In 1947 the government of India passed the Industrial Disputes Act. This Act outlined the machinery for prevention and settlement of disputes. This act was amended in 1956. This amended Act provided for machinery for settlement of disputes. State governments have set up labour courts to go into disputed orders of employers. These courts also go into dismissals and suspensions of employees. They are also empowered to go in to legality or otherwise of strikes and lockouts. The State governments have power to appoint one or more tribunals. These tribunals adjudicate disputes relating to wages, bonus, profit, etc. The state tribunals are headed by a person of the rank of a High Court Judge. In 1967 National Arbitration Promotion Board was set up the government. Its objective was to promote voluntary arbitration to settle industrial disputes. The Board includes representatives of employers and workers and Central and State Governments.

11.3.3 Labour and Social Security

In the Industrial sector workers have to face periodic unemployment due to what is known as cyclical fluctuation in business, sickness, industrial accidents and old age. While the capitalists have all the resources to face the uncertainities of business the workers do not have resources to fall back upon when faced with unemployment, old age, sickness or accidents. States have an obligation towards them. With this objective in view Employee's State Insurance Act was passed in 1948. This Act provides for cash benefit during sickness, maternity and employment injury. Pension on the death of a worker and payment of funeral expenses in the event of death of an insured person. This Act also provides for medical care and treatment. The Act covers wage earners, low paid clerical and administrative staff whose salary is below Rs 6500. This Act created an autonomous body named Employees State Insurance Corporation with the responsibility of administering the scheme. The governing body of the Corporation has 40 persons representing both Union and State governments, the Parliament, employers' and employees' organisations and medical professionals. The Act also created a Employees' State Insurance Fund. The employers contribution which was earlier fixed at 4 per cent has been raised to 4.75 per cent. The employees' contribution has gone up from 1.5 per cent to 1.75 per cent of wage. Besides, the contribution of employers' and employees' the scheme is dependent on grants from central and state governments. On medical care the state government shares to the extent of 12.5 per cent. In 1961 Maternity Benefit Act was passed. This Act intended to provide uniform standards for maternity protection. The Act applies to all factories, mines and plantations not covered by Emloyees' State Insurance Act. The Act provides for maternity benefit at rate of average daily wages for a total period of 12 weeks.

Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Andhra Pradesh continue to be states with highest unemployment. Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have lowest unemployment rates. In the year 1999-2000, Kerala's unemployment rate stood at 21 per cent,

whereas Himachal Pardesh unemployment figure stood at merely 3 per cent. An explanation given by the planning commission task force for a very high level of unemployment in Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu is that in these states wages are higher due to strong bargaining power of labour and these states provide better social security measures. Bhalotra calls it adverse labour relations. In the post reform phase except for Gujrat, Karnatka and Haryana other states have registered rise in the rate of unemployment.

11.3.4   Labour and Privatisation

Youth in the age group of 15-29 unemployment rates are very high in Kerala and West Bengal. States like Kerala, West Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Bihar, Himachal Pardesh and Maharashtra show very high rate of urban unemployment. Even in urban areas there seems to be a need to generate emloyment for the youth educated and skilled. The organised sector [Emloyment in public sectors and private sectors employing more than ten persons] emloys 8.34 per cent of the labour force. The organised sector is suffering from a near jobless growth. Between 1993-94 to 1999-2000 the public sector made a very small contribution to creation of jobs. As part of the New Economic Policy the policy of downsising has started. This means reducing overheads for cost reduction. In plain terms downsizing means loss of jobs. Privatisation also is seen as a threat to jobs. Closure of sick industries also makes the employees jobless. Retrenchment Voluntry Retirement Schemes and Casualisation seems to characterise the condition of labour in the post reform phase. Industrial Disputes Act 1947 lays reasonable restrictions on employers intending to undertake retrenchment or closure. In such cases due notice will have to be given to the union and the union and the management will devise ways and means to protect employment of the workers. On the grounds of economic rationality these provisions are sought to be changed. In the developed countries downsising is less painful because of fully developed social security system. That is not the case with developing countries like ours. Due to this fear labour in organised sector is opposed to privatisation. Ashutosh Varshney is of the view that privatisation should be decoupled from large scale retrenchment only then it will be easier to launch bigger privatisation programmes. Tata Steel bought OMC Alloys in Orissa in 1991 but without firing the workers its productivity went up. Even Delhi Vidut Board has been sold but the workers have not faced retrenchment.

In this kind of situation only unorganised sector seems to have potential for future employment because this sector employs 92 per cent of the labour force. The unorganised sector of the economy includes both small business and the self -employed. The main employment generating activity in the unorganised sectors are agriculture and allied activities, trade, restaurants and hotels and tourism. It also includes social sectors like education and health. Transport and construction are also part of it. Even information — technology is part of the unorganised sector. The unorganised sector has 3.8 times more employment elasticity than the organised sector. The agricultural sector can become labour absorbing if focus is given on areas like horticulture, floriculture, agro-forestry minor irrigation and watershed development. Another high potential employment generating area in unorganised sector are trade, restaurants and tourism and information technology. These areas are witnessing a high growth of above 9 per cent.

11.4 SUMMARY

To sum up, it can be said that generally academic works get swayed by national trends. The importance of states is not given proper focus. In shaping the political economy of the country states have played important role in the Pre- Reform period and this is equally true about the Post- Reform period. The constitution has provided for an important role to the States in shaping economic life of the nation. In the growth of the public sectors state governments had an important say. The states have not uniform pattern industrialisation. They have responded differently to the economic reforms. A large number of public sectors have been run by the state governments. The State governments play equally important role in settling industrial disputes and running social security schemes for workers. Even to make economic reforms a success determination and commitment of the state governments as an essential condition.

11.5 EXERCISES

1) Identify the features of industrial policy as envisaged in the Avadi session of the Indian National Congress.

2) What are the pattern of industrialisation in Indian States?

3) Discuss the impact of privitisation on working class.

UNIT 12 GLOBALISATION AND LIBERALISATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE POLITICS

Structure

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Paradigm of Economic Development

12.3 Economic Reforms and Foreign Direct Investment

12.4 Economic Liberalisation: Divergent Views

12.5 Globalisation and its Impact on State Politics

12.6 Summary

12.7 Exercises

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The 1990s marks a rupture in the evolution of the political economy of India. In 1991 the government of India launched the New Economic Policy that ushered in the phase of liberalisation and globalisation in India. Liberalisation and globalisation are inter-related concepts. Liberalisation has come to mean a policy of industrial delicensing, deregulation and disinvestments and privatisation of the public sector; globalisation means opening the economy for foreign investment, removing restrictions to international trade and becoming part of the World Trade Organisation. The policy of liberalisation and globalisation has become synonymous with policy of economic reforms. Although the general practice is to locate the beginning of the economic reforms from 1991, yet traces of economic reforms can be seen in the economic policies followed by Indira Gandhi's government since 1980.The economic policies followed by the Rajeev Gandhi's government can be seen as a precursor to the economic policies unfolding after 1991.The present Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and economists like Jagdish Bhagwati have been among the early supporters of economic reforms. While the policy of globalisation and liberalisation is defended in the name of faster economic growth, its critics see it as or anti- poor policy. Some even perceive it as a surrender to the international capital. More than two decades have passed since the country was launched on the path of economic reforms. From 1990s onwards several governments in India have shown their commitment to pursue the policy of reforms. It can be said that now a near consensus exists in favour of economic reforms. Parnab Bardhan believes that this consensus is inexorable and irreversible. The UPA government headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh has also affirmed its commitment to go ahead with the policy of economic reforms with 'human face'. The idea implies that only the better off sections of society should not corner the benefits of reforms but benefit should also reach the common man. Even the left

parties are not opposing economic reforms perse. The policy of globalisation and liberalisation has affected the lives of our country men in a big way. Their implications on State Politics have been far reaching. The policy of liberalisation and globalisation has led to the emergence of the regional capitalist class. A symbiotic relationship seems to have developed between the regional capitalists and the regional political parties. Many of the state governments have been vying with each other in attracting foreign capital. The new developments call for a fresh understanding of the centre state relations. The inter-state relations have also assumed significance in the context of New Economic Policy.

12.2   PARADIGM OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Before the introduction of the New Economic Policy in1991 by the Congress government led - by P.V. Narasimha Rao, the Indian Economy was control –ridden, inward looking and one of the insulated economies among the Third World countries. In 1991 the country was faced with an unprecedented economic crisis with the balance of payment situation reaching or critical point. The foreign exchange reserve of the country was barely enough to pay for the imports of two months. The country had no option but to approach the World Bank and the IMF for loans to tide over its economic crisis. To procure these loans, the country had to agree to a package of Stabilisation and Structural Adjustment Programme. This package gave the needed boost to the liberalisation process of the Indian economy. To break through the traditional mindset opposing economic reforms, the government used the crisis in the economy to embark on the path of comprehensive economic reforms. Forty years of state-led, centralised and planned economic development was replaced by a market-led, liberalised and globalised model of economic development. In this new paradigm of economic development the state is viewed as a the root cause of all the economic evils and market is seen as panacea for all the economic problems. The ideological opposition to the policy of reforms was very weak around this time. The economic policies of the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher in England and President Ronald Regan in the United States of America represented what came to be known as rolling back the state and giving larger role to market. In a way this indicated the dwindling popularity of Keynesian welfare state or what is also called the state administered socialism .The decline and disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the adoption of the capitalist path of development by its successor countries and the erstwhile communist countries of eastern Europe rendered the ideological props for pervasiveness of state control ineffective. This created a favourable climate for economic reforms worldwide. There has been a tremendous movement of students and job seeks to other countries, following the inflementation of the New Economic Policy. This has also led to a greater interaction and communication with foreign countries to the changes in the attitude about economic reforms. Similarly, closer home, the Communist China had started the policy of economic reforms around a decade earlier than India. The Chinese economy had made noticeable progress after pursuing the policy of economic reforms. In this way it is quite obvious that many national and international developments contributed in diluting the inhibitions against reforms and building a consensus in its favour.

The package of reforms that ensued in 1991 involved the devaluation of the rupee by twenty per cent. This was aimed at linking the rupee realistically to the market. Provisions for freer access to imports were made. The license control system was dismantled with the abolition of the Monopolistic and Restrictive Trade Practices which were taking place in

public sectors as well with a shift towards gradual privatisation. These reforms also included the reforms in the capital market and the financial sector. The attitude on multinational companies and foreign investment witnessed a complete turn around. Restrictions gave way to reception.

12.3 ECONOMIC REFORMS AND FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

India had set out on the path of economic recovery by following the path of economic reforms. The Gross Domestic Product that had fallen to a paltry 0.8 per cent in the year 1991-92, had gone up to 6.2 per cent by 1993-94. During the Eighth Five year Plan period, the economy recorded the growth rate of around seven per cent. This rate of growth was pretty close to that of high performance economies of East Asia. This remarkable feat was achieved in spite of the pangs of crisis and structural adjustment. Other economic indices like Gross Domestic Saving had also witnessed an upward swing. The growth rate of Industrial production registered an increase from a meager 1 per cent in 1991-92 to 6 per cent in1993-94. It further zoomed to 12.8 per cent in 1996.The capital goods sector which showed a negative growth in the beginning registered a 25 per cent growth in 1994-95.This put to rest the fear that liberalising imports would hit domestic capital goods industry.

Exports that had registered a decline of 1.5 per cent in 1991 (term of dollar) started showing signs of a steady growth. Between 1993-96, it registered a growth rate of around 20 per cent. It was in tune with the objective of self- reliant growth. A considerably larger proportion of imports were now paid for by exports. The ratio of export earnings to import payments raised from an average of 60 per cent in the eighties to nearly 90 per cent by the mid 1990s.The foreign exchange reserves in 1991 which were barely enough to pay for the imports of two weeks had now become enough to pay for the imports of seven months by the end of January 1999. The debt situation which had reached a crisis point started showing signs of improvement. The overall external debt/GDP ratio for India that had gone up to 41 per cent in 1991-92 came down to 28.7 per cent in the year 1995-96.The debt service ratio which had touched 35 per cent in 1990-91 came down to 19.5 per cent in 1997-98. It was still higher than the debt service ratio of countries like China, Malaysia and South Korea, which was below 10 per cent around this period.

The opening up of the economy encouraged foreign investment to a great deal. Between1991 to 1996, the foreign direct investment grew at the rate of 100 per cent per year. From $ 129 million in 1991-92, it touched the figure of $ 2.1 billion in 1995 -96. It was a commendable achievement but on this score, the country still lagged behind the East Asian countries. For example, China has been receiving foreign direct investment to the tune of $30 billion annually. An important development was the gradual erosion of hostility against foreign capital. After the 1996, election a coalition government came to power with a left party as its constituent. The Common Minimum Programme of this government aimed at $ 10 billion of annual foreign direct investment. The National Democratic Alliance government, also followed a pro-foreign investments policy. Even the present United Progressive Alliance government, in spite of its dependence on the support of the left parties, is encouraging foreign investment.

After 1995-96, when the growth rate reached a peak of 12.8 per cent, there has been a decline to 5.5 and 6.6 in the next two years. This slowing down of the economy is partly seen as an impact of the recession in Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and other nations. Around this time these economies were recording negative growth and even the world trade had slowed down in 1998. It was also blamed that India could not address itself to structural process inhibiting growth. Poor infrastructure [power, transport], archaic labour laws and continuing trade restrictions were to blame for the Indian economy not recording a higher growth rate.

Parnab Bardhan is of the opinion that in general, there has not been much political backlash against the policy of reforms. Many state level leaders supported liberalisation because it has been associated with a more open door policy for foreign investment providing a way out of fiscal bankruptcy to states. As a group, large business houses have not been losers; if they have lost due to increased competition in some areas they have also gained in some other areas, as restrictions to entry in certain areas have been eased.

There has not been much of resistance from the rich farmers. India joined the World Trade Organisation when the Government of India signed the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) at Maracas in 1994. As per the conditions of the GATT, the developing countries including India are under an obligation to introduce subsidies where they were asked to keep subsidies to the farmers up to 10 per cent of their value output. India, with other countries of the Third World, has accused the WTO of following discriminatory practices. The developed countries continue to give subsidies while they pressurise the developing countries to cut subsidies. As is obvious, cutting subsidies would hurt the interests of the farmers. The response of the rich farmers towards the New Economic Policy or India becoming part of the WTO has not been undifferentiated. On the one hand, the leader of the rich farmers Movement in the western part of the country, Sharad Joshi has supported the new developments, Mahendra Singh Tikait in the north and Nanjundaswamy in the south, on the other hand, have been critical of it. These farmers are diversifying their investment from agriculture to agriculture – based industries like sugar, rice mills, food processing etc. The climate provided by the economic reforms seems to be serving their purpose. Some of the new entrepreneurs belong to the families of bureaucrats, army officers and other members of the professional classes. It is obvious that a new link has been forged between bureaucracy and capital. Jetkins is of the view that there has been a great deal of piecemeal reforms through a political process of diffusing resistance on the part of vested interests in many ways without causing massive political confrontations.

12.4 ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION: DIVERGENT VIEWS

One of the major criticisms of the policy of economic reforms has been on the ground that the reforms have been anti-poor. It is argued that these reforms have an inbuilt bias in favour of the upper and middle classes and hurt the interests of the underprivileged in material sense. It is argued that these reforms would further aggravate economic inequality, and this is in conflict with the constitutional goal of creating a just society. Economic equality is an essential component of this conception of a just society. One of the basic objectives of the policy makers since inception of planning has been to achieve growth with justice. The supporters of the reformist agenda refuse to accept the view that economic reforms would aggravate economic inequality. On the contrary they argue that a rapid economic growth, in fact, is associated with a fall in poverty levels.

Another criticism of the liberalisation and globalisation process has been that it would lead to job loss. Privatisation of the public sector has faced resistance from organised labour. Workers have been pushed out under what has come to be known as voluntary retirement scheme. Contract and casual labour have started substituting regular employees. A number of unviable units have been closed through various subterfuges. Under the policy of privatisation several important public sector units in the country have been sold to the private companies. This has opened new challenges for the workers movement. The developments since 1991 in the Indian Economy have created fundamental problems for the working class. The unions are finding it difficult to resist the encroachment of capital on the rights of the workers.

Some critics have also started arguing that the economic reforms have led to a period of jobless growth. Globalisation and liberalisation are creating job opportunities for the highly trained manpower like the graduates from IITs and Indian Institute of Management; similarly the call centres give jobs to those having a good command over English. People coming from upper middle class and urban background have a clear advantage in getting such jobs with astronomical salary. The policy of reservation in government jobs has been based on the idea of social justice, because without reservation, candidates from disadvantaged background were unable to get jobs. The MNCs and the private companies do not partycularly follow any principle of reservation. Therefore, some see the policy of reforms as a ploy to deny them the advantage of reservation. The demand for reservation in private sector has also been gaining ground. The standard of public education that is available to the weaker section is falling. At the same time the private education is becoming more and more expensive and out of reach for people belonging to the disadvantaged sections of the society. Liberalisation has marginalised a large section of the population, as they do not have the skills or education to take advantage of the growth. So we need to invest in them substantially so that the marginalised section becomes partners in the liberalisation process.

The retreat of the state and neo-classical liberal economic ideology of the market led growth has increased economic inequalities and regional disparities. This has in turn led to the emergence of new tension areas between the centre and the states. This has also led to erosion in the power of the central government to promote balanced regional development. Some experts view growth as favourable to the urban India, organised sector, richer states and property owners.

Some economists are of the view that policies like trade liberalisation gives multinational corporations an opportunity to capture the Third World market at the expense of the local producers. Opening up opportunities for foreign investment in the third world countries offers to the MNCs an opportunity to earn huge profit. Likewise the sale of public sector assets to these companies gives MNCs an opportunity to build their business empires in the Third World at a cheaper price. There has been a plethora of accusations against the privatisation deals of the NDA government that they have sold public assets at throwaway prices.

The United Progressive Alliance government that came to power in 2004 pledged itself to carry on with the policy of reforms decided to give reforms with a human face. The Common Minimum Programme of the UPA gave the needed emphasis on the needs of farmers and poor people because the reforms so far are said to have a bias in favour of urban and the rich sections of the Indian society. The new government has done away with Disinvestments Ministry and has decided not to privatise profit making public sectors. There has been a growing perception that reforms have not benefitted the agricultural sector. The new government is focusing on agriculture to

correct this imbalance; the first budget of the UPA government has doubled agricultural credit and has pledged to promote agro-business and launch pilot projects to augment water bodies. An emphasis on higher growth rate in agriculture can sustain higher growth rate in industry. Another serious criticism of the reform policy has been that it has aggravated regional imbalance. The special package for Bihar in the Union Budget can be seen as an attempt to address to this issue. The Common Minimum Programme of the UPA government declares that Foreign Direct Investment will continue to be encouraged and actively sought particularly in the areas of infrastructure, high technology and exports. At the same time going ahead with the policy of reform, the Finance Minister has raised Foreign Direct Investment limit in telecommunication, insurance and civil aviation sectors. Sectoral caps in telecom have been hiked from 49 per cent, to74 per cent, in civil aviation from 40 to 49 per cent and in insurance from 26 to 49 per cent. Around 85 items have been taken out from the category of reserved list for small sale industries. The budget 2004-5 marks a change towards Public Sector. It promises a strong prop by way of 14,194 crore as equity and Rs 2132 crore as equity and Rs 2,132 crore as loan. But the support to public sector will not come at the cost of efficiency and competence. It would have to show consistent profit in a competitive environment. The budget also proposes to set up an investment commission with the objective of wooing domestic and foreign investors. There is a clear-cut realisation that India has lagged behind China in attracting foreign investment.

12.5   GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON STATE POLITICS

The New Economic Policy has affected state politics in India in such a big way that it has virtually necessitated a fresh understanding of state politics. The policy of globalisation and liberalisation has, in a way, created a situation in which the state governments have emerged as the real focus of power and decision - making. State governments have been engaged in an unbridled competition to attract foreign capital. The foreign investors have to deal with the state governments for establishing their projects. The decade of 1990s has also been described as political refederalisation of India without changing the constitution. It is because in the present phase government formation at the centre has become impossible without the support of important regional parties. The days of one party dominance system seems to have become a thing of the past. The phenomenon of coalition appears to be a new reality redefining the centre-state relation. Granville Austin has observed that the Nehruvian years institutionalised centralisation as well as dedication to democracy and social revolution. Opposition parties and even many scholars have alleged that the Congress Party's dominance during its forty years of rule led to on centralisation and the state governments were treated as glorified municipalities. The critics of the centralist character of the Indian federation fail to understand that a powerful Centre was supposed to keep a diverse society together. The political power of the central government to arbitrate in the inter-state disputes has got eroded in the era of coalitions.

A centralised political system has been an essential part of the Indian economic planning in which the state governments were led by the central government. Economic reforms demand an effective role from the state governments. The process of liberalisation and globalisation is throwing up new challenges to the Indian federalism and it appears to be restructuring power relations between the centre and the states. Some illustrations can substantiate these points in a better way. While every investor is looking for smooth relationship among states to ensure

smooth movement of capital and commodities, every state government is evolving its own agenda of dealing with foreign investors. During the phase of license-permit raj the state governments had created high tariff walls to restrict the movement of goods, commodities and even transport. The central government has been persuading state governments to permit the flow of commodities on the basis of uniform value added tax (VAT) in place of the present competitive state tariff system without any success. It can be said that India is struggling to create an all-India national market. The idea of globalisation is premised on a common global market but we are not a common market even as a country.

Rudolph, L.H.,and Rudolph, S.H., believe that in the 1990s, India moved from a command economy to a federal market economy. They have also observed that in the1990s the Chief Ministers became market players in India's federal market economy. The striking difference about the 1990s is that the state governments emerged as important players in the economic fields. This was a complete contrast to the centralised phase of planning during which the central government could get policies implemented by state governments because it controlled funds. In the 1990s not only the investors started contacting the state governments but also there started a competition among state governments to attract the investors. Even the Left Front state government of West Bengal did not want to be left behind in this race.

The old system of centre-State relations had evolved a system of centrally sponsored schemes implemented by state governments but funded by the central government. In the new trend the central government seems to be unburdening itself and passing on the responsibilities of economic development of states to state governments. In the new scenario state governments have emerged as important economic actors in place of the central governments. But the retreat of the central government from the management of the national economy is likely to aggravate inter –state or inter-regional disparities. India, at the time of independence, had inherited all kinds of regional imbalances. From the beginning one of the major goals of planning in India has been balanced development. It seems that with the launch of the New Economic Policy the commitment to the balanced development of India came to an end. The 1990s has witnessed state governments struggling to fight their own battle. If a state can offer an attractive package to the foreign investor, that state is considered as forward looking, reformist and progressive. In a World Bank survey, Maharashtra and Gujarat have been cited as hottest investment destination. Montek S. Ahulwalia, the present Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission believes that some states have done exceptionally well, several others show a strong performance, while some are doing very poorly. Some experts apprehend a threat to the central authority in the growing inter-state and regional disparities.

Centralisation, under the license-permit raj, created a rift between those who could effectively lobby the central government, and others whose political and business influence was restricted to a state or a region within that state. Unlike the merchant capitalist and largely metropolitan origins of the national big business groups, the new generation of regional business group have agrarian origin and rural roots. The regional business looked at licensing system of the national government as inequitable benefiting big business. Thus termination of the licensing system as part of the New Economic Policy has benefited the regional business. Regional business houses have set up most of the fast track private power projects.

In states like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, a dynamic first-generation business class has emerged over the period of last two

decades. This class remains distinct from the traditional national business class in a variety of ways. The failure of national political parties and the central government to address the needs of emergent regional business groups encouraged them to seek political and material support from regional parties and the state governments. The link between the emergence of regional capitalism and regional parties is too stark to be ignored.

12.6 SUMMARY

It can be said that the process of reforms seems to have acquired greater acceptance in India now than it had at the time when the reforms were launched. Even the radical economists of the Nehruian era K.N.Raj, and left economists like Sukhmoy Chakravorty, became supporters of the economic reforms. In spite of this overarching consensus in favour of reforms, the degree, direction and speed of reforms often becomes a contentious issue. Economic reforms are said to have a bias in favour of the better off sections of the society, marginalising the poorer sections. Rural India has not kept pace with the urban India. Thus the economic reforms appear to have affected the problem of regional imbalance adversely. The country is faced with the gigantic problem of unemployment. Many public sector units have been closed down and quite a few have been sold out. Employees have been offered voluntary retirement schemes. The jobs that have come up with liberalisation and globalisation are highly paid jobs requiring top class technical and managerial skills. Some people look at the policy of economic reforms as a ploy to deny the disadvantaged section of the society the benefit of reservation. Reforms give greater role to the private sector in the economy and the private sectors do not follow the principles of reservation. Economic reforms have also affected the nature of Indian federation drastically. It has seriously altered the discourse on the center and state relations. The old system of center and state relation had evolved around centrally sponsored schemes being implemented by state governments. In the new system the central government appears to have unburdened itself and passed on the responsibility of development of the states to the state governments, which have emerged as major players in the economic fields. Investors also have a hierarchy of preference on the basis of investment climate available in these states. Economic reforms appear to have further aggravated the problem of regional imbalance. Reforms have played an important role in the growth of regional capitalist class. Both regional parties and the regional capitalist class have become important in an era of globalisation and the phase of coalition politics at the national level.

12.7 EXERCISES

1) What are the factors that led India to follow the path of economic reforms?

2) Discuss the divergent views on India's policy of economic reforms.

3) What are the implications of globalisation on the state politics in India?

4) "The retreat of the central government from the management of the national economy will aggravate inter-state disparities". Substantiate this statement.

UNIT 13 INTER-STATE DISPUTES: WATER AND TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES

Structure

13.1   INTRODUCTION

The inter-state relations in India run along the lines of both conflict and cooperation. The apecifics of each case depend on the nature of constitutional provisions regarding these relations, attitudes of the institutions involved, concerned leaderships and political circumstances. There are disputes among Indian states over sharing of a natural resource like water and over boundaries. The disputes have resulted in violent clashes between states on several occasions. Their failure or success in handling the disputes is indicative of functioning of the Indian federalism. In this unit, you are going to study two types of disputes involving more two or more states.

13.2   WATER DISPUTES

Water is one of the most important requirements of human beings. It is used for multi-purposes – drinking, cleanliness, agriculture and industries. Its shortage or absence can lead to disputes in society. Its unequal distribution among states can disturb the federal relations. Water disputes arising from the need in agriculture for irrigation has had the most effective political expression im our country. Before discussing the cases of water disputes, it is relevant to discuss the unevenness of water availability and the river basin in India.

13.2.1   Uneven Availability of Water

India is considered rich in terms of annual rainfall and total water resources available at the national level. However, the uneven distribution of the resource causes regional and temporal

shortages. India's average annual rainfall, about 4000 billion cubic meters (BCM) is unevenly distributed, both spatially as well as temporally. The annual per capita utilisable resource availability varies from 18,417cubic meters in the Brahmaputra Valley to as low as 180 cubic meters in the Sabarmati Basin. Even in the Ganga Basin, the annual per capita availability of water varies from 740 cubic meters (cu m) in the Yamuna to 3,379 cum in the Gandak. Levels of precipitation vary from 100 mm annually in western Rajasthan to over 9,000 mm in the north-eastern state of Meghalaya. With 75 percent of the rainfall occurring over the four monsoon months and the other 1000 BCM spread over the remaining eight months, the Indian rivers carry 90 percent of the water between June and November. Thus, only 10 per cent of the river flow is available during the other six month. India can, however, boast of a good network of rivers flowing through different parts and sustaining the economy.

13.2.2   River Basins

The country's rivers have been classified as Himalayan, peninsular, coastal and inland-drainage basin rivers. Himalayan rivers are snow fed and maintain a high to medium rate of flow throughout the year. The heavy annual average rainfall levels in the Himalayan catchment areas further add to their rates of flow. During the monsoon months of June to September, the catchment areas are prone to flooding. The volume of the rain-fed peninsular rivers also increases. Coastal streams, especially in the west, are short and episodic. Rivers of the inland system, centered in western Rajasthan state, are few and frequently disappear in years of scant rainfall. The majority of the rivers flow through broad, shallow valleys and drain into the Bay of Bengal.

River basin as a unit of understanding the river flow through different states provides a scientific approach. The basin area is the extent of the area from where water may be expected in the river. It includes tributaries and even drains. Indian rivers have been divided into three categories depending on basin area. Major rivers are those rivers whose basin area is 20,000 square km. or more. The river basin areas in between 2,000 and 20,000 square kilometers are grouped as medium rivers and the rest are minor rivers. Major river basins are 13 in number and as a group they cover 80 per cent of the population and 85 per cent of total river discharge. Three major rivers i.e. the Ganga, the Brahmaputra and the Indus are snow-fed rivers, originating in the Himalayas. The other ten rivers originate either in Central India or in the peninsular regions. These rivers are Godavari, Krishna, Pennar, Mahanadi, Cauvery, Narmada, Tapi, Brahmani, Mahi and Sabarmati. The medium river basins are forty-five in number while the minor river basins are fifty five. Thus, the 113 river basins ranging from major to medium to minor based on their basin areas transcend different political boundaries. The increasing needs of water in different parts of India to meet varied demands especially in the arid and the semi-arid regions have given boost to large inter basin transfers in the last few decades. Accordingly, many schemes of large-scale water transfer projects (interlink proposals) have been planned and some of them implemented. There have been cases of hydro-animosity amongst different states and communities as the users are many while the supply is limited.

Harnessing the waters of the major rivers that flow through different states is therefore, an issue of great concern. Issues of flood control, drought prevention, hydroelectric power generation, job creation and environmental quality provide a common plank for debate as the states grapple with the political realities, of altering the flow of various rivers. The rapid increase in the country's population accompanied by the growth of agriculture, rapid urbanisation, economic growth and improved access to basic services has resulted in an increase in the demand for water. The

spatial and temporal variations give rise to shortages in some regions. The Western Plains, the Kachchh region and some pockets in the Northern plains face an acute water shortage. The widening gap between demand and supply has led to a substantial increase in the share of groundwater consumption by the urban, agricultural and domestic sectors. The quality of water sources is threatened because of inadequate provisions for the treatment of wastewater. Therefore, the gap between availability and supply has led to provocation and ensuing discords due to the diversion of waters from riparian states to the non-riparian states.

Several water tribunals have been formed and judgments pronounced in many river basin disputes but solutions have been few. In the case of Cauvery, the problem has persisted for more than a century. There are also many court cases pending at local levels as regards the uses of water, and this affects the livelihoods of many.

13.2.3 Politics of Water disputes

Resolution of water disputes depends largely on political considerations. Out of the several water disputes in India, we will focus on the Cauvery Water, Ravi-Beas and Satlaj-Yamuna Canal Link disputes. In resolving these disputes, the political leaderships of the concerned states, the centre, and the courts are involved. Yet they remain unsolved. The failure of negotiations has led to the appointment of authorities and tribunals in numerable. But even the awards of the tribunals have not been respected by one or the other parties involved in the disputes. According to Scholars like Alan Richards and Nirvikar Singh the most important reason for this is the merely advisory nature of various water authorities. Water remains virtually a state subject vide entry 17 in the State List. The centre has not utilised its authority to legislate on this matter vide entry 56 in the Union List according to Article 262 of the Constitution. While the Ravi-Beas and Satlej –Yamuna Canal Link remain unresolved, there are cases which have been resolved. Alan Richards and Nirvikar Singh attribute the main reason for their resolution to negotiations. The tribunals in this case proved ineffective. But regarding the Cauvery Water dispute and the Ravi-Beas water dispute both the negotiations and the tribunals proved ineffective

Besides the ineffective awards of the tribunals, the centre's unwillingness to utilise entry 17 in the Union List according to Article 262 of the Constitution to legislate on water disputes, political considerations are the major hindrances in resolving them. The possibility of resolution of the issue is viewed in a contradictory manner. While one state considers it advantageous to it the other sees its interosts, as against its interests. The political parties even within the same state view matters in the light of repercussions on their political support hase. These parties may disagree on all other major issues, yet share a common stance on the concerned water dispute. They apprehend that taking a contrary stance might push their political support to their political rival. As pointed out by some scholars, the state political leaders can even defy their national leaders and the advice of the court in this matter. For them their political support is more important. For example, the political leadership in Punjab passed an Act in 2004 against the completion of the Satlej-Yamuna Canal Link. It was to be completed within one year. Haryana challenged the decision in the Supreme Court. The latter decreed for a Presidential reference. The matter is still unresolved.

Any inter-state water dispute has its repercussions on the politics and people in neighbouring states. It has ethnic implications. As some linguistic and ethnic groups live within states which have disputes over the sharing of water, these ethnic groups also get drawn into violent riots. In

1992 the Cauvery water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnatka led to anti-Tamil riots in Tamil Nadu. This had further repercussion in the state politics of the two states. While the Tamil groups demanded protection of their ethnic and linguistic identities, the Karnataka political leadership in general opposed giving water to Tamil Nadu. They said that there was no surplus water that could be given to Tamil Nadu.

13.3   THE BOUNDARY DISPUTES

In this unit, so far you have read how and why water, a vital natural resource, has been a cause of major disputes between some states of the Indian Union. Now, you will read about territorial boundaries as a source of conflict among certain states of our country.

You might have, during the course of your studies, come across references about the longstanding tension between the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka over the rightful ownership of the district of Belgaun, between Punjab and Haryana over the Abohar-Fazilka Tehsil or about several such cases involving two or more states. Infact, the creation of certain new states in the last few years–Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh for instance-was partly a recognition of the longstanding problem of contesting territorial boundaries. The issue is complex and vexed and its roots can be traced to India's colonial past.

13.3.1   A Colonial Legacy

India, as we known it today, has traversed a chequered path from ancient times. The boundaries of its constituent geographical units have been continually changing. However, till the advent of the British it was not really a nation-state, as the term is understood and the frequent changes in territorial limits did not amount to much. The British, in pursuance of their own colonial agenda, set about defining and redefining geographical limits and this created problems, the lingering effects of which can be felt till today. These effects can be felt even internationally. For example, India's boundary disputes with Pakistan, China and Bangladesh.

This was essentially because our colonial masters were guided primarily by the consideration of *facile governance a*nd towards this end, they focused on administrative aspects rather than linguistic/cultural etc. unification. The result was a mismatch between people's personal identities and the territories they inhabited. It was left to the central government of free India to rectify the damage caused by the British colonialists' sectarianism and short sightedness.

13.3.2   Territorial Issue in the Post-Colonial Period

The central legislature – the Parliament – was empowered by the constitution 'to create new states or merge old states or parts of such states or alter their boundaries in future'. It may interest you to know that even during the tenure of the Constituent Assembly the specially created and convened body to draft free India's constitution-demands had been raised for a linguistic reorganisation of states, the assumption being that linguistic commonality is an index of a common culture and thus, states created on the basis of a common/unifying language would be more homogenous and thus, conducive to effective governance. However, at that time, the founding fathers of the Constitution had postponed the demand for a linguistic reconfiguration on the ground that the newly formed country might plunge into chaos and turmoil. But soon after independence, the government of Jawaharlal Nehru – India's first Prime-Minister- changed tacks. Possibly, it felt that there was no other way out.

Thus, it had to cope with the agitation for an Andhra state. According to the Linguistic Provinces Commission, the demand first raised in the cosastal regions of Andhra had become "a passion" and "ceased to be a matter of reason". Immediately after the First General Election (1951-52), the Andhra Pradesh Provincial Congress Committee (APCC) had passed a resolution for the creation of a separate Telugu speaking state. The then Madras state also came in the picture and the State Congress Committee there endorsed the creation of the proposed new state. Initially, the Central Government under Nehru tried to checkmate this demand, but the death of Potli Sriramulu, a venerable Andhra Congress leader who went on a fast into death precipitated matters. Finally, in 1953 a new and separate Andhra state was formed by carving out the Telugu speaking areas of the erstwhile bi-lingual Madras state.

The creation of Andhra gave a fillip to the demand for a further linguistic reorganisation of states and the government ended up setting a three member States Reorganisation Commission in 1953 to look into the whole question of altering old/creating new state boundaries. The Commission submitted its report in 1955 and its major recommendation was the creation of new states in the South of the country. In 1956, the States Reorganisation Act was passed. However, consequent to the passing of this act, no really new state was created as such. What actually happened was the integration of several formerly princely states on the basis of language. For instance, the new state of Andhra Pradesh was a coming together of the erstwhile Part B State of Hyderabad and the old Andhra state. Similarly, the new state of Karnataka was an amalgamation of the old Part B Mysore state and territories transferred from the former Madras and Bombay states.

But from the 1960s onwards, the process of creation of new states got going. Thus, in 1960 itself the state of Bombay was partitioned to create the new states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Similarly, in 1966 the new state of Punjab was created.

We have already mentioned about the creation of the new states of Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand in recent times. It is important to mention here that during the period, the north-eastern part of the country also underwent a major reorganisation. Thus, in 1963 the state of Nagaland and in 1972, the state of Meghalaya were created.

The demand for the creation of new states has not ceased in post-independence India. Demand for a separate Vidarbha state has been a longstanding demand of an influential section of populace in Maharashtra, but has not been conceded so far. Similarly, though the demand for a separate hill state of Uttaranchal gained fruition, a similar demand for a separate state of Western U.P. (Harit Pradesh) has not been legitimised so far. As we mentioned before in this unit, territorieal reconfiguration has been a complicated issue. And even when given a concrete shape, it has not been an answer to every citizen's aspirations. To cite a very prominent example, thought the newly created state of Andhra Pradesh brought together the Telugu speaking people dispersed in different parts of South India, the new state since its inception has faced the problem of prolonged agitation for another new state of Telangana. Similarly the creation of new sates in the North-East has not resolved territorial disputes. The demand of Nagas to bring Nagas of three different states into a single "Nagalim" is among such examples. A look at a well known case relating to the dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka over Belgaun, may throw some light on the vexed questionof altering/creating territorial boundaries.

13.3.3 An Example Belgaun Dispute: An Example

The district of Belgaun is currently located in the state of Karnataka (North-West) and borders Maharashtra as well as Goa. Approximately, 20% of the local populace is of Maharashtrian origin. Atul Kohli observes "the issue of whether or not the areas with Marathi pluralities, especially the town of Belgaun, should be transferred from Karnataka to Maharashtra continues to be one of the central political issues in this district".

The roots of the Marathi-Kannadiga conflict over the district of Belgaun-as with many such conflicts - are directly attributable to the linguistic reorganisation of states in India after independence. Belgaun district consists of a mixed population of Marathi and Kannada speakers. After the formation of Maharashtra state, some parts where Kannada was spoken got transferred to Karnataka, but some Marathi speaking pockets were also transferred to Karnataka. Belgaum is one such district which has a population of Marathi and Kannada speakers. The cause of these displaced Maharashtrians has been spearheaded for more than four decades by the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES). It has stood for transferring selected Marathi dominated areas of Belgaun (especially the town of Belgaun) to Maharashtra. The case of the MES is based on two premises:

i) Language and ethnicity – the criteria for the reorganisation of states.

ii) Alleged or real discrimination against Marathis in education and employment (particularly government service).

The Kannadigas, especially those resident of Belgaun Town, lay claims to the area on historical grounds. Mainly, that the town of Belgaun had always been an intrinsic pat of a district that was chiefly Kannada speaking.

A third and no less significant factor in the longstanding conflict has been the political compromise effected by the then central government. That is, some Kannada speaking districts of the old Hyderabad state were given to the new state of Andhra Pradesh in exchange for Belgaun being given to Karnataka.

Thus, as Atul Kohli has remarked "the MES's argument on linguistic grounds, the argument of Kannadigas on historical precedent, and the national decision based on political considerations all combined to set up the basic matrix within which the conflict has evolved".

13.5 SUMMARY

To sum up, sharing of water and territories are among the contentious issues between two or more states. The reorganisation of states left several issues concerning the states unresolved. The politicisation of these issues further compounds the problem. If one state is willing to a solution, the other disagrees. Competitive politics becomes one of the principal factors in deciding about the issues in the dispute. So far as the water disputes are concerned, negotiations and arbitration are the two devices to solve them. When negotiations fail, various water bodies or tribunals are set up. But the awards of the tribunals are ineffective, as the tribunals are only advisory bodies. However, in some cases the disputes have been settled. These have been through negotiations, not tribunals. Regarding territorial disputes, what you have studied in this

unit about the conflict between Maharashtra and Karnataka over Belgaun is true of almost all the inter-state boundary disputes in our country. The issue can be worked upon if all the concerned parties desist from petty politicking and cheap populism. Currently, however, this seems a tall order.

13.6 EXERCISES

1) Contextualise the water and territorial disputes in relation to federalism in India.

2) Analyse the factors for the persistence of inter-state water disputes.

3) Write a note on inter-state territorial disputes.

UNIT 14 PATTERNS OF COMMUNAL POLITICS

Structure

14.1   INTRODUCTION

Following independence the political elite in India were faced with the task of entering the legislative bodies. They needed to mobilise people to get their political support. This need for political mobilisation modivated them to search for the issues in the society. These issues were of the two kind socio-economic and emotional. The former included the basic needs of employment, education and basic infrastructure. The latter included the issue of building India into a nation - state as well issues relating to the markers with which people identify by birth — religion, language, tribe or caste. The mobilisation on the basis of caste, religion, language, or the tribe has been taking place in India indifferent ways. Religion has been one of the most important forces of the communal mobilisation in India.

14.2   WHAT IS COMMUNAL POLITICS?

Communal politics is a South Asian expression for what is globally described as ethnic or sectarian politics. Such politics is based on a belief that religion forms the basis of a common identity; that members of a particular religious community have the same economic, political and social interests. In other words, communal politics works on the belief that each religious community is distinct from the other in its religious, cultural practices, lifestyles and value systems which become the basis of differences in socio-economic interests between these communities. In the absence of shared interests it is only distrust and suspicion that tends to define the relationship between different communities. Communal politics generates mutual distrust between religious communities. Communal politics generates mutual distrust between religious

communities. This feeling of distrust often leads to violence, which has a place of importance for communal politics, as it deepend the mutual suspicion and hatreds which fuelled violence in the first place. Communal violence thus, leads to communal polarisation of society and hence, helps in the expansion of communal politics.

Communal politics in this sense is primarily a form of politics, which mobilises a particular religious community for political power. It is the exploitation of religious differences for political gains. Communal politics may also take the form of highlighting the communitarian interests of a religious group without necessarily generating hatred towards any other community. What is important about communal politics is that it is not driven by any religious or spiritual issue, but secular interests, which can range from bargaining for jobs, educational concessions, political patronage, separate representation or control over institutions of governance. Crucial for communal politics is a feeling of oneness within a religious community as also a sense of cultural difference between communities. Communal politics, whether for economic concessions or for political power heightens this sense of internal coherence, and the feeling of difference between communities. Over the long term, it reinforces the idea of an internally cemented monolithic community and is also revivalist in nature. It strengthens the hold of traditional customs and practices over its members. When this hold becomes very strong it curtails the freedom of the individual to think and act differently from the established status quo. Therefore, such artificial strengthening of community identity has deep anti-democratic consequences by denying individuals the freedom of thought and expression. Thus, all communal politics is inherently anti-liberal and anti-democratic.

Those individuals who think or speak differently from the established norms and traditions of the community are either pressurised to keep quiet and conform or they are expelled from the community as traitors. This is an inherent authoritatian streak which is shared by all forms of communal and ethnic/sectarian politics all over the world. Galileo was ex-communicated from the Church for having truthfully recounting the scientific discovery he made that Earth revolved around a stationary Sun since it was against the prevalent dogma. Similarly, Raja Rammohan Roy had to face the community's anger for condemning and opposing the prevalent practice among Hindus of burning widows alive. In the recent past we have seen social reformers like Asghar Ali Engineer and novelists like Taslima Nasreen facing death threats for holding opinions contrary to established religious practice. Eminent historian of ancient India, Romila Thapar and Magsaysay award winner, Sandeep Pandey have been the target of virulent attacks for opposing politics and ideology of Hindu communalism. In every country and at every moment of history communal/ethnic politics has victimised those who have dared to think differently.

Communal politics, as distinguished from communal violence (or communal riots), is a particular approach to politics which is practiced at a sustained level. Communal violence involves incidents of violence between two religious communities. It can be sporadic in nature and mainly forms a law and order issue to be handled on the spot for restoring peace and calm. Though communal politics does not need immediate police intervention, it has much more damaging implications over the long term. It breeds feelings of suspicion between religious communities and also raises the frequency of violence which in turn sustains communal politics.

14.3   HOW AND WHEN DID COMMUNAL POLITICS ARISE IN INDIA?

Communal politics arose in British India mainly as a bargaining medium for positions of economic privilege and social status under colonial rule. As such, the early communal politics was in the nature of competition for government patronage, jobs, educational concessions and political positions, and was not necessarily something that generated communal animosity. The politics of Syed Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school can be placed in this category. This politics was more of an interest-oriented politics rather than one based strictly on ideology. Its prime concern was the upward socio-economic mobility of the Muslim community. For almost two decades it remained so before slipping into an ideological mould. The relations of both the Muslim and Hindu communal politics with the Indian National Congress remained tense. From the very beginning this politics tried to keep itself consciously away from the Congress-led nationalist movement, though often it was overwhelmed by circumstances and had to join the secular-liberal anti-colonial movement. While the primary objective of the Congress was complete independence from British rule, communal politics was more concerned with gaining immediate advantage within the colonial system with regard to jobs and power for its members.

It also happened that in the early 20th century anti-colonial mobilisation often occurred on religious issues and brought people into the nationalist struggle as religious communities. For example, the Akali agitations against the corrupt, British-supported Gurudwara managements between 1919 and 1926 brought the Sikh community into the nationalist struggle. This brave and relentless agitaion against ruthless Mahants eventually led to a strong movement against British rule itself. The Khilafat agitation against the British in 1920-21 to restore the Caliphate in Turkey — once again a religious issue — drew this time the Muslims to the freedom struggle. These movements contributed to building a nationalist struggle against colonial rule, but also fortified a false sense of a homogeneous religious community disregarding the differences of class, region and lifestyle. Religious icons and symbols were also used to heighten anti-imperialist fervour. The popularisation of the Ganapati festival, the Shivaji festival, *rakhitying* was done to involve the Hindus in anti-colonial struggle in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. *Kali* worship was also popularised in Bengal as a part of the Swadeshi and Boycott movements after the partition of Bengal in 1905. The use of these Hindu festivals and symbols while serving the purpose of anti-colonial mobilisation also ended up alienating communities from each other.

The British, to weaken the nationalist movement, encouraged communal and separatist politics and tried to strengthen the impression that Congress was a Hindu organisation. This was in line with their policy of 'divide and rule'. The British government's support to separatist politics together with the indigenous elite's hankering for material privileges gave way in the 1930s to the idea that Hindus and Muslims constitute two separate and hostile nations. Differences among the communal elite about the nature of independent India and their political status in this future entity strengthened this two nation thesis. One of its very first proponents was V.D. Savarkar, the extremist nationalist who went on to become the president of the All India Hindu Mahasabha. This ideological community based nationalism became the foundation of the public activities of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the All India Muslim League. These outfits were never in the forefront of challenging colonial rule, on the other hand they ranged themselves against the Congress' ideology of an Indian nationalism which transcended religious affiliations. The British

encouraged these divisive and separatist views as they, along with the feudal elements, worked in the interests of colonial rule and against the integrative anti-colonial nationalism of the Indian National Congress.

The Congress was committed to Hindu-Muslim unity and building a strong front against the British. It also made attempts to build some kind of a socio-economic programme for an independent India. There existed within the Congress a strong Hindu right wing, but it remained marginal and was not able to dominate the all-encompassing, all-India character of the Congress. The fear of the 'Hindu' character of the Congress was exaggerated by the British government as well as by the Muslim League to strengthen communal separatism. Though the Congress was wedded to non-communal politics, there was no conceptual clarity within the party about what a secular state policy should be. The leadership was for a territorially and culturally united India, pledged religious freedom to its citizens and also agreed that there should not be a state religion. Freedom from colonial rule and the subsequent economic development were considered antidotes to communalism. There also seemed to be a subconscious belief that the notions of 'eternal' Hindu 'secularism' and 'tolerance' that had brought about a 'unity in diversity' in the past would once again generate harmony and brotherhood between communities. But, the Congress failed in formulating a clear theory of secularism grounded in the particularities of India. Was state functioning to be completely separate from religious affairs? What should be the stance of the state on religious mobilisations for political ends? Should there be a uniform law to govern civil relations or various communities can follow their own laws? How should the law reconcile individual freedoms with community norms? Considerable ambiguity remained on these and other questions not only in its political programmes but also in the Constitution which was adopted in 1950.

The concluding years of the British rule in India witnessed the most gruesome Hindu-Muslim riots. The 'Direct Action Day' called by the Muslim League in 1946 set off large scale violence in Calcutta that continued for several months. Town after town witnessed killing sprees. Violence in Bengal and Bihar spread to the Punjab and NWFP. This was a time when the non-separatist Muslim leadership was completely overshadowed and popular support began to shift to the Muslim League, a fact which goes on to shows the importance of violence for communal politics. Partition of the sub-continent took a further toll upon Hindu-Muslim relations. Communal killings whose number touched one million—and the accompanying displacement inflicted deep wounds on the national psyche and formed the basis of communal politics in independent India.

14.4   WHY DOES COMMUNAL POLITICS THRIVE?

It is easy for communal politics to thrive in a situation of uneven and retarded economic development. Uneven economic development and distribution, in terms of region as well as social groups, works to the advantage of communal politics. An economy which is marked by slow and haphazard growth, rising levels of unemployment, unmanageable levels of poverty, low literacy levels, falling health standards, etc., is prone to mobilisations based on community, religion, caste and sect. A society facing economic hardships—poverty, hunger and unemployment—is more likely to support community based politics.

Two reasons can be given to explain the differences of wealth. First the successive governments have failed to bring about a just distribution of resources and to provide minimum access to

education and health. Second, the religio-cultural reasons are responsible for the differences in wealth. Communal politics uses the second explanation and advances itself. It also constructs the exploitation of a community by another, or regions for the basis wordiness, rich in reality might not even exist. For instance, communal rhetoric like, "the economic and political appeasement of the other community is the cause of our poverty" and "the flourishing business of that community is at the cost of our well-being", is commonly used to mobilise religious communities on political agendas. Thus, one finds that the underprivileged--the lower castes, tribals, the poor peasants and the labouring sections—get drawn into communal mobilisations, expecting an end to their economic miseries. It is the poor and underprivileged sections of society who often get drawn to communal violence. However, even the middle classes and privileged sections have been involved in voilance in several cases. Communal interests promote communal strife to maintain their dominant position in politics and society.

Moreover, it is much easier for the ruling elite to mobilise people on narrow communal lines. Such mobilisations are short-cuts to power. Improving the economic status of the masses requires a will and commitment over long term. This commitment is something which can eventually pose a challenge to the dominant political and economic interests. The rate of economic development remains painfully slow, not least due to the massive corruption involving the political leadership. Often, the state resorts to cutting down on welfare schemes meant for the people. Resources are withdrawn from education and health sectors, employment generation schemes are frozen and workers retrenched from public sector undertakings to meet the fiscal crises of the state. Communal politics is of great utility in breaking any popular opposition to these policies. In such situations communal politics helps channelise the anger of the people away from the leadership responsible for their economic underdevelopment towards other communities.

Lastly, often communal riots have been instigated to eliminate a business rival and to take over coveted property. In an event of economic competition, traders and entrepreneurs of a particular community often use communal politics and violence to smother competition from business rivals of a different community.

14.5 COMMUNAL POLITICS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

Communal politics to be able to operate smoothly, relies heavily upon the past. It is dependent upon a certain interpretation of history and its selective appropriation distortions, constructions, decontextualisation and selective picking and choosing form the baggage of communalisation of history, something indispensable for communal politics. As such an imagined past is created to serve communal needs. As such an imagined past is created to serve needs of communal politics. For instance, Hindu communalism operates with a view of history where certain eternally noble characteristics are attributed to Hindus, such as tolerance, respectful of other's religious beliefs, spirituality, unmindful of material desires, etc. These attributes are said to be in full bloom during the ancient period of the history of India, a period interpreted as one of glory and prosperity for the Hindu nation (the 'nation' is also attributed an imagined antiquity). This ancient era is considered Hindu heritage which needs to be revived.

The entry of the Muslims is said to have spoilt this period of calm, prosperity and creativity. With the entry of Muslims India is said to have embarked on the second phase of its history, the

medieval period, an era of darkness. This was an era, so it is propagated, of Muslim fanaticism and destruction, — the Muslims were driven by the sole religious aim of conversions and destruction of the places of worship of the Hindus. In this history, Muslims are unflinchingly attached the traits of fanaticism, iconoclasts, marauders and murderers.

Conversely, for the Muslim communalists, it is the medieval era which needs to be looked up to. It was a period when Muslim power was at the helm — a glorious time of Muslim rule. This marking of historical periods on the basis of religion of the rulers is in itself ahistorical putting in doubt this entire exercise. It is a history, which does not even remotely resemble the complex currents and cross-currents that make up the historical process. This periodisation of history — Hindu, Muslim and British — is borrowed from James Mill's, *History of British India*. Besides, officially endorsing the Hindu-Muslim antagonism, this British periodisation created monoliths out of religious communities giving them an internal unity which never existed. In turn, this interpretation gave grist to the mills of communal politics.

This interpretation also helped building communal *stereotypes*. For the Hindu communalists, Hindus are innately tolerant and the Muslims are fanatics. For the Muslim communalists, Hindus are seen as scheming and shrewd exploiters of innocent poor Muslims. For one, Hinduism is a philosophically rich, tolerant and peace-loving religion, while for the other, it is an idolatrous, obscurantist collection of mumbo-jumbo. Communal politics always reduces the other community into a set of stereotypes and caricatures which obliterate all social complexities and historical variations within that community.

An oft-repeated instance of Muslim 'fanaticism' is destruction of places of worship. What is conveniently forgotten is that the destruction of places of worship was not always due to religious fanaticism and it was not only the rulers of the Muslim faith who indulged in such activity. Often, political and socio-economic factors were responsible for the destruction of places of worship and also their conversions into rival shrines. This was not only peculiar to India, but occurred in other societies as well. Such destructions were assertions of political power and also ways of replenishing dry treasuries. Also, various religious orders clashed with each other for state patronage or economic gain resulting in destruction of sacred shrines. Historian, Romila Thapar, tells us of an 11th century king Harsa, plundered and confiscated temples to replenish his treasury. She points out the antagonism between Saivas and Jainas in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh which in many instances became violent resulted in the destruction of Jaina temples or their forcible conversion into Saivite shrines. She also tells us of many cases of violence between Sannyasi orders and the Vairagis in the latter part of the Mughal rule. These instances highlight some significant points.

First, that religious faith may be the identifiable basis of the group, but factors such as political influence and economic advantage became the prime reasons of conflict and destruction.

Second, sectarian strife leading to plunder and destruction of each other's places of worship for wealth or political patronage was not unusual occurrences in the pre-modern era.

Third, there was no such formation as an undifferentiated religious community. Differences of ritualistic and social practices marked one sect from the other. Also distinct were identities of region, occupation and caste.

Communal politics thus breaks up history into simplified phases which besides giving a distorted picture of the past is also communal in nature. Moreover, religious prejudice rather than an

objective view of history forms the basis of historic explanation. Here, religion and religious conflict are given a centrality and their role exaggerated to such an extent that even simple rivalries over secular issues are given a religious interpretation.

14.6 COMMUNAL POLITICS AND COMMUNAL VIOLENCE TODAY

Over the years, as the economic hardships have grown, the politics of the country has turned increasingly towards communal issues for political mobilisation. Most often this has resulted in communal violence. Violence is important for communal politics for it leads to communalisation of society and results in a polarisation, which brings votes and political power. Therefore, communal riots are not sudden outbursts of religious conflicts. As one moves from the 1960s to the first few years of the present century (21st century), one witnesses that increasingly communal riots have been carefully planned and systematically engineered. Material reasons and electoral compulsions form the basis of this politics.

Communal politics openly resorts to communal mobilisation for political ends. There is also a politics which opportunistically resorts to communal mobilisation for short term electoral gains. In the first category are groups like the VHP, the Shiv Sena, the Muslim League, the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, etc. In the second are parties like the Congress-I, the Trinamool Congress, the Telegu Desam, the Samata Party, etc. The political programmes of the first group are openly based upon mobilisation of religious communities. The second group has opportunistically used communal themes or have not taken a categorical stand against communal issues because that would have meant a weakening or loss of power for them. For instance, the Congress pandered to Hindu communalism when passed orders to open Babri mosque to Hindu for prayers. The Congress also tried to please the Muslim communal interests when around the same time (1986) it overturned the Supreme Court Judgement on the Shah Bano case, which had ordered maintenance to be paid to the divorced Shah Bano by her husband. During the Gujarat communal violence in 2002, parties like the Telugu Desam, Samata Party, Janata Dal and DMK confined themselves to verbal criticisms and did not use their parliamentary leverage to force the Government's hand on the issue as it may have led to their losing power.

It can be argued that the politics around the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi dispute has been the prime contributor to the growing intolerance and violence in India over the past decade or more. The primary contention of those responsible for the destruction of the Babri mosque and who are mobilising for construction of a Ram temple is that India is a Hindu nation and therefore Hindu community's, rights take precedence over everything else. This is clearly the two-nation theory at work and this politics openly advocates the formation of a Hindu nation-state in India. The politics of Ramjanmabhoomi has been a prime contributor to the electoral fortunes of the BJP. The Lok Sabha strength of the BJP went up from 2 seats in the 1984 election to 88 seats, in the 1989 elections and in the 1991 elections to 120 seats. It is this dependence of the BJP on the Ramjanmabhoomi movement which prevents it from dealing firmly with communal violence and politics despite being in power.

The loss of life in communal riots has gone up steadily over the years. It is reported that between 1950 and 1960 the number of lives lost in communal riots was 316. This number (over a

decade) is very small compared to the death toll in each incident of communal violence from the late 1960s. In 1969 riots in Ranchi-Hatia the number of people killed was 184 and in the Ahmedabad riots the same year, the death toll was 512. In the Bhiwandi-Jalgaon (1970) riots the number was 121 deaths. In the Bhagalpur violence from October 22, 1989 to January 15, 1990 the number of those killed was 960. What also should be added here is that in communal violence in independent India more Muslims have been killed and displaced. In the Ranchi-Hatia riots out of the 184 killed, 164 were Muslims; in Ahmedabad (1969) out of 512 deaths, 413 were Muslims. In Bhiwandi-Jalgaon out of 121 deaths, 101 were Muslims. In Bhagalpur, out of 960 killed, nearly 890 were Muslims.

About 900 people were killed in the 1992-93 Bombay (Mumbai) riots of which at least 575 were Muslims. In the Null Bazar market of Mumbai, 512 shops were set ablaze after being looted. Of these 90 belonged to the Hindus and rest to the Muslims. Behind Gol Deval there were a few Muslim shops and all of them were looted and gutted. The Justice B.N. Srikrishna Commission that was set up to probe the violence found that the Shiv Sena fomented and organised communal riots in Mumbai that led to the death of innocent Muslims and destruction of their property.

During the Gujarat violence (2002), Muslims and their property were systematically targeted. In four days—28th February to 3rd March 2003—600 Muslims had been killed, though Amnesty International puts the number as 2000. More than 2 lakh Muslims were displaced, their homes looted and burnt. The number of Hindus who were displaced was 10,000.

The role of the police in communal violence needs to be taken into account also. From every major incident of communal violence in the country, what has almost invariably emerged is the partisan role of the police. The communalised character of the police has been more than evident. The police through its partisanship has helped communal politics and in fact has played the role of an oppressive bureaucracy in the service of the ruling class well. The police rather than playing a mediatory role and swiftly putting an end to arson, loot and murder has either been a moot spectator to violence or has itself become participant in it. Moreover, this silence or participation has almost always been anti-minority. In Bhiwandi 1970, Firozabad in 1972, Aligarh in 1978, Meerut in 1982 there was not a single Hindu victim of police bullets while the number of Muslims dying of police bullets respectively was 9, 6, 7 and 6. The police is reported to have joined the mobs and looted Muslim homes in the Jamshedpur communal violence in 1979. The Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) opened fire on 40,000 Muslims while they were at Id prayers in Moradabad in August 1980. A pig had wandered into the *namaz* that led to a small altercation and the police went berserk and began firing at the *namazis*. Meerut witnessed a cold-blooded massacre of innocent Muslims by the PAC following riots of May 1987. More than two dozen Muslims were picked up from the Hashimpura locality and massacred. The bodies were dumped in the Hindon canal. Some bodies were found floating in the canal near Maliana village. This ignited passions and Meerut was again on fire. The months of May, June and July 1987 saw some tragic rioting in Meerut. During the Bhagalpur riots 1989, the police silently watched the murder of 116 Muslims who were buried in a field and cauliflower was grown on it.

During the 1992-93 Mumbai riots, police used excessive force against and systematically refused to register their complaints against Hindu mobsters. The same was the story in Gujarat in 2002. The Muslims not only had to face the Hindu mobsters, many a times led by local VHP-Bajrang

Dal supporters, but also the police. In Gujarat in 2002, the police did all that it was not expected to do and did not act where it should have taken action. The police directed the mobsters to Muslim homes, was a mute spectator to their killings, fired at Muslims, took part in looting their property, and did not register complaints of affected Muslims against their attackers. On February 28, 40 men shot dead near the Bapunagar police station were all Muslims, shot on the head and chest, while trying to defend themselves from a 3000 strong mob.

14.7 PATTERNS OF PRESENT DAY COMMUNAL POLITICS

These happenings reveal some significant facts about communal politics after the emergence of Hindutva as a major ideological force on the political scene. One, communalism has acquired an openness, a legitimacy and mass reach comparable to, and surpassing, what the Muslim League achieved in British India. Communal politics in the early decades of Independent India needed a screen from behind which it operated. It was a tacit kind of politics, which was shy of coming out in the open. Now this shyness has been replaced by openness attributable to the legitimacy that it has acquired. This legitimacy flows from a culturally majoritarian understanding of Indian politics, that is, an understanding which believes that since India has a religious majority of Hindus, Hindu politics is the most natural representation of the interests and aspiration of the entire population. Therefore, according to this understanding, Hindu politics should be acceptable to all because it is an articulation of the interests of the greatest number and this is what democracy is all about. The reach of Hindu communalism has spread, which is partly attributable to the first point discussed above, that is, the majoritarian religio-cultural understanding of democracy, and partly, to the State's increased identification of itself with Hindu right wing politics. The State has also distanced itself much more from the promises it made to the impoverished mass of the Indian population.

Two, present day communal politics, in its Hindu communal form, challenges the very foundations of democracy in India. It calls for the formation of a Hindu state and challenges the basic principles of equal citizenship, secularism, religious tolerance and religious freedoms — the foundations of a plural Indian polity. Rather than governance by a political majority which is open to democratic contestation, it is oriented to religious majoritarianism as the basis of political rule. This was not case earlier. Earlier communalism became a vehicle for economic or political influence, but never posed a threat to democracy. Hindutva has brought about this fundamental change in communalism post-late 1980s.

Three, in independent India, minority communal politics has not been able to survive the onslaught of Hindu politics. Earlier, minority and majority communal politics used to breed on each other to consolidate their spheres of influence and also, the Muslim League had considerable political clout. But, in independent India, Muslim politics, as an ideological force, has been pushed to an insignificant fringe. In recent years, Muslim politics has become less communal and more communitarian, in the sense that it is concerned more with rights of Muslims as equal citizens and is speaking against discrimination in the public sphere. Questions of citizenship have come to occupy Muslim politics more than issues of communal contestation. In this role, it is moving towards secular political agendas. However, a small element of minority communalism has moved towards fundamentalist outfits and terrorist groups. So, Muslim communalism has two forms

today. One, a widespread and more communitarian form that defends the rights of the Muslims as equal citizens of India, and two, an extremist form, which is on the fringes, that takes recourse to terrorist activites.

Four, Muslim communal politics (in its communitarian form) is regionally specific. There are scattered pockets of its incluence that do not have any connection with each other. For example, the politics of MIM in Hyderabad, of the Muslim League in Kerala, of some leaders in Uttar Pradesh, etc., is regionally localised with little possibility of collaboration. Each represents the interests of Muslims in their specific regional context. An organisational unity of the kind present in Hindu communalism is absent here.

Five, Hindu communalism is ideologically much stronger than Muslim communalism, and this strength comes from its ability to identify with Indian nationalism. Hindu communalism's trait to conveniently slip into claims of Indian nationalism is something which Muslim communalism can never achieve, rather it, like all other minority nationalisms, is always in danger of being branded separatist and anti-national. Hindu communalism's ideological expression is revealed in Hindutva which has a geographic uniformity and unity. In other words, there is no idelogical difference between Hindu communalism in say, Uttar Pradesh or Karnataka or Gujarat. Its intensity might differ but ideologically it is the same everywhere. It is on questions of identity rather than interests that this ideological edifice has been built marked with a sharp sectarian and authoritarian outlook.

Six, Hindu communal politics has got an added force from the way world politics itself has moved. The identification of Islam with global terrorism at the hands of the neo-imperialist forces after the 11th September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre towers in New York has come as a big political and ideological support to the Hindu communal forces. This has led them to intensify their politics of hate against the Muslims in India for a further political expansion. The activities of extremist groups like Al Qaida at the international level, and of the Mumbai underworld at the national level has made matters convenient for Hindutva forces in India to identify Muslims as anti-national and terrorists.

14.8   SUMMARY

The use of religion or religious identity for socio-economic benefits or political power is called communal politics. This politics thrives in a situation of religio-cultural plurality on the one hand and uneven and retarded economic development on the other. Both these conditions are present in India.

While communal violence is sporadic and ends up as a problem to be tackled on the spot, communal politics is a long term phenomenon that is based on a monolithic understanding of a religious community and exaggerates the differences between different religious communities. These differences lead to communalisation of society, which strengthens communal politics.

Communal politics in colonial India was a way of competing for government jobs and political positions. It acquired a much more serious face as a bulwark against the Congress led national movement. It was in colonial India that the two-nation theory was propounded. Communal politics was also a part of the 'divide and rule' policy of the British colonialists.

Communal politics interprets the past in a selective and distorted manner to be able to extend its area of influence. It resorts to certain communal stereotypes also for its advantage.

Over the years, politics has been increasingly resorting to communal mobilisations. Most often this has resulted in gruesome communal violence. In Indian politics today, Hindutva has acquired a centrality. Majority politics or Hindu politics has pushed minority politics to the margins. Minority politics has gradually moved towards communitarian issues in independent India. After 11th September 2001, Hindu communal politics has got a considerable political and ideological push.

14.9   EXERCISES

1) What is communal politics? Discuss the relationship between communal politics and economic development.

2) What kind of interpretation of history does communal politics rely on?

3) What are the patterns of communal politics in India today?

4) Spell out the necessity of communal violence for communal politics?

UNIT 15   ASSERTION OF DALITS AND BACKWARD CASTES

Structure

15.1   INTRODUCTION

During the past few decades there has been an assertion of the dalits and backward classes in India. The latter are also known as the other backward classes (OBCs). Through such assertions these groups have seek to strive for social and cultural autonomy, self-respect and dignity, and demand a share in the political power. They are playing very dominant role in politics of several states. In the recent past they have become a formidable components of the power structure in the national politics. In this unit you are going to study the assertion of dalits and backward castes in India, the reasons for it and its impact on the politics and society in India.

15.2   SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

15.2.1   Dalits

Dalits is a term generally used for the ex-untouchable castes, which have been identified as the Scheduled Castes by our constitution. They form a large number of castes and have been involved in the low ranking occupations like leather work, scavenging and agricultural labourers. Land reform measures did not benefit them. However, a large number of welfare programmes have had varying impact on them in different parts of the country. Despite the handicap in benefiting from the welfare policies of the state, there has been improvement in their conditions.

Reservation in the educational and political institutions have given rise to the emergence of an articulate group among them. This group articulates their problems. This also indicates towards a process social transformation, which has taken place in India. But the social transformation has shown uneven patterns in the country. In large areas of the country, especially the rural areas, dalits continue to face indignities and humiliations.

Despite the comprehensive provisions in the Constitution of India, the fight against dalits' discrimination is yet to be won. Dalits continue to suffer from the menace till date. Marc Galanter laments: '' The Constitution sets forth a general programme for the re-construction of Indian Society. In spite of its length, it is surprisingly undetailed in its treatment of the institution of caste and existing group structure in Indian society.''

Even the provisions provided by the law of the land have proved ineffective in most of the cases. Article 17 of the Constitution had abolished "Untouchability". The provisions of affirmative action contained in the Constitution have become redundant in some cases. The entire private sector is under no obligation to do social justice to dalits. Dalits' demand for reservation in the private sector faces stiff opposition from several powerful and articulate groups.

15.2.2 Backward Castes

Backward Castes are also known as backward classes or the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Our constitution identifies those social groups as OBCs, which are educationally and socially backward. This categorisation includes those groups among the OBCs, which are not necessarily backward politically or economically. That is why a large number of the castes identified as OBCs are quite influencial in politics and economy, especially agriculture in different states of India. Unlike dalits, OBCs is a more differentiated category. It includes the intermediary land owning castes as well as the landless service castes. The land owning middle or intermediary castes are mainly Jats, Yadavs, Gujars, Lodhs, Kurmies in the north India, Marathas and Patels in Maharastra and Gujarat and Reddies, Kammas, Vokaliggas and Lingayats in South India. It is these castes which are the most assertive among the OBCs. Socially belonging to the middle or intermediary castes, they have benefited from the land reforms and green revolution. They also own the maximum resources and land in rural society. Some of them have even diversified into non-agricultural economy. Thus their sphere of influence cuts across the towns and the villages. They form significant component of the market economy relating to agriculture.

15.3 ASSERTION OF DALITS

Post-independence period in India has seen assertion of dalits in India. This assertion can be divided into three phases – the phase of Republican Party of India; the phase of Dalit Panther and the phase of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Since this assertion took place after the death of Ambedkar all these phases belong to the post-Ambedkar dalit movement. The focus of dalit movement in the preceding period had been on the temple entry, restoration of self-respect, and getting reservation for the dalits in the political and government institutions. The post - Ambedkar dalit movement took the multiple forms—socio-cultural, economic and political. Due to their assertion dalits have been able to get the recognition as a distinct social and political group. Their assertion is reflected through various ways i.e., foundation of social, cultural and political organisations, conversion to other religion and increasing political participation.

A number of factors account for the assertion of dalits. The most important of these are the rise of an educated and articulate group among them, the expansion of mass media and most importantly the impact of ideas and life of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on them. The process which denotes the impact of life and ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has been conceptualised as Ambedkarisation by Jagpal Singh. The sub-sections 15.3.1, 15.3.2, 15.3.3 and 15.3.4 deal with dalit assertion with the examples of the Republican Party of India, Dalit Panther and the Bahujan Samaj Party, and left and dalit question.

15.3.1   The Republican Party of India

A few years before his death Dr B.R. Ambedkar founded the Republican Party of India (RPI). This party aimed at amelioration of the socio-economic conditions of dalits and the poorer classes and to enable them to capture political power. After Ambedkar's death the RPI was strengthened by an emergent educated middle class of dalits. The RPI became popular mainly in Uttar Pradesh and Maharastra in the 1950s and 1960s. In Uttar Pradesh it even contested elections in 1960s and became a force to reckon with. In UP the RPI forged an alliance of dalits, Muslims and the OBCs. But it lost its popularity after 1960s as some of its prominent leaders got accommodated in the Congress party. In Maharastra the RPI was split into several groups, marked by ideological and personal differences.

It is important to note that the RPI worked among dalits on two fronts – political and cultural. The political front included mobilisation of dalits to participate in elections. Though the RPI ceased to exist as a significant political force after the 1960s, the work done by it had its impact on the cultural field. Influenced by Ambedkar, a large number of his followers converted to Buddhism. Those who were influenced by Ambedkarism and Buddhism played significant role in spreading Ambedkarism among dalits. In fact, the process of Ambedkarisation was initiated at that time. This contributed to the assertion of dalits in following decades.

15.3.2   The Dalit Panther

Influenced by Marxism Ambedkarism and Negro literature a group of dalit intellectuals founded Dalit Panther in Maharastra in 1972. It was basically a movement of dalit intellectuals, which contributed to generating consciousness among dalits to a significant extent. It attacked the Hindu Caste system through literary activities, debates and discussion in homes, offices and public places. An incident was the main cause for setting up the Dalit Panther. Dalit Panther was named after the Black Panther of USA. The incident was related to a controversy published in by dalit writers in a magazine *Sadhna*. Dalit Panther also launched a movement for renaming of Marathwada University after Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. It was constrained by the confinement of its base to Urban areas. It also suffered multiple splits on the ideological and personal bases.

15.3.3   The Bahujan Samaj Party

The rise of BSP in last two decades of 20th Century in north India, and becoming Chief Minister of its leader Mayawati thrice in Uttar Pradesh symbolises the empowerment of dalits in India. The rise of the BSP is part of the process of dalit empowerment, which started in the post-independence period. Founded by Kashi Ram, on April 14, 1984 the Bahujan Samaj Party aims to empower the majroty section of the society or bahujan samaj – dalits, OBCs tribals and minorities.

According to the understanding of the BSP, the minority high castes in India – Brahmins, Rajputs and Banias have exploited the bahujan samaj. The former have used their votes to rule over the bahujan samaj. The bahujan samaj should capture political power as it forms the majority of the population, and in democracy the majority should rule. When the bahujan samaj captures the power, it will not need help from the minority high castes. Rather it will condescend the help to the high castes. Before the formation of the BSP, Kanshi Ram had mobilised the middle classes employees belonging to the scheduled castes, other backward classes and minorities through All India Backward and Minority Employees Federation (BAMCEF). He changed it into DS4.

In Uttar Pradesh the Bahujan Samaj Party was able to mobilise the bahujan samaj in collaboration with the Samajwadi Party in 1993 assembly election, which enabled it to share power with its alliance partner, the Samajwadi Party. Following its estrangement with the Samajwadi Party, the BSP allied with the BJP thrice in Uttar Pradesh to head the government. The governments headed by the BSP leader Mayawati identified Ambedkar villages where dalits formed a substantial population, in Uttar Pradesh. Special programmes were introduced in the Ambedkar villages for the over all development of these villages, with main focus on dalits.

Dalit assertion through BSP is, infact, continuation of a process which had started in the late 1950s and 1960s. However, the BSP's initial strategy to forge an alliance of the bahujan samaj could not succeed. All major constituents of the bahujan samaj, which formed the social bases of the BSP initially – the OBCs, the Muslims and a section of the non-jatav- dalits got separated from the BSP within a few years of its having shared the power. The first instance of the disintegration of the social base of the BSP was the split within the BSP and SP alliance.

Though the major constituents of the bahujan samaj which formed the social base for the BSP have got separated, the BSP has become strong political force. Through the BSP dalits can bargain to share the political power on their own terms and conditions. Besides, the BSP has changed its strategy of caste mobilisation. It no longer adheres to its earlier strategy of mobilising the bahujan samaj. It now believes in mobilising the sarva samaj (all castes inducing Brahmins, Rajputs and Banias). That is why the BSP gives its tickets to the high castes also. With its strong base among dalits, it is able to get additional support of high castes as well by allotting tickets to them.

15.3.4 Left and Dalit Question

Dalit assertion has also taken place through the mobilisation by the left especially the in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and parts of some other states. The naxalites have taken up the issues of dual exploitation of dalits – caste exploitation and class exploitation involving issues related to self-respect, exploitation of woman, wages and land reforms. The naxalites are not averse to using the violent means to get their demands conceded. PWG (People's War Group), Party Unity, Indian People's Front are some of the naxalite organisations, which work towards dalit assertion. They are countered by the high castes and landlords' organisations like 'Lorik Sena' or 'Bhoomi Sena' in Bihar.

The major left parties – the CPI(M) and the CPI did not feel, till recently, special the need to mobilise dalits on the caste question. For them dalits were constituents of the poorer classes, which face economic exploitation. These parties felt that improvement in the economic conditions of dalits will also result in the abolition of social discrimination. The CPI(M)'s Party

Programme in para 5.12 clearly mentions: "The problem of caste oppression and discrimination has a long history and is deeply rooted in the pre-capitalist social system. The society under capitalist development has compromised with the existing caste system. The Indian bourgeoisie itself fosters caste prejudices. Working class unity presupposes unity against the caste system and the oppression of Dalits, since the vast majority of the Dalit population are part of the labouring classes. To fight for the abolition of the caste system and all forms of social oppression through a social reform movement is an important part of the democratic revolution. The fight against caste oppression is interlinked with the struggle against class exploitation." However, in the context of assertion of dalits and backward classes, even these parties have reconsidered their position. Like others, they also feel that along with the class issues, the caste should also be given special consideration while devising the policies for dalits.

15.4   ASSERTION OF BACKWARD CLASSES

15.4.1   North India

Assertion of backward castes in North India is basically assertion of middle or intermediary castes, i.e., Jats, Yadavs, Gujars, Kurmies, Lodhs, etc. in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Haryana. The lower backwards – the artisans and service castes do not show the kind of assertion which the intermediary castes have shown. However, Karpoori Thakur, who belonged to the service castes, barker, had become chief minister of Bihar twice. But his catapultation to the chief minister's post was not indication of the assertion of service castes and artisans. He, infact, represented the intermediary or the middle castes. During the first two decades following independence, the representation of the backward castes was much less as compared to the latter period. From the 1970s these castes have come to dominate the politics in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They not only constitute the larger number of the legislators and ministers in these states, they also now play decisive role in formation of the government at centre.

The credit to mobilise the backward castes in north India during the post-independence period actually goes to Charan Singh. Though his caste, Jat was not categorised as an OBCs in Uttar Pradesh till 2002, he identified himself with other backward classes like Yadavs, Kurmies, Lodhs and Gujars. He understood the political significance of these castes. While he was a member of the Congress, he carved out a special place for himself as the leader of the backward classes. He chalked out his strategy for this purpose meticulously. During the 1950s and 1960s, he visited the districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh quite frequently to address the peasants belonging to backward classes. He apprised them of the role played by the Congress, in which he had a decisive role, in making them the proprietors of their land as a result of zamindari abolition; he attended and addressed the meetings of the backward classes; he opposed the Nehru's idea of cooperative farming and imposition of cess on agriculture etc. Apart from the land reforms, these groups also benefited from the green revolution introduced in the 1960s.

Charan Singh's strategy to mobilise the backward classes displeased some high caste leaders within the Congress. The latter accused Charan Singh of favouring the backward classes and as a result alienating the high castes from the Congress. The differences within the Congress resulted in the defection of Charan Singh from Congress in 1967 and formation of the Bharatiya Kranti Dal by him in 1969. This happened at a time when Congress was defeated in eight states, and formation of the government led by the non-Congress formations.

This enabled Charan Singh to emerge as an independent leader of the backward classes in north India. For the first time he gave maximum representation to the backward classes in his ministry. Along with efforts of Charan Singh, the socialists influcned by Ram Manohar Lohia also mobilised the backward classes. The coalition of backward castes came to be known as AJGAR (Ahir, Jat, Gujars and Rajputs) in north India. Similarly the backward caste coalition in Gujarat was known as KHAM (Khartiyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims). The merger of the Bharatiya Kranti Dal and the Sanyukta Socialist Party in 1974 brought the Gandhians, Socialists and Charan Singh together. These gave ideological cover to the backward class mobilisation and assertion in north India.

Backward classes formed an important section in the Janata Party. Issues of backward classes, rural sector and agriculture got special focus of the Janata Party government during 1977-1980. One result of the backward castes' assertion was appointment of Mandal Commission, for identifying the backward classes. The implementation of Mandal Commission Report by V.P. Singh's government in 1989 shows the culmination of the process of backward caste assertion. The criterion of including among the other backward classes those classes which are socially and educationally backward, and timings of its implementation resulted in the anti-mandal agitation.

These developments indicate towards the assertion of the backward classes. The backward classes are accommodated in different political parties: some parties like the Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar and Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh are largely identified with the backward classes.

15.4.2 South India

Backward castes' assertion in south Indian States – Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra started much earlier to that in north India. It had its root in the non-Brahmin movement or the self-respect movement which was led by E V Ramaswami Naickar popularly known as Periyar in the 1920s and 1930s. The legacy of Periyar was carried forward by C.M. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi and several of his followers. It aimed to demolish the Brahmins' domination in culture and public institutions. It attacked cultural symbols identified with Hinduism or Brahminism, preached atheism against the belief in God.

The backward classes' aspirations and ideology were articulated through the political parties like the Justice Party, the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kaghgam), ADMK (Anna Dravida Munneba Kaghgam) and AIDMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kaghgam). Besides, there exist a large member of smaller parties of the backward classes in south India: the DK, forerunner of the DMK, was the first in the post-Independence India to begin a major agitation for backward caste reservations in the erstwhile Madras province in 1950. During the 1950s – 1960s the backward class assertion assumed the form an ethnic movement, which demanded a separate state for the dravidians. The Madras government issued the first such order in 1951, which ultimately led to the appointment of the First Backward Classes commission after a long period when DMK government came to power in 1967. The commission was appointed in 1969 and submitted its report the following year. The DMK accepted the Commission's recommendations to raise the existing reservations for the backward castes and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Unlike in the north, the backward caste assertion in south India has included all sections of the backward classes – the intermediary castes and artisans and service castes. The backward classes are divided among different political parties, which seek to espouse the backward class causes. They dominate in politics and economy of the south Indian states. Their assertion has eroded the influence of the high castes. That is why unlike north India, the south India did not evoke any opposition to the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report.

15.4.3 Organisations of Backward Castes

A large number of backward class associations appeared in the post–independence period. Marc Gallenter observed that by 1954, there were 88 organisations in India, which articulated the interests of the backward classes. The most important of these existed in North India. These were UP Backward Classes Federation and Bihar State Backward Classes Federation. These two organisations merged on 26 January 1950 to form All India Backward Classes Federation (AIBCF) by the efforts of Punjab Rao Deshmukh. The AIBCF had split into two groups – one adhering to the Congress ideology and another Lohiaite socialism. The former was represented by Punjab Rao Deshmuk and the latter by R L Chandpuri. R L Chandpuri formed Indian National Backward Classes Federation (INBCF) on 10 November, 1957.

These organisations sought to get the reservation for the OBCs and empower the them in order to overthrow the 'Brahmin-Baniya Raj'. The organisations contributed to the rise of consciousness of the OBCs. This consciousness, coupled with the result of land reforms and adequate numerical strength led to the assertion of the OBCs. However, AIBCF had become defunct by the 1970s. But a generation of the backward classes had already emerged on the political scene, which became more effective during the Janata Party regime (1977-80). It wad due to efforts of this section of the OBC leadership that the Janata Party government had appointed the second backward class commission, known as Mandal Commission named after its chairman B P Mandal. The implementation of Mandal Commission Report in 1989 in seeking to introduce 27 per cent reservation for the OBCs in the government jobs changed the contours of Indian Politics.

The present phase of backward classes assertion is a sequel to their assertion in the years surrounding the achievement of independence of the country from colonial rule. This had led to the appointment on January 29, 1935 of the first backwards classes' commission known as the Kalelkar Commission, which was headed by Kaka Kalelkar. Purpose of Kalelkar Commission was to determine the criteria to identify socially and educationally backward classes in India, in order to enable the government to introduce policies for their betterment. But there were differences among the commission members on the criteria which was to be followed to determine the backward class status of a community; one section supported the caste as a criterion, another class. The Kalelkar report was presented to the central government. But the government decided against introduction of reservation to the backward classes. Kalelkar report, however, occupied a prime place in the agenda of the backward classes' organisations. They demanded appointment of another backward class commission. The appointment of the second backwards class commission, i.e., Mandal Commission, was a result of it.

15.5 SUMMARY

We have studied in this unit that the dalits and OBCs have become assertive and politically dominant in India during the post-independence period. Although their assertion is more visible in the recent past, the process of their assertion had started much earlier. The policies of the state, emergence of conscious sections among them and ideologies like Ambedkarism, Lohiaism and urge for political and social recognition can be accounted for their assertion. However, their assertions have not been uniform across the country. But dalits and OBCs have become political and social forces to reckon with.

15.6 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the socio-economic condition of dalits and OBCs in India.

2) What factors have contributed to the assertion of dalits?

3) Write a note on the assertion of backward castes in India.

UNIT 16 LINGUISTIC AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN STATE POLITICS

Structure

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The linguistic and ethnic minorities occupy a significant place in democracy. Their empowerment in terms of participation in political processes, ability to avail of the distributive justice, security, freedom, equality, etc. is indicative of level of success of a democracy. In a multicultural and diverse society like India the multiple identities based on the diverse factors – caste, language, religion, race, culture, traditions, customs, etc. play significant role in impacting their place in democracy. The mobilisation, patronage, discrimination, in society and politics based on these markers form significant part of a democratic system. This unit attempts to acquaint the students with the linguistic and ethnic minorities in state politics in India.

16.2   WHO ARE THE LINGUISTIC AND ETHNIC MINORITIES ?

A minority is a group of persons whose numbers are smaller than the number of another group. It is a relative term; a group is minority in comparison to the other group, which forms the majority. The basis of the minority status of a group or community could be a single marker or more, i.e, language, religion, culture, customs, traditions, race, economy, etc. The denomination of a community whether it a linguistic, religious or cultural minority or majority depends on the basis of factor with which the group or the community is identified. The scholars in India generally address a community of the basis of single marker – language, religion or region. And the religion-based identity formation in particular is considered as communal. But the scholars following the American or European traditions consider the identity formation on both single and multiple markers as ethnic or communal. They use ethnic and communal interchangeably The Indian scholars generally consider that identity as ethnic which is formed by multiple factors – language, caste, religion, culture, customs, traditions, race, economy, etc. However, Dipankar Gupta holds that ethnicity and communalism are different: the ethnicity refers to mobilisation with reference to the nation-state – the territory and sovereignty. The mobilisation which does not refer to the nation-state referents is communal mobilisation.

There could be two levels of identification of the linguistic minorities - national and state/Union Territories. Even within the states there are again vertical and horizontal levels where the linguistic minorities exist. At all India level the linguistic majority consists of Hindi speakers; other linguistic groups are linguistic minorities. But the linguistic groups which are minorities at the all India level are linguistic majorities in different states. The groups within the states which do not speak the language of majority are linguistic minorities. All states of India have more than one linguistic minorities. The formation of states in the basis of language did not remove the linguistic diversities from there. Rather a large number of linguistic minorities live in every state. Within the states, the areas which border another state have the linguistic minorities, which could belong to the linguistic groups of another state.

There are 18 national languages, which are listed in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution. These are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Manipuri, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Except Hindi, most of these languages are the principal languages in a single state. From these languages Hindi is expected to "draw" its vocabulary wherever necessary and primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages. Besides, there are hundreds of dialects and languages in different regions spoken by variety of communities within the states. Many of these communities are demanding inclusion of their dialects and languages in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution. Their inclusion in VIII Schedule depends on the political factors. In fact, Cynthia Groff argues that "The large number of languages in India remains a political question and census categorization of minority language impacts that number". Though the minority languages do not have formal constitutional recognition as the official languages, these do matter in forming the identity of the community which speak them, and are important political mobilisers. Though minority languages are not given official recognition like the 18 languages mentioned in the VIII Schedule, there are safeguards (Arts. 29-30) to protect the linguistic and cultural interests of the linguistic minorities "from prohibition of their languages and from some discrimination".

However, except the provisions for setting up the cultural and linguistic institutions, the linguistic minorities do not enjoy any protection. No attempts are made by the political establishment to address the issues of linguistic minorities, since they lack political clout. Some scholars like Pattanayak believe that the "Three-Language Formula does not include the mother tongue of minorities." The adoption of Three-Language Formula also varied from state to state; some opted for three and some for the four language formula. Some observers, in fact, argue that the Three-Language Formula is discriminatory: in the Hindi speaking areas in reality it is Two-Language Formula, while for the linguistic minorities in several states it is virtually a four-Language Formula.

The significance of language as the basis of identity in India was recognised in the early twentieth century when Congress had organised itself on the linguistic lines. But after independence Congress had shown its reluctance to organise states on the linguistic basis till the state reorganisation Commission made its recommendation for linguistic organisation of states. This too was in the wake of the death of a Gandhian, P. Sriramulu, from Andhra Pradesh as a result of the hunger strike demanding a Telugu state Andhra Pradesh, which was created in 1953. The reorganisation of the states on the linguistic basis in 1956, however, did not resolve the language question. In the new states there were several languages which were spoken by the minority of people. These languages did not get the official recognition as well. This gave rise to the language-based conflicts within the states. The linguistic majorities allege that the linguistic minorities have

not adjusted to assimilated/respected the language of the majorities; the latter must do so as it is expected of them. The linguistic minorities on the other hand allege that they are discriminated against by the majority communities, which imposed their language on the former. This ultimately entails the demise of their language and culture. They demand that their language should be saved. One of means for this could be establishment of a state based on their language; some demand territorial autonomy within the states. Such demands continue to be raised in one or the other state of the country.

There is close a relationship between ethnicity and the linguistic identity. Some scholar do not differentiate between ethnicity, linguistic identify and communalism. A linguistic minority also shares multiple attributes among its members. In a mobilisation, which may be on a single factor, language, there is the collective mobilisation of the members of the linguistic groups. It is particularly so in the context of conflict between members of one linguistic group and those of another. Therefore, at the time of mobilisation the distinction between the ethnic identity of a group and its linguistic identity get blurred.

16.3 LINGUISTIC MINORITIES AND POLITICS

Politics of linguistic minorities has principally been impacted by these factors: their perception of themselves and of the linguistic majorities, the attitude of the linguistic majorities towards them, and the linguistic majorities' perception of the linguistic minorities. The linguistic majorities in different states have demanded that the linguistic minorities accept the language of the majorities as medium of instruction in educational institutions and the official language. They have done it through the three or four language formula. The linguistic minorities have demanded protection of their language by demanding its inclusion in VIII Schedule of the Constitution. It must be noted that demand for recognition of language as an official language or its inclusion in the VIII Schedule is rarely made as an independent demand; it is one of the several demands. In this respect the demands of the linguistic minorities are also demands of the ethnic minorities. A linguistic minority can also be an ethnic minority simultaneously. The ethnic minorities also demand separate states for themselves; they feel in such states their cultural and linguistic identity will be protected. Often the differences between linguistic groups in a state lead to linguistic riots. There are innumerable examples of riots between linguistic majorities and minorities in states of India. This section discusses some of these cases the relationships between the linguistic minorities and politics.

Let us start with the north-east India. There are a large number linguistic minorities in state of North-East India. The linguistic groups of the region can again be linked to the ethnic groups. The latter belong to two blocs of ethnic communities – the minorities indigenous groups which have not migrated from anywhere else outside the state, and those who have come from other states and settled there over the years in search of employment. The latter consist of minority multi-lingual groups. But the former consist of several single language minority groups. Assam is among the north-eastern states where the linguistic minorities have resisted the attempts of the linguistic majority to make its language as official and court language of all. The minority linguistic groups have resisted it by demanding protection of their own languages by asking for opening the educational institutions where the medium of instruction could be their mother tongue rather than that of the linguistic majority. In Assam the principal linguistic conflict has been between the Assamese and the non-Assamese languages. When Assam was a composite state, i.e., before

other states were carved of Assam, the conflict was between the Assamese on the one hand and the non-Assamese on the other. The latter included the Bengali, tribal languages, etc. But after formation of separates states out of Assam, especially Meghalaya in 1972, in Assam the main contradiction has been Bengalis and Assamese. Bengalis are a minority linguistic group in Brahmputra Valley and Assamese in Barak Valley. The Bengalis fear that introduction of Assamese as the official language would hamper the progress of Bengalis in Brahmputra Valley.

The Assamese-Bengali linguistic conflict in Assam can be traced back to the colonial policies. Within a few years of the occupation of Assam, the British made the Bengali as the official language. The Assamese had alleged that the British did so under the pressure of the Bengalis and it was discriminatory to them. They demanded that the Assamese be declared as an official and court language in Assam. This gave birth to a debate between the intellectuals of two linguistic groups. The Bengalis argued that there was no need for a separate court language for Assam, as Assamese was a dialect of the Assamese. The Assamese intellectuals on the other hand argued that Assamese was not a dialect of Bengali; it was an independent language with its own script and history. The Bengalis should be replaced with the Assamese as an official language. The British in fact declared Assamese as official language of Assam in 1873. Since then the conflict between the two linguistic groups continued in one or the other form. It assumed violent form in the post- independence period when the Assamese government introduced Assamese as an official language in 1960. It also resulted in demand for a tribal state in the Khasi dominated part of Assam. All non-Assamese communities including Bengalis, other non-tribals and tribal groups launched an agitation for formation of a separate state. With the formation of Meghalaya, the Assamese no longer remained the official language. But within Assam the linguistic minorities, both tribals and Bengalis, continue to complain of the discrimination by the linguistic majorities.

The formation of the linguistic states gave the status of linguistic majorities to those groups which were linguistic minorities in the context of all India scenario. But it placed the linguistic minorities within these states in vulnerable position. Apart from facing discrimination in the linguistic policies, they became targets of the attack of the dominant linguistic groups in a different context as well. For example, the linguistic community which is a majority in one state is a majority in another and vice-versa. The conflict between these groups which is not necessarily language – based has its repercussions for them in another states. The linguistic groups in two south Indian states - Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were involved in fierce language riots in 1992. These riots were in no way related to language. It was a fall out of the conflict which took place between two states over sharing of Cauvery water. The Tamil speaking community was targeted by the Kannada speakers in Karnataka causing damage to their property and lives. The minority Tamil linguistic groups demanded the introduction of special measures for the protection of their language and property.

Paul R Brass argues that the state governments have introduced discriminatory policies against the minority languages and the central government has not protected them. The attitude towards Urdu and Mithila spoken in north Bihar are among such examples. Besides, Urdu which is spoken several parts of the country, and is the single largest minority language in U P, has been subject to controversy by the communal forces. Any attempt to give Urdu as a status of official language is met with the criticism by certain groups that it was an appeasement of Muslims. But the Urdu speaking sections, which include both Hindus and Muslims see the opposition to Urdu as an attempt to discriminate against the linguistic minorities.

In Punjab also the linguistic issue got linked with the communal divide between Hindus and Sikhs during the Punjabi Suba movement of the 1960s. The Arya Samaj impacted the vision of non-Sikh Punjabis, who declared their language in the census enumeration as Hindi, though in reality it was Punjabi. It was mainly because of the communalisation of language and apprehension of Hindus that creation of separate states of Punjab excluding Haryana would reduce the Hindus to a minority community in Punjab. They felt by declaring Hindi as their mother-tongue would weaken the case for a separate state of Punjab.

16.4 ETHNIC MINORITIES AND POLITICS

As mentioned earlier, in Indian context the ethnic identity is based on multiple factors unlike the linguistic identity, caste or communal identity which is based on a single attribute. Since ethnic identity is a relative identity, the politics of one ethnic group is formed in the light of the politics of another ethnic group. Again, the ethnic politics to a large extent depends on the real and imagined factors. All states of India have ethnic minorities. But it is generally in the states which have witnessed the political movements for self-determination movements – autonomy movements, secessionist movements, insurgencies, that their politics assumes special significance. A large number of states are witnessing such movements. But these are most assertive in north-east India, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. This section deals with the relationship between politics and ethnic minorities in these states. It also attempt to reflect on the issue in context of the newly created states.

In north-east Indian states there are two types of ethnic minorities - one, those who have been living there since centuries, those who have settled there as a result of migration from different parts of the country since nineteenth century, and who still continue to immigrate into the region. Each of the ethnic minority groups is further divided in their background, culture, etc. The immigrant settlers are further divided on the basis of their original states, the states from where they have migrated. But in times of their conflict with the majority ethnic groups, their differences get blurred and they tend to unite into an informal federation of ethnic minorities. Some time even the single ethnic minority has been in conflict with the majority ethnic minority, which leaves them divided into distinct ethnic minorities. Some of the most important examples of politics of ethnic minorities in north-east India are relatd to the Kukis in Nagaland, the Bodos, Santhals, Karbis in and non-tribals in Assam, and the non-tribals in Meghalaya.

The ethnic minorities sometime join the majority ethnic groups in a common pursuit. But after the movement has achieved its purpose, the dominant ethnic group does not give them their due and recognition. This gives them a feeling of neglect and discrimination. As a result they also demand autonomy for their ethnic group. The examples of Bodos and Karbi tribes of Assam are suitable in this context. These two tribes participated wholeheartedly in the six year long agitation against the foreigners in Assam led by AASU. But when the AGP formed the government, their problems were neglected by the AGP/ASSU which was dominated by the majority ethnic group of Assam. As a result the Bodo started an agitation demanding creation of a Bodoland. The same pattern is applicable to the Karbi tribe of the Karbi Anlong district.

The politics of ethnic minorities is decided by the course of the politics of ethnic majorities. Let us take the example of the ethnic majorities in case of Meghalaya. The ethnic minorities there are three local tribes – Khasis, Garos and Jaintias. The principal ethnic majorities are Bengalis,

Nepalis, Biharis and Rajasthanis/Marwaris. Both groups of these ethnic communities joined together to demand a separate state of Meghalaya to be carved out of the then Assam in the 1960s. One of the principal reasons of their demand for a separate was their common grievance against making Assamese an official language, which they resisted as the ethnic majorities in Assam. The relations between them at that time were marked by ethnic harmony. But in the wake of formation of Meghalaya in 1972, the relations between ethnic minorities and majorities were characterised by ethnic conflict.

The politicians belonging to the ethnic majorities introduced certain policies in order to protect their identity, tradition and culture. They introduced the property laws, which prevented the non-tribals in general and tribals from other states from purchasing, inheriting and selling the property; reserved seats in the state government jobs and state assemblies for the local tribes or the ethnic majorities there. Besides, a large number of demands have been made which attempt to favour the majority ethnic community of the state. These contributed to the widening of ethnic divide between ethnic majorities and minorities. It also resulted in ethnic riots.

The politics of ethnic majorities provides a context to the politics of ethnic minorities. Unlike the politics of the ethnic majorities, the politics of the ethnic minorities does not always take the form of formidable political parties or effective political mobilisation. It is expressed in the form of complaints of violation of their political and human rights. They complain of being discriminated against in terms of right to get elected, get jobs and enjoy basic rights. The majority ethnic communities defend special measures given by state for them as special right as enshrined in the VI Schedule of the Constitution. The ethnic minorities argue that if special measures are not introduced for them, the ethnic majorities would encroach upon their rights. This will result in extinction of their identity.

Another region which enjoys special protection under the Article 370 of the Constittuion is Jammu and Kashmir. There are three major ethnic minorities in the state – these are Buddhist tribes of Laddhakh region, the people of Jammu region and the Kashmiri Pandits. In the context of politics of Jammu and Kashmir the principal markers of ethnic identity of the Kashmiri Pandits is religion, of the other two groups these are religion, language and region. These three groups have felt discriminated against by the dominant ethnic groups of Kashmiris. The Kashmiri Pandits became victim of the insurgency; being displaced from their ancestral habitat. The main ground for their discrimination has been religion. Their politics has revolved around the issue of their survival, human rights, and rehabilitation. They have become the victims of militancy because they belong to an ethnic minority. In fact, some of their representatives have demanded creation of a separate state consisting of Kashmiri Pandits as the major ethnic group.

The ground of the grievances of the ethnic minorities in Jammu and Laddakh regions is both regional and religious. They allege that the dominant ethnic groups of the state control the state power, which they use to strengthen their base in the Kashmir region. Their different religious and cultural background compound their discrimination further. Its repercussion in the politics are found in the demand for the status of Union Territory to the Laddakh region and for a separate state for the Jammu region. The Hindu rightist political organisations demand division of the state into three parts on the basis of religion.

Ethnic minorities in states have become an issue on which the ethnic majorities play their politics.

Their presence is projected by the politicians belonging to the latter as detrimental to their development. The ethnic minorities are seen as the appropriators of the job opportunities, grabbers of properties, as exploiters (in the case of eorth-east) of their natural resources and as threat to their cultural identity. Some of these allegations are imagined. The politicians belonging to the dominant ethnic groups demand protection of "the sons of the soil". They launch political agitation for removal of the "outsiders" from their state/city. Very often this leads to the ethnic violence. In the specific political context, especially before or after elections the demands of the "sons of the soil" become more strident. The Shiv Senas movement against the immigrant settlers in Mumbai and such agitations in north-east are some of the examples of ethnic minorities becoming the issue of political contestation and mobilisation.

16.5   SUMMARY

Empowerment of linguistic and ethnic minorities is an indication of the success of a democracy. The minorities are those groups whose numerical strength is smaller than other, the majorities. The basis of identification of a linguistic minority is language, while that of the ethnic minority is multiple. The latter mainly consists of caste, language, region, customs, tradition, economy, etc. Often the boundaries of the linguistic and ethnic minorities overlap. It is generally the scholars in India who differentiate between the identity formed on the single variable - linguistic, communal (religion) or caste, and the multi-variable ethnic identity. The scholars following the American and European traditions use the ethnicity and linguistic or the communal identity interchangeably.

Almost all states of India have linguistic minorities. Their politics is relative. It occurs in relation to the politics of linguistic ethnic majorities or in the context of it. The linguistic and ethnic minorities feel neglected and discriminated against by the majorities. The latter make the minorities as the bone contention or the target of their politics. They hold the ethnic minorities responsible for their problems. Many times it results in riots between the religious minorities and majorities. The ethnic minorities in tern demand autonomy from the majorities and recognition of their language as the official language by its inclusion in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution.

16.6   EXERCISES

1)   Discuss the characteristics of the linguistic minoities.

2)   Identify and discuss the features of politics of linguistic minorities in Indian states.

3)   Discuss the patterns of politics of ethnic minorities in Indian states.

UNIT 17 STATE AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

Structure

17.1 INTRODUCTION

The debate about the nature of the Indian federation as laid down in the constitution has gone on for about three decades now. The general trend of opinion has been to treat it as a federal constitution but with a very strong unitary bias. Its working during the last many decades has, however, been pronouncedly on unitary lines along with a steady encroachment on the powers of the states, which means that the Constitution provides mechanisms to the centre to encroach upon and curtail the rights and powers of the constituent states. In the 1990s in the era of coalition politics, which continues till now this process has been arrested though not reversed; all this due to the dependence of the Union governments on a variety of regional parties or the support of the Left. Moreover, provisions that make the centre all-powerful as against the states also tend to strengthen the executive as against the legislature. This process can in general terms be referred to as the centralisation of powers. This trend in turn gives rise to a counter movement on the part of the states to regain their powers.

17.2 FEATURES OF AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS

One manifestation of the fight back on the part of the states has taken the shape of the movements talked off as the state autonomy movements. It is more than the fight for financial resources, which has been a constant refrain on the part of the states. This is so because the division of powers between the centre and states is such that balance of powers tends to be against the states. Without going into details let us take just an instance. All the powers to impose taxes on constantly expanding incomes, like excise and custom duties or the income tax, also known as the elastic sources of income are with the centre. Whereas sources of income which are static, also referred to as inelastic, with the exception of sales tax, are with the states. As such the states become resource — starved and dependent on the centre for whatever they would like to undertake.

Apart from the struggle for financial resources, the state autonomy movements have a political dimension, which gives them a distinct character. This dimension involves issues such as the question of the exercise of powers by the centre under Art.356, to dismiss the state government, appoint and remove governors, standing of the states within the federal structure, and such other questions. In all of these the centre exercises discretionary powers and the states are quite at the mercy of the centre. The movements for state autonomy have been cantered around these issues. The scope of the state autonomy movements can best be captured in what is contained in the document called the Sakaria Commission Report.

One way of understanding both the process of centralisation of political power and the manifestation of the counter-tendency in the shape of the demands for 'State autonomy' is to look at it, at one level, through the consolidation and differentiation of the ruling classes like the capitalists and the landlords and how they seek to manage their contradictions and, at another level, to relate it to the growing democratic aspirations and concrete struggles of the common people, the working class, the peasantry and the other toiling people. All these forces are represented in the various political parties and their combinations. Before we do so, for the proper understanding of these demands for state autonomy it is also essential to grasp the underlying forces that provide the push towards the centralisation of political power. The contradictory consequence of the working of the economy for the states and the centre and the kind of reactions it evokes is of importance. One very important consequence flows from the development of capitalism.

The development of capitalism necessitates, as one of its conditions, the formation of larger markets for commodity production. This condition and the requirements of the capital, which is growing bigger all the time, demand centralisation of decision-making. The centralisation of state power is in part a reflection of this inner logic inherent in the capitalist development. The consequent erosion of the rights of the states or denial of autonomy to them is not simply a matter of will of this or that leader or this or that party in a simple sense; there are deeper forces working. This is a trend discernible all over the world. The history of the evolution of the federation in USA or Canada clearly shows this. Hence the issue of state autonomy and state rights is more than a question of simple choice between federal and unitary preferences on only a constitutional level, in spite of the fact that the constitutional division of power is very important.

The trend towards the centralisation of power is inherent but how it works out in specific circumstances in different countries is dependent on the configuration of political forces.

17.3 THE INDIAN CASE

We are not looking at the global trends but only at the case of India. Let us look at Indian politics by breaking it into three landmark phases; the uninterrupted rule of the Congress party from 1947 to 1977, the rule of the Janata Party from 1977-1979, the return of the Congress in 1980, and the continuing era of coalition politics since 1996.

17.3.1 The Phase of Congress Hegemony: 1947-1977

In India in particular, the process of political centralisation was facilitated by the more or less uninterrupted rule of the Congress party for the first 30 years both at the centre and in most of the states and was necessitated by the challenges to the hegemony of the Congress rule. The

Congress moves were the attempts of an insecure leadership in the face of the mounting crisis of the capitalist path of development. In fact, due to the failures of the economy to even mitigate the hardships of the people, solving the basic problems apart, the Indian political system has been in a state of semi-permanent crisis. The political dominance of the Congress and its hegemony over state power not only helped it to contain by repression or manipulations the recurrent political crises but also aggravated, by the very logic of the situation, the tendency towards the centralisation and concentration of political power. Given the nature of divisions among the ruling class parties in India, the Congress had no difficulty in converting this centralised power into authoritarian rule in the shape of the emergency. The consequence, as we have all experienced in a gruesome form, was not just the erosion of federal principles and the negation of state rights and powers but also a complete negation of the democratic rights and civil liberties of the people, including sections of the ruling classes. It is in the context of these developments of the recent past and the possibility of their recurrence in a possible future that the struggle around the demand for state autonomy assumes importance and reveals its link with the struggle for democratic rights of the people.

Within the perspective given above, I will look at the interconnections between the different dimensions in the working out of the process of centralisation of state power. I will also go into the roots and needs of different state autonomy movements in India. Given the divergent class bases of different movements, e.g. the Akalis or different parties representing the Dravidian movement or Jammu and Kashmir or West Bengal etc., it is also necessary to see if any objective complementarities exist between these different parties fighting for the same issue.

These can help to explain, in spite of important discontinuities, the great similarities between the periods 1967-1969 and 1977-1979 with respect to the fortunes of the political parties as well as to the heightened articulation of the demand for state autonomy. Both these periods witnessed the decline of the Congress Party and the emergence of the regional political parties and formations to political prominence. In both the situations, apart from one or two states, the regional or regionally-based parties that gained at the cost of the Congress party were the ruling class regional parties. Similarly, the parties which formed governments in different states on both these occasions, were providing opposition to the Congress party both at the centre and in the states within a framework of similar policy preferences, e.g., Akalis in Punjab, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal in Uttar Pradesh, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu, etc. It is possible to argue here that the growth and consolidation of the regional ruling class parties have been generally conditioned by the interests of the locally placed ruling class groups like the landlords and kulaks in Punjab, Haryana, western U. P., etc. or the non-big bourgeoisie in Tamil Nadu. It seems to me plausible to argue that differentiation in landed interests between different States is due to differential distribution of investments and concessions by the centre on top of the historically inherited consequences of land tenures, land development and productivity of land, crop specialisation, etc. In situations of economic crisis the inability of the state to dole out concessions to the dominant landed interests uniformly all over leads to discrimination and consequent dissatisfaction. This is likely to lead to conflicts of interest within the same class across the regions. Likewise, though in a different way, the non-big bourgeoisie may be objectively hampered by the operation of the market laws, which favour big bourgeoisie and thus impede the growth of locally placed non-big bourgeois groups. Such a condition, along with crystallised feelings of linguistic-cultural oppression, seems to provide the material basis for non-big bourgeoisie in certain clearly demarcated regions with a distinct population composition like Tamil Nadu to

strike an alliance with the landlords there in a potent regional formation – the Dravidian movement. Under circumstances like these, the locally placed ruling class groups seek greater power for themselves through the regional parties in power or opposition so that these can be used to further their own interests when these are perceived as not being best served by the all-India ruling class parties. Under circumstances like these, these ruling class groups avail of the popular discontent due to the deepening of economic crisis in order to build up oppositional politics in favour of the respective states. Such a configuration provides one objective ground on which regional movements thrive and seek greater" autonomy for" the states.   .

As a consequence of the above, during 1967-1969, with the decline of the Congress party as the political monolith and the coming to prominence of regional political parties and formations, the question of Centre-State relations was posed with a new sharpness. The 1977-1979 period also witnessed the recurrence of the same phenomenon. But there is a distinct difference between 1967-1969 and 1977-1979 although the similarities are significant. The 1967 defeat of the Congress was only partial and did not threaten the Congress rule at the Centre. Unlike 1977 when the rout was total, the 1967 elections left open the possibility of tactical manoeuvres by the Congress to contain the political crisis. The Congress defeat of 1967 led to "toppling operations" with the use of Congress power at the centre along with a tactical shift to the left with recourse to radical slogans and rhetoric in a much more pronounced manner than ever before. The success of these moves depended, among others, on the power at the centre which facilitated supportive state actions in favour of the political faction under Indira Gandhi.

17.3.2   The Janata Phase: 1977-1979

The nature of the Janata Party in power at the centre was unlike any other party. It was a conglomerate of many opposition parties and its birth was an outcome of a rapid coming together of disparate opposition groups ranging from Jan Sangh to the Socialists and the breakaway group of the Congress party under Jagjivan Ram. Their interests and programmes were naturally very different. An extraordinary situation, the need to defeat the emergency regime of Indira Gandhi, brought them together. These parties became factions within the newly formed Janata Party and continued to represent their earlier interests and programmes; Jana Sangh of the commercial petty-bourgeoisie or feudal landlords in certain regions, the BLD/BKD/Lok Dal of landlords and kulaks in three or four states of northern India, Swatantra of the bourgeoisie and erstwhile feudal lords; the Congress (0) was the only party that represented, like the Indira Congress, the interests of the entire ruling class, and the socialist parties which did not have any close identity with any class except to present a vague combination of radicalism and peasant populism. The spectrum of interests they represented and viewpoints they presented made them no different from the Congress in terms of the class interests.

Such a conglomeration ruled at the centre but its different constituents were in power in different States in uneasy alliances with other constituents. In the absence of a viable compromise formula, their different social bases and mass support forced them to horse-trade within the Janata Party to so tilt the policies that their mass supports could be sustained. It also happened that the Janata party was much more dependent for its rule on the various regional parties than was the Congress except for a brief while during 1969-1971. The absence of internal cohesion as well of intra-party consensus on vital issues made it difficult for it to impose its will or to effectively protect or guide the ruling classes. All this made the federal process in Indian politics much more fluid and open to bargaining as it also facilitated the assertion of people's power in both

organised and unorganised ways. Such a situation did not lead to any alteration in the rights of states in a constitutional-legal sense but gave a considerable margin politically to states under different political persuasions, like West Bengal, to strike an independent path without the fear of being toppled or excessively harassed. Likewise, the toiling people could also bargain better via-a-vis the ruling class power.

This division was not, from an ideological point of view, fundamentally different from what existed earlier. But there was a very significant fact: the support for the ruling class parties became, and was becoming, more and more atomised and relatively evenly spread whereas earlier it was concentrated around one party, the Congress party. Moreover, the left forces, especially the CPI(M), became relatively much more powerful than ever before without, however, having become decisive in the all-India context. The implications for the political process of this development—the conglomerate nature of the Janata party, the atomisation of other ruling class parties and the growth of left forces—were of far-reaching importance. Such a situation provided a conducive atmosphere for the assertion of people's power—mass movements, working class struggles, peasant agitations, etc. as well as for the struggle for and the consolidation of the rights and autonomy of various constituent States. The notable example of this was the comparative ease with which the Left Front-led government of West Bengal could push through with radical reforms. What needs to be noted here is the conglomerate nature of the Janata party; in other words, what became decisive was the absence of a monolith like the Congress party. In such situation different parties with very different ideological perspectives and representing diverse social and class interests joined together to fight for the rights of the states. It is obvious they would use the greater powers for the states for furthering very different interests.

Parties like AIADMK or Akali Dal represent specific interests of the dominant classes within their states, these parties are likely to seek greater power for themselves in the interests of locally placed ruling class groups, at a time when their interests are not being best served by the centralised state.

The left-democratic parties, on the other hand, need state autonomy in the interest of democratic economy and democratic polity. Their search for greater powers for the states can be fulfilled only when the class preferences of the working class and the peasantry can be materialised. The very logic of this involves the use of state autonomy for undermining the material bases of ruling class power. The left-democratic concept of state autonomy would therefore seek to further a politics of quite a different kind than that of parties like the Akali's or the DMK/AIDMK. While each party sought to further its own specific ends and class preferences, their coming together does not make for an opportunist politics. What the situation represented is a condition of what may be called objective complimentarity; that is, for a common fight for state rights different parties seek to pursue different political ends given their diverse preferences. This is something unavoidable in a large federal polity like that of India. Therefore the argument that writes off the state autonomy movements for their diverse class and social consequences is mistaken.

Not only will this lead to the development of a better federation in India by making the balance of power between the centre and states more even but it will lead to a more democratic society. More and more decision-making will be decentralised making politics more participatory. Centralisation of power even when formal democratic structures work makes politics remote from the people. Centralisation of power can also give rise to authoritarian tendencies in the working of the state.

The movements for state autonomy became decisive but no major constitutional change could be brought about to give it a permanent shape. One does not know what would have happened if the Janata party had lasted longer. It came to an abrupt end. With the return of the Congress party under Indira Gandhi's leadership with secure majority, the movements for state autonomy slowly receded in the background.

17.3.3 The Phase of Coalition Politics

At the present moment, there is no movement for state autonomy like earlier even though the struggle to get more financial resources for the state continues. In the 1990 a visible change came in the correlation of forces active in the Indian politics. Let us look at that to understand why there is no such movement today.   We are all witness to the development of a pattern in Indian politics since 1996 in which the government of the nation-state called India has been made up as much by the political forces and parties having their bases in only one or the other states. No all-India party or what in India are called "national parties" has been successful in providing a government to the country. Conventionally speaking, it is, on the European example, a coalitional pattern. But given the multi-ethnic specificity of India, it is, on a deeper analysis, more than a coalition. It is much more a co-governance of the country by the nation and the regions which make up the nation. What constitutes the Centre at the level of the nation-state is made up as much of those who speak on behalf of and claim to represent the nation as much as those who do so for the various regions. In fact, this configuration has been a result of a long contestation, going back to the early years of Independence, between various forces as to how and by whom will the "nation" be represented; what will be the cultural identity marks of the nation(-state). The result is a slow process towards congealing of the respective claims of the diverse forces representing the nation-state and the different regional states. One cannot do without the other. I am calling it a co-governance in that sense. Now the sense of this will become clear if we compare it with an earlier period in the history of governance in India.

It is quite clear from the above that this period in the 1990s has been marked by a pronounced ascendance of regional parties in a somewhat enduring manner. In the short term (now there is no long term trend that can be analytically discerned in Indian politics), there seem to be no chance of this trend being reversed. But what informs the ascendance of the regional parties is the absence of any overt conflicts or clashes between the centre and the state in India however much of differences of opinions can be shown to exist on any number of issues. What seems to be happening between the centre and state in terms of differences of opinion are in the nature of symbiotic contests. This trend crystallised during the period of the two United Front ministries in 1996-97. Even the BJP with its chauvinistic nationalism and rabid communalism and centralising ideology has been forced to accept the pattern and pay lip service to the code of behaviour entailed within these patterns. Barring a region here and there on the borders, the national unity of India seems to be acquiring deeper roots. It will be an effort of the argument here to look for reasons and some causal chains in the making of this phenomenon.

17.4 SUMMARY

The first time when the regionally based political parties representing the various states or regions of India emerged as a force was in the period 1967-72 (and the pattern repeated itself in the late 1970s as well, though on a relatively smaller scale). Let us here reiterate the first mentioned

period for a contrast, which is revealing in itself. The entire period was marked, as we have seen, by intense (and shrill) struggle between the centre and the states. There also were constant bickering and mutual accusations. The central government charged the regional governments of being against the nation-state; in Indian phraseology, of being a threat to national unity. The state governments accused the centre of becoming authoritarian—both a danger to democratic aspirations and the federal arrangement. Most of the parties ruling in the states—Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Punjab, West Bengal, Tripura, Kashmir and many others went on to produce documents enumerating measures for the protection of the rights of the states and listing details of how the centre has gone on encroaching into the sphere of their jurisdiction and had violated the rights of the states. Each of these governments represented diverse ideological views, class preferences, social bases, and so on. It least bothered them as to how this greater power for the states for which they were fighting would be used by the different states, so long as they would have it for their own purposes. What brought them together against the government of the nation-state was an objective complimentarity in spite of different ideological and class preferences as between Tamil Nadu or West Bengal or Punjab and so on.

Today, there is no sharp contradiction between the centre (the nation-state) and the states (regional governments) though there may be many differences of opinion or even conflicts of interests centered around economic and fiscal or monetary policies and on questions of culture and language policies. This situation has altered the terrain of centre-state relations in such a way that there is no scope for a state autonomy movement.

17.5 EXERCISES

1) Identify the features of autonomy movements.

2) Compare the nature of autonomy movements between the phases of Congress hegemony and the Janata rule.

3) Comment on the autonomy movements during the era of coalition politics.

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