

UNIT 21 PRESSURE GROUPS

Structure

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21.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- analyse the role of pressure groups in democratic politics;
- explain the types of pressure groups; and
- compare the Indian and Western pressure groups.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

In democratic politics, pressure groups are organisations which attempt to influence the government. The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences describes the groups as representing the interest of the sections into which a society is divided. With advanced specialisation groups will be more numerous and specialised. Such groups represent interest of various sections of society viz., farmers, labourers, government employees, businessmen, professional people and even students. Pressure groups are also known as interest groups.

21.2 MEANING OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure groups are organised associations, unions or organisation of people having common interest. Their aim is to seek better conditions for their members through organised efforts. They try to influence the legislature, executive and other decision makers to have decisions made in their favour.

According to V.O.Key, a striking feature of American politics is the extent to which political parties are supplemented by private associations formed to influence public policy. These organisations are commonly called pressure groups. David B.Truman defines an interest group as "a shared attitude group that makes certain claims upon the other groups in the society." One of the major trends in democratic political process is the increasing role of pressure groups. Herman Finer viewed that it is perhaps now an axiom of political science that, where political parties are weak in principles and organisation, the pressure groups will flourish; where pressure groups are strong, political parties will be feeble; and

where political parties are strong, pressure groups will be curbed. In the context of the USA, the rigid nature of its constitution, the doctrine of separation of powers, difficulties of conveying the grievances of the people to the government, etc. contribute to the growth of pressure groups in American politics. American pressure groups are not much influenced by the political parties whereas in Britain pressure groups implicitly or explicitly have attachment with political parties.

Indian political parties are weak in principles and organisation. Therefore, pressure groups are supposed to be very significant in the functioning of the Indian Political System. In parliamentary system of government, pressure groups exert pressure mainly on the executive with the assumption that legislature is under the control of executive. Here executive includes both the political and permanent executive.

21.3 ROLE OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Group activities are generally more effective than individual activities. Therefore, pressure groups play a vital role in a democratic society in terms of influencing the government for expressing the common concern of a section of society and promote their interest. The vitality of the pressure groups is mainly determined by their ability to influence the government. Influencing the government involves influencing the public policy decision makers, law makers, implementers of policies and decisions, etc. The role of pressure groups is closely connected with politics. Here our assumption is that power is an essential element of politics which implies the study of influence. In this context Harold D. Lasswell in his early work on politics, uses the subtitle, "who gets what, when, how?" and says that, "the study of politics is the study of influences and influential." In view of this understanding, the role of pressure groups in democratic countries constitutes an important dimension of the study of politics because the primary objective of any pressure group is to influence the government on a specific public policy issue or problem.

Pressure groups do not contest elections and they may not have political programmes. Pressure groups informally attempt to influence the government on a specific public policy issue of a section of society.

Freedom of association is generally found in all democratic societies. This is required in order to identify and promote common interest or well-being of the people through the collective activities. This is regarded as the basic factor which tends to the establishment of pressure groups. So, pressure groups play a crucial role in interest formation and interest aggregation.

Pressure groups play the mediatory role between the people and government. They balance the national interest and interest of individuals. Generally interests of the common people are not organised. Pressure groups contribute to give concrete shape to the interests of people. This role of pressure groups is significant in interest formation as well as interest aggregation. The groups have to move demands before the government based on the difficulties or grievances of people. Interest formation may occur through the reactions of groups of people on issues of public importance like GATT, Nuclear explosion, reservation policy, environmental issues, price rise, regional imbalances, rural development program, etc.

According to Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell, converting the demands into policy alternatives is interest aggregation. In this process also, pressure groups play a significant role in terms of identifying possible policy alternatives or options. They also explain the pros and cons of each policy alternative which is a very

helpful information for the policy makers to select the best alternative. This role of pressure groups is to provide inputs to public policy making. On the whole, pressure groups contribute to democratise the public policy making and law making.

When it is found that political parties cannot adequately represent the aspirations of the people, pressure groups become the devices for representing the aspirations of the people. In this sense, pressure groups perform the representation function.

In a welfare state, the growing functions of government may tend to affect the responsive capability of the political system. Besides the members of government may not be able to get sufficient time to get all the details of a particular issue of public importance as the political elites are preoccupied in the political activities. In view of these, pressure groups are essential to make the political system respond to the aspirations of people and provide the details of a particular policy issue of public importance to the ruling political elites. This will contribute to work out development activities very effectively.

Check Your Progress 1

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

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

- 1) Explain the meaning and role of pressure groups in democratic politics.

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21.4 TECHNIQUES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

The main techniques of pressure groups are manipulating public opinion, persuading legislators and administrators, etc. When some project, as for instance the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) in Gujarat, and the Kaiga project in Karnataka, are likely to affect the interest of a section and region, pressure groups attempt to promote environmental awareness by providing the necessary information to the concerned people. This role of pressure groups tends to change the public attitude towards a specific issue. The extent of influence of pressure groups on government is mainly determined by their position to represent public opinion. Hence it is necessary on the part of pressure groups to influence the process of formation of public opinion. As a consequence, pressure groups seem to manipulate public opinion.

Pressure groups have friends and allies in the legislatures as in the case of American Congress and the Indian Parliament. Influence of pressure groups is through the legislators for making specific provisions or deleting some provision in legislation. This involves lobbying and it is particularly influential in the USA.

Pressure groups attempt to influence the process of implementation of decisions through the administrators. Besides, pressure groups adopt the technique of

influencing the government through public interest litigation in courts of law. When we talk of the techniques of the pressure groups, we should take into account the political form in which the pressures are to be exercised. In the U.S., the pressure are exercised in the presidential form. In India, they are to be exercised in the context of the cabinet form of government. The methods of pressure groups in India may be said to be ill-defined and, to some extent, crude. The methods of the American pressure groups are highly developed and routine. In the U.S, the need for the pressure groups is felt greatly because the executive is separate from the legislature and both of them of course are separate from the judiciary. In India, the co-ordination between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary is well defined. The judiciary is independent but does not have the powers of judicial review as wide as in the U.S. In India, the judiciary is asserting its position under the influence of the pressure groups which are bringing before it the public interest litigation which is seen clearly in case of environmental pressure groups and economic pressure groups. Medha Patkar and her associates have exercised a vast amount of pressure on the executive at the state and central level over the question of the Narmada dam and particularly the resettlement of the people affected by the dam. There are pressure groups which have been working on the problems of daily wage workers and women and many of them are exercising pressure by bringing their cases before the courts in the form of public interest litigation. Even in the limited context of municipal government, as in case of Bombay, citizens are taking cases to the high courts to exert pressure on the municipal authorities to clean streets and undertake environmental measure. In the context of India, as in several developing countries, these techniques are new. Therefore the pressure groups have to work hard to organise the members of the public in order to be effective in relation to government and public administration. In active cities like Pune, citizens have gone to the extent of bringing back the transferred commissioner in the teeth of opposition of the state government.

Check Your Progress 2

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

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

- i) What are the techniques adopted by the pressure groups in different forms of government?

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21.5 PRESSURE GROUPS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Pressure groups and political parties constitute very important structure of a political system. Both pressure groups and political parties are extra-constitutional agencies and play a crucial role in the political process. Sometimes, pressure groups become political parties. In Maharashtra, the Shiva Sena was a pressure group and it has now become a political party. Similarly, the Karnataka Rajya Sangh (KRRS) in Karnataka, was initially a pressure group. After sometime, the KRRS became a political party in Karnataka.

Pressure groups may give rise to political parties. The cultural and religious pressure group (the RSS) gave rise to the establishment of Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951. The Indian political parties have corresponding students' organisations namely, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), Students Federation of India (SFI), All-India Students Federations (AISF), etc. which are regarded as pressure groups of students affiliated with one party or the other. There can be pressure groups within a political party. The Seva Dal was a unit of the Indian National Congress before independence and it was working as a pressure group. After independence, the Seva Dal has continued to be a pressure group but it is not so effective now as in pre-independence days.

A political party is a larger organisation, while a pressure group is comparatively a small organisation. The main objective of a political party is to come to power whereas the main concern of a pressure group is to influence the government for promoting its specific interest. However, political parties have to represent the aggregate of diverse interests of the people. That is why pressure groups are regarded as non-political. Parties put up their candidates, try to win maximum number of seats in the legislature and form government, if possible. Pressure Groups do not, on their own, do any of these things.

A political party requires an ideology which enables it to have an identity. Pressure groups do not need ideology and sometimes they may be subjected to the influence of an ideology.

Check Your Progress 3

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

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

- 1) How are pressure groups different from political parties?

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21.6 TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Rationale and methods of operation of various pressure groups may not basically vary from one country to another country. The generalisations that can be made are broadly applicable to understanding of the working of pressure groups in various countries. The origin of pressure groups is diverse since they represent a particular dimension of interests like economic, social and political interests. Pressure groups exist for protecting or promoting particular interest(s).

Pressure groups can be broadly classified into the following categories :

- 1) Business Groups
- 2) Labour Organisations
- 3) Farmers' Groups
- 4) Professional Groups
- 5) Religious Groups

1) Business Groups

Businessmen are generally well-organised and their concern would be to get reasonable restrictions imposed on the production and distribution of goods, import and export of commodities, determination of price of commodities, etc. There are business groups like the National Association of Manufacturers in the USA, the Federation of British Industries, the National Council of French Employers, the Federation of German Industry, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), etc.

In India the British merchants established the Chamber of Commerce in 1830s. In 1926, it was decided to establish a national Indian business organisation. In the following year the same business organisation became the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The support of the wealthy businessman like G.D.Birla made this business group an important and influential force. In addition to the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry there are other national business groups namely the All-India Manufacturers' Organisation, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India etc. These business groups keep in touch with political parties and contribute to party funds and some candidates in elections are financed by the businessmen.

The primary function of any business group is to protect its business interests like opposing tax increase, minimum control on labour, etc.

2) Labour Organisations

In the USA trade union politics began with the establishment of the American Federation of Labour in 1886. There are labour organisations like the communist dominated Confederation of Christian Trade Unions in France, German Confederation of Trade Unions, Transport and General Workers' Union in England, Indian National Trade Union Congress, etc. The labour organisations are concerned with payment of adequate wages and emoluments, reasonable working hours and conditions of service, compensation in case of some accident, etc. They are often associated with one party or the other.

In India the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh have links with political parties like the Congress (I), Communist parties, the Socialist Party, the BJP etc. All these trade unions are regarded as major Indian Labour Organisations.

3) Farmers' Groups

Farmers' groups are basically concerned with protecting the interest of farmers from adverse effects of modernisation and getting facilities of modernisation to the farmers. These include continuation of subsidy to the farmers, minimum price for agricultural products, etc. In the USA, the farmers' groups like American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Grange, the National Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America are regarded as very important farmers' groups for getting their just dues from the government. In India, we have farmers' groups like Karnataka Rajya Raith Sangh, Setkari Sangh of Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra and similar organisation of Mahendra Singh Tikait in UP.

4) Professional Organisations

Professional organisations are mainly concerned with the service conditions and other facilities for their respective professions. Associations like teachers'

association, medical association, bar association, etc. are regarded as pressure groups based on their professions. The American Association of University Teachers, All-India Federation of University and College Teachers' Organisations, the American Bar Association, the Indian Political Science Association, the British Medical Association are some of the examples of professional pressure groups.

5) Religious Organisations

Religious pressure groups generally attempt to protect the interest of a particular religion. In the USA, the National Council of Churches is a religious pressure group. The other religious pressure groups are the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, etc. In the Indian context, the caste and communal associations can be categorised as religious pressure groups. In Indian politics, caste associations are increasingly getting prominence and becoming very influential.

Check Your Progress 4

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

- 1) Describe the various types of pressure groups.

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21.7 COMPARISON OF INDIAN AND WESTERN PRESSURE GROUPS

Both India and Western countries are democracies. But within western countries there are differences between Presidential and Parliamentary forms of government. India though a parliamentary democracy differs from such countries of the West in terms of developmental levels. Therefore there are some differences in the role of pressure groups.

Firstly, the American pressure groups are regarded as the fourth organ of the government but the Indian pressure groups are not yet able to play such significant role in politics.

Secondly, in India and Great Britain the cabinet and civil service are the main targets of pressure groups for lobbying purposes rather than the parliament. However, the targets of American pressure groups are the Congress and its committees rather than the President for lobbying purposes.

Thirdly, Indian pressure groups based on caste, religion, region, etc. are more powerful than the modern groups like business organisations.

Fourthly, a significant feature of American pressure groups is that in the USA pressure groups take interest in foreign policy issues while in India pressure groups do not seem to have interest in foreign policy matters. Comparatively, the Indian pressure groups are concerned more with domestic policy issues and problems, and less with foreign policy matters.

However in general, despite the differences, democratic politics presupposes the crucial role of pressure groups for serving the interests of different sections of society.

21.8 LET US SUM UP

Pressure groups play a vital role in democratic politics in terms of representing and promoting the aspirations of the people. The significance of pressure groups is mainly determined by the political parties, the forms of government, attitudes of people towards politics, the nature of leadership etc.

Pressure groups are different from political parties mainly because their main purpose is to secure maximum advantage for their members whose interests are common. Political parties contest elections to legislative bodies, and those who get majority form the government and control the administration. Pressure groups do not seek political power. They only try to influence the decision-makers.

There are different types of pressure groups, such as business groups, labour organisations (trade unions), farmers' associations, professional groups (e.g. bar associations, medical associations, teachers associations and chartered accountants groups), and religious groups. Some of the pressure groups associate themselves directly, or indirectly, with one political party or the other, without formally joining it.

21.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

V.O.Key, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*, New York, Thomas & Crowell Company, 1969, p.18.

Herman Finer, *Theory and Practice of Modern Government*, Delhi, Surjeet, 1977.

Pressure Groups in Indian Politics, New Delhi : Radiant Publishers, 1980, p.38.

Verinder Grover (Ed.) *Politics of Influence, Violence and Pressure Groups*, New Delhi, Deep and Deep Publication, 1990.

21.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) These are groups of people organised to achieve a common goal. They try to influence decision-makers to seek maximum concessions for their members. (See Sections 21.2 and 21.3)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Manipulation of public opinion, persuading legislators and administrators. They have their friends in legislatures and administration. They often offer benefits to decision-makers to favour their groups. (See Section 21.4)

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Political parties have clear and distinct ideologies, pressure groups merely promote the collective interests of their groups. Parties seek political power

and contest elections; groups do not. Groups only exercise influence or pressure over the decision makers. (See Section 21.5)

Pressure Groups



Check Your Progress 4

- 1) They are mainly labour (trade) unions, business groups, farmers groups, religious groups and professional groups, such as doctors' associations, bar (lawyers') associations, teachers organisations, traders groups, etc. (See section 21.6)

Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Majoritarian Methods
 - 22.2.1 First-Past-The-Post System (Simple Majority System)
 - 22.2.2 Second Ballot System
 - 22.2.3 Other Methods
 - 22.2.4 Shortcomings of Majoritarian Systems
- 22.3 Proportional Representation
 - 22.3.1 Single Transferable Vote System
 - 22.3.2 List System
 - 22.3.3 Semiproportional Method
 - 22.3.4 Stake System
 - 22.3.5 Cumulative Vote System
- 22.4 Electoral Process and Parties
 - 22.4.1 Party Unity and Cohesion
- 22.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.6 Key Words
- 22.7 Some Useful Books
- 22.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

22.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will learn about comparative electoral processes and various methods of electoral representation.

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- explain the meaning of electoral process;
- recall various methods of electoral representation;
- compare various systems of election;
- describe the majoritarian plurality system;
- analyse the methods of proportional representation; and
- describe the relation of parties and electoral process.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

Election is the process by which people choose, by voting, representatives to act on their behalf, to represent them, in a legislative body. It may be Parliament or even a local body. This process of choice by elections is now almost inseparable from representative democracy. In the twentieth century, most states granted the right to vote to all adult resident citizens. Over time, the suffrage has been extended from estates to individuals. In the twentieth century large categories formerly excluded on grounds of race, sex and property qualifications were enfranchised. The change has also led to equality or 'one man one vote one value'.

Elections have several functions. These include designating, directly or indirectly, the government; providing feedback between voters and government; demonstrating public support for or repudiation of a regime; providing a means for the recruitment of political leaders; and making the government answerable to the electorate. Functions may differ in states that have elections without choice, where a party's hegemonic or monopolistic position makes the outcome a foregone conclusion.

In some countries like Belgium, Italy, Denmark and The Netherlands it is not the election but the inter-party bargaining following the election which determines the composition of government. But it is only where the party system provides a choice between alternative potential majorities that the voters do have such a greater direct choice.

The nature of electoral choice in each country is shaped by three sets of factors. First, the object of election, which may be to choose a constituency representative, party list or president. Second, the party system, or pattern of voting alignments which in turn is shaped by cleavages in society, the electoral system, and the manoeuvres of elites. Third, the electoral system, particularly those provisions which aggregate votes and translate them into seats, that is, rules for counting and weighing votes.

22.2 MAJORITARIAN SYSTEMS

A distinction may be drawn between the absolute majoritarian system, as in France, in which the winner has to achieve at least half the total number of votes polled; the plurality (first past the post) system in India and many English-speaking countries; the various forms of proportional representation (PR) such as Single transferable vote system.

22.2.1 First-Past-the-Post System

Plurality system of election is one of the most prevalent systems of representation. It is often referred to as 'first-past-the-post', relative majority, or more commonly described as the simple plurality system. It implies that the winner is the candidate who receives the maximum number of votes. Examples are Lok Sabha and State Vidhan Sabha elections in India. It is also used in the Philippines, and Venezuela and for members of the lower houses of the legislatures in Canada, United Kingdom, and United States. According to the single majority system, it is possible to win an election without winning a majority of votes. For instance, in an election, in which three candidates receive 40, 35, and 25 per cent of votes, respectively, the winner is the candidate who received 40 per cent of the vote. In fact, in a three-candidate contest, a candidate can win with just over one-third of the total vote if each of the other two candidates receive just below one-third of the votes. As the number of candidates increases, the minimum number of votes that may be sufficient for election decreases. This method is called first-past-the-post system because it resembles a race in which one who reaches the victory post first is declared the (first) winner irrespective of the time taken by him. In election, it means the one with maximum number of votes wins the seat, even if it is less than half of total votes polled.

In many democracies the possibility that a candidate can win without getting a majority of the votes has been considered undesirable. One objection to plurality has been that the democratic principle of majority rule is violated if a candidate is elected who has received less than a majority of the votes and against whom a majority of the votes has been cast. The second objection is the practical problem

that a candidate elected with less than majority support will not have the democratic legitimacy to govern effectively.

22.2.2 Second Ballot System

In order to ensure that the candidate who is declared elected secures more than fifty per cent votes, some methods have been used. One of these majority methods is to use, as many rounds of voting as are necessary to elect a candidate with an absolute majority. In the Third and Fourth French Republics the repeated-ballots method was used for the election of the President of the Republic by joint sessions of the two houses of the national legislature. However, the major drawback of the method is that a large number of rounds of voting may be necessary, thus making it impractical for mass elections. A variety of this method is also used by both the major American political parties in their national conventions, to select their presidential candidates. Ballot, after ballot are held till a candidate secures absolute majority.

Two rounds of voting constitute the practical limit for mass elections, and there are two methods that are based on this two-ballot, or double-ballot, format: the mixed majority-plurality method and the majority-runoff method.

- 1) The mixed majority-plurality method requires a majority for election on the first ballot; if no candidate has received such a majority, a second ballot (polling on a subsequent date) is conducted, and the winner is the candidate who wins largest number of the votes. The major example is the electoral system for the French National Assembly.

22.2.3 Other Methods

Two additional majoritarian methods that are less commonly practiced but highly recommended by experts on electoral process are:

- 1) Limited Vote Plan, invented by political scientist Steven J. Brams, entails a slight amendment to the plurality rule: voters can cast votes for as many candidates as they like instead of only for their most preferred candidate. For instance, if there are five seats, voters can vote for one, two, three, or four of these candidates but not for five candidates. (Voting for all five would be tantamount to not voting at all). If many voters make use of the opportunity to cast two or more votes, the winner is likely to be a majority winner, even when the field of candidates is relatively large.

Limited Vote Plan, also called Approval voting, has been adopted by several private associations but has not yet been used for the election of public officials. In the 1990 parliamentary elections in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, however, the electoral formula (inherited from the former Soviet Union) asked the voters to strike out the names of candidates of whom they disapproved; this method of disapproval voting is logically equivalent to approval voting. The difference in these elections was that additional rules specified that the winner needed to win an absolute majority of the votes and that the turnout had to be 50 per cent or higher - with the election to be repeated if one or both of these requirements was not met.

- 2) The Condorcet method, invented by the Marquis de Condorcet, an eighteenth-century French mathematician, disaggregates a multicandidate contest into a series of two-candidate contests. It asks the voters to choose between each of the possible pairs of candidates. For instance, when there are three candidates - A, B, and C- voters are asked to choose between A and B,

between A and C, and between B and C. The Condorcet winner is the candidate who defeats all other candidates in these pairwise contests. For instance, if a majority of the voters prefers A to B and also A to C, candidate A wins.

For some the Condorcet method is the most accurate and fairest majoritarian methods but this method also has some drawbacks. The most serious of these is the possibility, discovered by Condorcet himself, that there may not be a single Condorcet winner. The standard illustration of this problem involves three voters and three candidates. The first voter has the preference order A-B-C (that is, the first voter prefers A to B, B to C, and A to C); the second voter's preference order is B-C-A, and the third voter's is C-A-B. Collectively, the three voters prefer A to B, B to C, and C to A (in each case by a 2-1 majority). Such examples do not occur often, however, and in case they do they can be resolved by some additional rule like the alternative vote.

Another problem appears to be that the Condorcet method is very complicated for both voters and vote counters. When there are three candidates in an election, there are only three pairs of candidates, and the decisions are fairly simple. But when, for instance, eight candidates compete, there are twenty-eight pairs to be compared. Voters need not pick their favourites from all possible pairs of candidates, however; they need only indicate their preference orders among all the candidates. Then their preferences in each pairwise contest can be logically deduced. The counting can be performed easily by computer.

22.2.4 Shortcomings of Majoritarian Systems

One of the serious shortcomings of majoritarian electoral system has been that when an entire legislature is elected by majoritarian methods, large parties tend to be favoured. The reason is that in each single-member constituency the candidates of small parties do not have much of a chance to be elected. Hence majoritarian elections tend to yield considerable disproportionality between votes cast and seats won as a result of the overrepresentation of the largest parties and the underrepresentation of small parties.

British parliamentary elections, which are held according to simple majority system, or the first-past-the-post system, provide a good example of this pattern. In the four elections between 1979 and 1992, the Conservative Party won an average of 42.6 per cent of the total vote but 56.0 per cent of the seats. The Labour Party won 32.4 per cent of the vote and 37.8 per cent of the seats. The third party (the Liberal Democrats and their predecessors) won 19.9 per cent of the vote and only 2.9 per cent of seats. The regionally concentrated ethnic parties (the Scottish and Welsh national parties and the Northern Ireland parties) together received 4.2 per cent of the vote and 3.2 per cent of the seats. The largest party got more than its share and the third party was the most disadvantaged.

In the 1993 National Assembly elections in France, the two large allied conservative parties won 79.7 per cent of the seats after receiving only 39.5 per cent of the first-ballot votes. It can also happen (as in United Kingdom in 1951 and in New Zealand in 1978 and 1981) that the second largest party in terms of votes wins by relatively narrow margins in relatively many districts - and thus wins a majority of the seats and the election.

In India, no ruling party at the Centre ever secured fifty per cent or more of the total votes polled. This is because of large number of parties, and candidates. The winning candidates often get lesser number of votes than the number of votes secured by all the defeated candidates taken together.

Check Your Progress 1

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

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

- 1) What are the shortcomings of first-past-the-post system?

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- 2) In which two countries the mixed majority-plurality method is used?

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- 3) What is the second ballot (or majority runoff) method?

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22.3 PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Proportional representation was invented in the nineteenth century. It was adopted by many European democracies about the turn of the century or in the early decades of the twentieth century (the United Kingdom and France being the main exceptions). It has become a much-preferred electoral system for many national parliamentary elections. For instance, of the twenty-three long-term democracies - those that have been democratic without major interruptions since about 1950 (the fifteen older West European democracies plus the United States, Canada, India, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and Costa Rica) - fifteen have used mainly proportional representation during this period, one (Japan) has used a semiproportional system, and only seven have used majoritarian systems.

The major reason many countries have adopted proportional representation is, as the term indicates, to avoid the disproportionalities inherent in majoritarian systems and to achieve a relatively high degree of proportionality between votes cast and seats won. In practice, however, proportional representation systems rarely attain perfect proportionality. Unlike majoritarian systems, proportional representation can be applied only to the election of multimember constituencies. In other words, the idea is that, as far as possible, different parties should win seats in the legislatures in accordance with the proportion of votes polled by them.

The two principal methods of proportional representation are the list system and the single transferable vote.

22.3.1 Single Transferable Vote System

This method of proportional representation is also known as (i) Hare System because it was first suggested by Thomas Hare; and (ii) Preferential Vote System because each voter is required to indicate his/her preferences of candidates on the ballot paper, though the vote is only one. This method can be used when there is a multiple-member constituency, which means three or more members are to be elected from one constituency. However, each voter is entitled only to one vote, which may be transferred, if necessary, according to the preferences indicated by the voter on the ballot paper. That is why it is called single transferable vote system. After the polling, the total number of votes polled are

divided by total number of seats + 1, and 1 is added to the quotient. This then becomes quota, and a candidate in order to be able to get elected is required to receive the number of votes equal to the quota. Surplus votes, if any, are transferred, according to the preferences. Similarly, the candidates who polled least number of votes are eliminated, one by one, and all their votes are transferred according to their second/third preferences. This ensures fair amount of representation according to voters' wishes, and (unlike simple majority system) votes are not wasted. This method is used in the elections to Indian Rajya Sabha, with each State Assembly as one multiple-member constituency and each MLA has one transferable vote. It is also used for our State Legislative Councils, for the Senate of Australia, and for parliamentary elections in Malta and Ireland.

22.3.2 List System

List System is another method of securing proportional representation. This method also operates in multiple-member constituencies. Different parties put up lists of as many candidates (each) as number of members to be elected. Thus, if seven persons are to be elected, each party will put up a list of seven candidates in the preference in which they would like to be elected. The voters vote for parties and not individuals. Quota is fixed by dividing total number of votes by number of seats. The party which secures votes equal to, say, three times of the quota (less than half being ignored, and more than half taken as one), that party will have its first three candidates in the list elected.

This system has been slightly modified in Switzerland where each voter is given a blank voting paper. The voter may either vote for any of the party lists or prepare his/her own list by picking up names from different lists.

22.3.3 Semiproportional Method

Some countries have also followed the semiproportional method. At the national level, the major example is Japan, which used the single nontransferable vote for its House of Representatives elections from 1947 to 1993. The single nontransferable vote method gives each voter one vote in multimember districts (in Japan, mainly three to five members), and the candidates with the most votes win. In this system it is relatively easy for minority parties to gain representation. For instance, a party with slightly more than 20 per cent support that nominates one candidate in a four-member district is assured of getting this candidate elected, without the use of a formal proportional representation system.

Another practice that may be regarded as an intermediate form between majoritarian and proportional representation systems is to guarantee representation for ethnic minorities. New Zealand has several special Maori districts in which only Maori voters can cast ballots. India has a large number of constituencies in which only members of the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes can be candidates, though all the people living in the constituency are voters irrespective of their caste or community, this is just reservation of seats, not real proportional representation.

22.3.4 Slate System

This is a peculiar system used in the election of American President's Electoral College election. In each State different parties put up their lists (called Slates). Voters vote for a Slate, not individual candidates). The slate which gets majority of votes polled is declared elected in its totality. Thus, if 51% voters in California vote for Democratic Slate, all the 54 Democrats will be elected and none of the Republican will get in. This may be described as a variety of majoritarian method.

22.3.5 Cumulative Vote System

This again may be called a semi-proportional method, in which a minority (racial, linguistic, etc.) can pool all its votes in favour of one candidate. Thus, if ten members are to be elected from one constituency, the voters have ten votes which they may use the way they like. A voter may cast one vote each for ten different candidates or 5 each for two candidates, or all the 10 votes for one candidate. The voter writes number of votes given for a candidate figure 1 each or 5 for 2 or may write figure 10 against one candidate. The ten with maximum number of votes get elected.

Check Your Progress 2

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

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

1) Why do countries adopt the proportional representation system?

.....
.....

2) What is the difference between list system and single transferable vote system?

.....
.....

3) Describe the single transferable vote system.

.....
.....

4) What is the cumulative vote system?

.....
.....

22.4 ELECTORAL PROCESS AND PARTIES

In the debate about electoral process, there have been two main themes. First concerns the effects of electoral process on the proportionality of representation and the possibilities for minorities to be represented. Second, concerns the effects of electoral systems on parties and consequently on the viability and effectiveness of democratic government.

Elections to a single office are inherently majoritarian and disproportionate, but the majority-runoff method gives small parties a chance to produce a respectable showing in the first round, some bargaining leverage between rounds, and hence a sizable incentive to participate in such elections. Plurality system favours the large parties and especially the two largest, which are the only parties with a reasonable chance to win, and hence encourages the development and maintenance of two-party systems.

In a two-party system the legislature may well include members from smaller parties -- for instance, the British House of Commons normally contains about ten parties. But in a two-party system the major parties predominate, and one of the two is likely to win a majority victory in parliamentary elections.

Plurality system often creates a one-party majority of legislative seats out of less than a majority of popular votes cast for the winning party. All of the one-party majorities in the United Kingdom since 1945 and in New Zealand since 1954 have been such examples. The normal party system under proportional representation is a multiparty system without a majority party. Thus, in parliamentary systems of government, multiparty coalition cabinets (or sometimes minority cabinets) need to be formed. The conventional argument is that two-party systems are preferable because they produce one-party cabinets that are internally united and hence strong and decisive -- in contrast to coalition cabinets, whose continual need to make compromises makes them weak and indecisive.

When post - World War II Western parliamentary democracies are compared, two-party democracies do not have a better record than multiparty democracies on managing the economy (stimulating economic growth and controlling inflation and unemployment) or maintaining public order and peace. Critics of the British two-party system have explained the superior performance of a multiparty democracy like the German in terms of steadiness and continuity. They point out that a steady hand is better than a strong hand and that centrist coalitions encourage a continuity in public policy that alternating parties cannot achieve.

Similarly, proportional representation and coalition governments in religiously and linguistically divided countries have a greater capacity of reaching compromise and of formulating broadly acceptable policies than more narrowly based governments.

Two-party systems do have the advantage of providing clear government accountability. The voters know that the governing party is responsible for past public policies. When these are judged favourably, the voters can reward the ruling party by returning it to power; when they are seen to have failed, power can be turned over to the opposition party. But greater accountability does not necessarily spell greater responsiveness to citizens' interests. There is no evidence that coalitions are less responsive than one-party majority cabinets. On the contrary, coalitions are usually closer to the center of the political spectrum, and hence closer to the ideological position of the average voter, than one-party cabinets representing the left or the right. But supporters of plurality and two-party systems can legitimately regard government accountability as a value in and of itself -- just as, for many proportional representation advocates, proportionality is an ultimate value.

Both supporters and critics of proportional representation agree that proportional representation elections yield greater proportionality, than plurality system. Greater proportionality means better minority representation, not only in the sense of the representation of minority political parties but also in terms of better representation of religious and ethnic minorities. Moreover, the representation of women - a political rather than a numerical minority - is much stronger in proportional representation than in plurality systems.

22.4.1 Party Unity and Cohesion

The unity and cohesion of political parties, and the encouragement of alliances between parties, are affected in important ways by the electoral process. Party unity is lessened when members of the same party have to run against each other; hence to the extent that electoral processes give them an incentive to do so, party unity tends to decrease.

With respect to unity the clearest contrasts emerge between different plurality and proportional representation systems. Most plurality systems do not entail competition between candidates of the same party, but this element is introduced by the direct primaries of the United States.

List Systems can range from closed-list to open-list systems. When the lists are completely closed, as in Israel, voters can merely choose the lists of candidates

as these are nominated by the parties without expressing preferences for one or more of these candidates. At the other extreme, lists can be completely open, as in Finland, where the voters vote for both a party and for a candidate within the party; so voters determine which candidates will occupy the seats won by the party list. An example of an intermediate form is Belgian list system, where voters can vote for the entire list nominated by the party or for an individual candidate, and where lower placed candidates can win election over higher placed candidates if they succeed in collecting a specified minimum number of preferential votes.

Electoral alliances between parties are encouraged by the alternative vote, single transferable vote, two-ballot systems, and list systems. Examples of interparty alliances that have been stimulated by the inducements to collaboration of these electoral systems are the virtually permanent partnership of the Australian Liberal and National Parties, the occasional collaboration between Fine Gael and the Labour Party in Ireland, and the alliances of the left and the right in the multiparty but two-bloc French party system.

Check Your Progress 3

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

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

1) What are the major themes of debate about the electoral process?

.....
.....

2) What is the conventional argument favouring two-party system?

.....
.....

22.5 LET US SUM UP

Electoral processes are of the greatest importance to representative democratic governments for some reasons. First, they have important consequences for the degree of proportionality of election outcomes, the party system, the kinds of cabinets that can be formed, government accountability, and party cohesion. Second, they are more easily manipulable than are other elements of democratic system. It means that if one wants to change the nature of a particular democracy, the electoral process is likely to be the most suitable and effective instrument for doing so.

The most common method of election is the simple majority system, also called the first-past-the-post system. In this system the candidate who secures maximum number of votes is declared, even if he/she has got only 40 or less per cent of total votes polled. This often leaves majority unrepresented.

On the other hand countries have to adopt the proportional representation system in order to eliminate some of the shortcomings of the usually adopted electoral methods. Proportional representation is helpful in bringing proportionality between votes cast and seats won. But even proportional representation is more suitable for election of multimember bodies.

But beyond proportionality there are a few other advantages of proportional representation systems. For one thing, higher turnout is encouraged by the greater

choice and the lower probability that one's vote is wasted in a district that is safe for the other party. Second, proportional representation encourages nationwide party activities. It is worthwhile for parties to maintain strong party organizations and to campaign actively even in parts of the country where they are weak because they are likely to garner valuable votes that would simply be lost under the plurality system.

22.6 KEY WORDS

- Plurality Systems** : Often referred to as 'first past the post', relative majority, or simple plurality systems. In this electoral process the winner is the candidate who receives the most votes.
- Repeat-ballot Methods** : This method uses, as many rounds of voting as are necessary to elect a candidate with an absolute majority.
- Majority-plurality Method (Second Ballot Systems)** : This method requires a majority for election on the first ballot; if no candidate has received such a majority, a second ballot is conducted, and the winner is the candidate who has won a plurality of votes.
- Majority-runoff Method** : If no candidate receives a majority of the votes in the first round of voting, a second ballot (runoff) is held to decide between the two candidates who were the strongest vote getters on the first ballot.
- Cumulative Vote** : In this method voters are asked to rank order the candidates. In the first stage of counting, only the first preferences are taken into consideration. If no candidate receives majority, the candidate with the least first preferences is eliminated, and the ballots with this weakest candidate as first preference are redistributed according to second preferences.
- Double Simultaneous Vote** : In this system all candidates from all parties run against each other. Voters cast their vote for one candidate - this vote simultaneously signifies a vote for that candidate's party.
- Approval Voting** : Voters can cast votes for as many candidates as they like instead of only for their most preferred candidate.
- Condorcet Method** : It asks the voters to choose between each of the possible pairs of candidates. The Condorcet winner is the candidate who defeats all other candidates in these pairwise contests.

22.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Barber, Benjamin R. (1984) *Strong Democracy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Grofman, Bernard, and Arend Lijphart (eds.) (1986) *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*. New York: Agathon Press.

Lijphart, Arend. (1994) *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lipset, S. and S. Rokkan (eds.) (1967) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York.

Nurmi, Hannu. (1987) *Comparing Voting Systems*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Reidel.

Rokkan, S. (1970) *Citizens, Elections, Parties*. New York.

22.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) First, the democratic principle of majority rule is violated if a candidate is elected who has received less than a majority of votes and against whom a majority of votes has been cast. Secondly, a candidate elected with less than majority support will not have the democratic legitimacy to govern effectively.
- 2) France and America.
- 3) If no candidate receives a majority of the votes in the first round of voting, a second ballot (runoff) is held to decide between the two candidates who were the strongest vote getters on the first ballot.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Proportional representation system is helpful in avoiding the disproportionalities inherent in majoritarian systems and to achieve a relatively high degree of proportionality between votes cast and seats won. (Please see section 22.3.)
- 2) In List proportional representation system the voters choose among party lists, whereas in single transferable vote system, voters cast preferential votes for individual candidates by rank ordering them. (Please see sections 22.3.1 and 22.3.2)
- 3) Each voter has one vote (in a multiple member constituency), which is transferred according to preferences indicated. A quota is determined. Surplus votes of winners, and all the votes of least vote-secur ing candidates are transferred to enable other candidates to reach quota and wins. (Please see section 22.3.1)
- 4) All the votes may be cast in favour of one candidate, or divided according to voter's choice. (Please see section 22.3.5)

- 1) First, the effect of electoral process on the proportionality of representation. Secondly, the effects of electoral process on parties. (Please see section 22.4)
- 2) Two-party systems are preferable because they produce one-party cabinets that are internally united and hence strong and decisive - in contrast with coalition cabinets, whose continual need to make compromise makes them weak and indecisive. (Please see section 22.4)

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 View Points of the Trade Union Theorists
- 23.3 Behavioural Theory
 - 23.3.1 Critics of Behavioural Theory
- 23.4 Anarchist Syndicalist Theory
 - 23.4.1 The Syndicalists
- 23.5 Marxist Leninist Theory
 - 23.5.1 Difference Between Anarchism and Marxism
 - 23.5.2 Lenin on Trade Union Movement
- 23.6 New Left Theories
 - 23.6.1 Lenin's Criticism of Revisionists
 - 23.6.2 The New Left
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- 23.10 Let Us Sum Up
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- 23.12 Some Useful Books
- 23.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

23.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to give you a brief account of development of trade union movement, different theories of trade union movement and the functioning of trade unions in different countries. After going through this unit you will be able to understand:

- Various theories of Trade Union Movement;
- Differences between Liberal, Marxist and Anarchist Theories;
- Development and Nature of Trade Union Movement in different countries; and
- Origin and Development of Trade Union Movement in India

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Human Social life depends on human work. The nature of work changes from time to time and place to place. There are different categories of workers and plethora of relationships. In the modern times, with the development of industries a category of workers is called industrial worker, which constitutes bulk of working class. The scholars have developed many theories and there are controversies relating to the concept of class. What constitutes 'Working Class' there are various theories for that. However, whenever the term 'working class' is used, it generally means those people who earn their livelihood by selling their labour. This is also assumed that there are some who buy their labour. The

working class can enhance their bargaining power by joining hands with each other. Their coming together is called trade unionism.

A cursory look at the development of trade unionism in modern times brings out the fact that, the trade union movement, industrial working class and capitalism emerged on the world scene simultaneously. The working class could assert itself against the mighty capitalist class, helped by the state, only when it organised itself. True, the capitalist class never welcomed the unionisation of the workers. Therefore, in the beginning unionisation of workers had to face the hostility of the capitalists. They tried to crush any sort of organisation of workers. The interest of the capitalist class could be served best by bargaining with an individual worker, rather than with the collective organisation of workers, while workers experience taught them that they could not withstand the power of the capitalists alone and therefore have to bargain collectively.

The capitalists started attacking workers' organisation from the very beginning. The state also helped them by giving them support with state apparatus – legislature, executive and judiciary. Legislations were passed to curb the collectivisation of the workers.

"In Great Britain", writes G. D. H. Cole, "there were already, in the eighteenth century a number of statutes forbidding workers' combinations in particular trades." He adds that "The principal purpose of the combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 was to make them more so, both by declaring unequivocally that combinations were unlawful. Indeed, criminal conspiracies against the public interests and by providing simpler ways of proceeding against offenders". But these combination of Acts of 1799 and 1800 should not be construed as an introduction of new principle banning combinations. It was, in fact, the culmination of a series of Combinations, acts passed by the Parliament beginning right from the 1548 Bill of Conspiracies of Victuallers and Craftsmen—a general statute against such combination to raise wage or reduce working hours. The trade unions were maligned and considered to be responsible for the disruption of industry, the decline of economy, and undermining of social rights and privileges that traditionally have held together the delicate fabric of society.

The ideologues, against the unionisation of workers sanctioned the right of state to prohibit the workers to enter into any type of organisation by approaching the "universal right of individual freedom." These philosophers of capitalism, in the name of individual freedom asserted that 'unionism' is the negation of the sovereign right of individual freedom to enter into contract. The courts of law had accepted the plea, and had shown growing tendency to outlaw all such combinations on the ground that their effect was to restrain trade by interfering with the 'natural' liberty of all men to dispose of their labour as they wished. The orthodox economists (the spokesmen of capitalist system) opposed unionisation of the workers and held that "the share of wages in the product of industry was determined by inexorable laws-based on the laws regulation, the growth of population. Wages, it was said, could never rise more than, above subsistence level because if they did, more children would be born, or more survive so as to produce surplus labour".

Thus, workers had struggled to assert their right to organise themselves. They formed secret societies in many countries to carry forward their struggle to protect the fundamental right of unity of the workers. "These early trade unions," writes Cole, "had a hard struggle. Men who took the lead in organising them were very apt to find themselves discharged from their employment and to have much difficulty in getting fresh jobs; and, over and above this many of them were imprisoned when they organised strikes, or even simply for the offence of

forming Trade Unions and presenting collective demands." The workers faced persecution and repression. Yet against all odds they were able to win their right to unionise. In Great Britain the laws forbidding combination of workers were repealed in 1824. This concession was not sufficient as there were many pitfalls in the act. Needless to say the owners of factories denied this right in one way or the other. This became clear that the struggle for the rights of workers cannot be isolated from the political struggles. Hence, workers fought tooth and nail for the grant of franchise and other political rights. The workers could achieve their fundamental right to organise themselves after paying a heavy price in their sweat and blood.

Check Your Progress 1

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

- 1) Why was any kind of combination of workers opposed by the employers?

.....

- 2) How did the workers achieve their right to organise themselves in trade Unions?

.....

23.2 VIEW POINTS OF TRADE UNION THEORISTS

By and large, workers' right of union has been accepted in the capitalist society. But the politicisation of the unions has been frowned upon. Some scholars predict that in future they will lose the status they have secured so far. Professor Galbraith has stated that unions in the future will "retreat more or less permanently into the shadows. Those who hold that labour unions are part and parcel of the system and play a positive role in the society are not, however, enthusiastic for their close linkages with the politics. Allan Flanders views union as "mixture of movement and Organisation." He accepts that, "one of the principal purposes of trade unions is collective bargaining a wide range of other issues pertaining to their members' jobs and working life. He admits that "the constant underlying social purpose of trade unions is then participation in job regulation, but participation is not an end in itself; it is the means of enabling workers to gain more control over their working lives." R. F. Hoxie holds that "while the trade union programme as a whole and as differentiated for each type of unionism is mixed and incomplete, the economic programme has for all unions a single, definite outstanding viewpoint. The economic viewpoint of unionism is primarily a group viewpoint and its programme a group programme. The aim of the union is primarily to benefit the group of workers concerned, rather than the workers as a whole or society as a whole; its theories which attempt to explain the determination of wages, hours, conditions of employment, etc. are not general but primarily group theories. Jack Barbash who studied American trade unions says, "Higher wages and shorter hours are obvious but

genuine incentives for joining a union. He holds that the workers join unions to save themselves from favouritism, to save themselves from hugeness and impersonality. Fred H. Blum studying the Hormal-Packing House workers' experiment opined that the aim of unions is to organise the work process in such a way as to give to human values a central significance. R.C. Roberts highlighting the role of trade unions in free societies asserts, "trade unions in free society are an expression of the fundamental right of men and women to organise themselves in order to protect and promote their interests by collective action." He writes "In a free society the right to organise implies the right to exercise power that collective action carries within the scope of liberal legal frame work. A democratic society is by definition, one in which power is not concentrated entirely or substantially in the hands of government; in modern terms this means power is diffused through a multiplicity of agencies in other voluntary organisations, such as trade unions, have an important role to play, they should, therefore enjoy the freedom necessary to exercise their functions in industry and to exert political pressure on the government to legislate in their favour". "In a free society," B. C. Roberts comments, "it is recognised that the interests of different groups will inevitably conflict and it is of the essence of democracy that these conflicts shall be settled by an interplay of social and political forces. It follows from the fundamental assumptions that trade unions in a democratic society must be independent of both employers and state."

Check Your Progress 2

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

- i) What is the purpose of trade union in a capitalist society?

.....

- 2) What relationship do they have with politics in modern developed societies?

.....

23.3 BEHAVIOURAL THEORY

Trade unions, in the beginning had to face the wrath of establishment, but they survived and now are accepted as a part and parcel of social life. They are considered as pressure groups, and thus, it is asserted: "from an opposition movement trade unions have become a recognised institution deeply rooted in our economic and political system." The role of trade unions has vastly changed. Earlier they were considered to be in conflict with systems, but now the relationship between trade unions and society, for example, has undergone a process of integration. Mark Vande Vall refutes Marxist concepts of "classes or class conflict; and uses the term used by Peter Drucker at the forty-seventh annual meeting of American Sociological Society, in September 1952- "The

present society is status society and the past society was the class society. Trade Unions as pressure groups are considered to be part of the political system. The 'political system' has been conceived by behaviouralists as analogous to an electronic computer which processes and thereby transforms 'inputs' into 'output'. While adjusting mechanisms allow for a feedback from the outputs on the inputs mechanism, the inputs are pressure of all kinds which are exercised on the system. In the early phase of capitalism trade unions were looked at with suspicion. But modern political scientists now assume that they are equal and sometimes more powerful in pressurising the system, thus extracting concessions for themselves. In an advanced society the polity is considered as a readymade neutral mechanism, which establishes equilibrium amongst various groups. "To say that politics is the authoritative allocation of values in a community", according to Blondel, "is to say that some measure of conflict exists between values and between the holder of these values. The government has to solve these conflicts by whatever means are at its disposal – the only limitation being that in so doing it must prevent the break up of the polity."

The behavioural political scientists thus admit that in advanced societies the trade unions have been playing an important role. Nevertheless, they deny the Marxists' and Socialists view that trade unions are vehicles of class war, or they have any political role in the establishment of a socialist society. For them the trade unions are not the organisation of oppressed working class. Their participation in politics means: their role in pressuring the political system through various channels so that workers may get maximum benefits.

23.3.1 Critics of Behavioural Theory

The state, according to traditionalists, liberal and modern behaviouralists is a non-partisan, neutral and impartial institution which mediates between the conflicting interests without any bias. The capital and labour are at par in relation to the state; and their claims are adjusted in a mechanical way. They view society as a mechanical process, and there are no wide mutations and revolutionary changes. Working class is an ordinary segment of this system. The various schools of the socialist thought do not accept state as an impartial body and believe that the working class has to play a different and revolutionary role i.e. the transformation of the society. Though there is a wide range of differences regarding the role of state in bringing a new social system, yet they agree that the state is an instrument of exploitation in the hands of ruling class. State socialists hope that state could be used as an instrument, gradually in transforming the society in a peaceful way. The Marxists want the state to play a transitory role as the dictatorship of proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat will give way to the Communist social order of classless society by eliminating the class distinctions, the distinctive feature of all class societies. The anarchists and syndicalists are suspicious of state, and want to keep their hands off the state. For them the very nature of the state is oppressive and it can never be an instrument of transforming the society. The state and Church are the paraphernalia of the ruling classes and serve their interests.

Check Your Progress 3

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

- ii) Check your answers with the model answer given at the end of the unit.
- 1) What is the role of trade unions in politics according to behaviouralists?

23.4 ANARCHIST SYNDICALIST THEORY

Proudhon, the Anarchist held that “property is theft” which is considered to be the fundamental right of man by the propertied classes. Thus propertied classes are thieves protected by state. The endeavour of the people should be to do away with all the institutions of these propertied classes . A true human society will not only be a classless but a stateless society. The ideal anarchist is “to organise society in such a manner that every individual man or woman should find, upon entering life, approximately equal means for the development of his or her diverse faculties and their utilization in his or her work. To organise such a society that renders impossible the exploitation of anyone's labour, will enable every individual to enjoy the social wealth which in reality is only produced by collective labour, but to enjoy it only in so far as he contributes directly towards the creation of that wealth.

For this, Bakunin advocates, “ it is necessary to abolish completely both in principle and in fact, all that which is called political power; for so long as political power exists, there will be ruler and ruled, master and slaves, exploiter and exploited. Once abolished political power should be replaced by an organization of productive forces and economic service. He adds, notwithstanding the enormous development of modern states, a development which in its ultimate phase is quite logically reducing the state to absurdity it is becoming evident that the days of state and the state principle are numbered. The contention of anarchists is that state protects the capitalist, system so the first attack should be on the state itself and the other system would crumble down automatically. They vehemently criticize Marxist Communists, who want to capture state power to crush the bourgeoisie. Bakunin says, “ only the Communists, imagine that they can attain it (a classless social order) through development and organization of political power of working classes, and cheaply of the city proletariat, aided by bourgeoisie radicalism- whereas the revolutionary socialists, the enemies of all ambitious alliances, believe on the contrary, that this common goal can be attained not through the political but through the social (and therefore anti-political) organization and power of the working masses of the cities and villages....”

Bakunin criticises communists and says that “the communists believe that it is necessary to organise the forces of the workers in order to take possession of the political might of the state. The revolutionary socialists organise with the view of destroying, or, if you prefer a more refined expression of liquidating the state. The communists are partisans of the principle and practice of authority, while revolutionary socialists place their faith only in freedom”. According to Bakunin- “ the source of its misfortune lies not in this or any other form of government but in the principle and the very existence of the government, whatever its nature may be.” Bakunin exhorts, “On our banner, the social revolutionary banner- are inscribed, in fiery and bloody letters, the destruction of all states, the annihilation of bourgeois civilisation” Thus, anarchists advocate, “before creating rather aiding the people to create this new organisation, it is necessary to overthrow that which is, in order to be able to establish that which should be.”

23.4.1 The Syndicalists

The syndicalists share with anarchists their abhorrence of the word ‘state’. Any linkage of the working class with the state power would mean the defeat of the very aim. The very character of state is such that it can never be used as an instrument of revolutionary change, is the firm faith of syndicalists. Therefore, an ideal society for syndicalists will be an organisation of working class syndicates,

where there is no pace of state power. The workers' syndicates will attack capitalist system as well as state power, which needless to say, is the protector of the system. Sorel, the philosopher and spokesman of syndicalists philosophy was an advocate of the creed of violence. He admires and eulogizes violence and violent method as the only method of overthrowing the present system. The methods the workers should use to terrorise the capitalist class is general strike. Sorel, in his "Reflections on violence" writes "Revolutionary Syndicalism keeps alive in the minds of masses the desire to strike, and that only prospers when important strikes accompanied by violence take place." The 'strikes' have a sentimental purpose. They are not only a bargaining instrument but also play an emotional and educative role. Sorel was a supporter of anti-rationalism. He writes, "Syndicalists believe in spontaneity and that there is no process by which future can be predicted scientifically." Thus, he advocated that through myth the spirit of strike should be included amongst the workers. He writes, "...use must be made of a body of images which, by intuition alone and before any considered analysis is made, is capable of evoking as an undivided whole the mass of sentiments which corresponds to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by socialism against modern society." Sorel elaborates, "General strike is a myth in which socialism has comprised, i.e. a body of images capable of evoking instinctively all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the work undertaken against modern society: strikes have endangered in the proletariat the noblest, deepest and most moving sentiments that they possess, the general strike group all in a coordinated picture and by bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum of intensity, appealing to their painful memories of particular conflict...." thus syndicalists' strike has a psychological purpose and accompanied with violence create the revolutionary consciousness amongst the workers. The methods of syndicalists are propagation of myths, violence, strike, general strike and sabotage.

Check Your Progress 4

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 ii) Check your answers with the model answer given at the end of the unit.
- i) Discuss Anarchist and Syndicalist view of trade union movement.
 What are the points of agreement and disagreement between the two?

.....

23.5 MARXIST LENINIST THEORY

Marx was very critical of anarcho-syndicalists. He fought bitter struggle against Proudhonism and Bakunism as well as Lassalleism in the First International. For Marx, Proudhon was the type of petty bourgeois socialist whose bold wars were confined to reactionary theories. He was a "talented publicist, a representative of sentimental delinquent socialism," "from head to foot, a philosopher, an economist of the petty bourgeoisie", who upbraided the bourgeoisie with the glaring accusatory formula ownership is theft. Proudhon considered himself as a theoretician of the working classes" and boldly began to come out with theoretical arguments on the philosophy of the poverty. Marx made sharp criticism of Proudhon's philosophy of poverty in his "Poverty of Philosophy". Proudhon, as an anarchist, did not give any value to strikes, and economic

struggle of workers. While Marx considered these struggles very important as part of class struggle through which the proletariat will capture the state machinery. Bakunin who followed anarchists tradition and also rejected ‘politics’ wanted workers to adhere exclusively to economic character. Lozovosky brings out the distinction between Bakunin and Marx. He writes, “here we see that Bakunin refers to purely economic agitation.” He speaks about the creation of resistance fund societies for purely economic struggle, says the workers are ignorant and, therefore, must not occupy themselves with too difficult problems, etc. The most that Bakunin permits is a federation of a resistance fund societies. This shows although Bakunin went further than Proudhon, he yet remained on one and the same path with him. He did not realise that trade unions are centres for organisation of the masses, that they are the ones which prepare the message for the struggle of the dictatorship of proletariat. He failed to see just what Marx saw in the very steps of the trade unions.

Marxist as against anarcho-syndicalist advocated that the workers should capture the state to establish a classless society. Thus the role of the economic struggle in general class struggle of the proletariat is clearly and concisely defined. The trade unions must be a ‘lever’ in the hands of the working class for the struggle against the political power of its exploiter. The political movement of the working class naturally has as its final aim the conquest of political power.

23.5.1 Difference between Anarchism and Marxism

The dictatorship of the proletariat rests on the international unity of the workers. Marx’s role in international working men’s Association and the first International corresponded to his belief that workers of the world have to unite to loose their chains. All working class movements, thus be directed to the establishment of the unity of the workers. For Marx the interests of the working class are the same, and there is no antagonism and conflict of the workers of the various countries.

The trade union philosophy of Marx is different from anarcho-syndicalist philosophy, who want to keep off political struggle from working class struggles while Marx attributes immense importance to the day to day struggles of the working class. “Marx writes about concrete strikes and gives dozens of examples of workers’ actions, describes what influence these had on working hours, wages, labour legislation, etc. . Bakunin is not interested in factory laws for he does not see the connection between partial demands and the final goal. He thinks that every strike may develop into a revolution. Marx is interested in the scope within which the trade unions can act.” “It means”, sums up Lozovosky, “the revolutionary Marxists have their own strike tactics- different radically from the strike tactics of the anarchists and reformists.”

23.5.2 Lenin on Trade Union Movement

Lenin, following Marxist tradition of proletarian internationalism, class struggle and dictatorship of the proletariat, developed his doctrine by focussing on the close relationship of the working class with the working class party. Lenin’s “What is to be done” represents the essence of his trade union philosophy. Here, he elaborates the tactics to achieve Marxian goals of trade unionism. Lenin felt that economic struggle of the workers can serve little purpose because, “The economic struggle merely ‘impels’ the workers to realise the government’s attitude towards the working class. Consequently, however much we may try to ‘lend the economic struggle itself a political character’, we shall never be able to develop the political consciousness of the workers to the level of social-democratic political consciousness by keeping within the frame work of the economic struggle, for, that framework is too narrow.” Lenin held that “Class

political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers." Lenin explains that, "The history of all countries shows that the working class exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals." Lenin thus emphasised that the political consciousness of the workers is very essential for socialist revolution: but if it is confined to trade union activity it would lead only to 'economism'. Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse. Lenin also warned that only theoretical and bookish knowledge is not sufficient. The social democrats have to be in close contact with the working class and their activities. He writes, "Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social Democrats; for the self knowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely with a fully clear theoretical understanding or rather not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical understanding of the relationships between all the various classes of modern society acquired through the experience of political life." "In order to become a Social democrat," Lenin emphasised, "the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of economic nature and the social and political feature of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant, the student and the vagabond...; he must understand what interests are reflected by certain institutions and how they are reflected. But this "clear picture" cannot be obtained from any book. It can be obtained only from living examples and from exposures that follow close upon what is going on about us at a given moment, etc. These comprehensive political exposures are an essential and fundamental condition for training the masses in revolutionary activity."

Lenin opposed tooth and nail the revisionists' concept of trade unionism; that spontaneous trade union activities of the workers will lead them to political consciousness, his view was that clear political understanding is necessary for leading the working class struggles and this understanding could be developed only through direct and active association with the working class struggles.

Check Your Progress 5

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 ii) Check your answers with the model answer given at the end of the unit.
- 1) Explain Marx's views about trade unions as class struggles.

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- 2) How did Lenin support close linkages of working class struggles with working class party?

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23.6 REVISIONISM AND NEW LEFT THEORIES

The revisionists claimed to revise Marxism according to the changing nature of modern capitalism, which Marx could not foresee in his own time. The Marxists concept of the dictatorship of proletariat has been given up by the modern Social Democrats. They hold that orthodox Marxian had become out of date, therefore, it must be re-examined, corrected and supplemented. For them, Marxism is wanting on the following counts:

- 1) The theory of the class struggle, is itself correct; however, it loses its significance with the development of the trade union and the establishment of democracy;
- 2) Revolution is an absolute conception, it corresponds to a lower level of social development. The democratic state precludes revolutions and the revolutionary struggle;
- 3) Democracy assures the working class the peaceful passing over from capitalism to socialism, and therefore the dictatorship of the proletariat is not and cannot be the order of the day;
- 4) The theory of the impoverishment held good at one time, but now it has become obsolete;
- 5) During the epoch of Marx it was perhaps true that the leading role in the trade unions belonged to the party, but today only party-political neutrality can ensure the effective development of the trade union movement;
- 6) During the epoch of Marx, strikes had to be considered as one of the most important weapons of struggle, but native philosophy of trade unions have outgrown this.

This Marxian alternative philosophy of trade unionism, or revisionism, has many varieties like state socialism, evolutionary socialism, collectivism, guild socialism, fabianism and democratic socialism, etc. They have minor differences on some issues but they are based on the faith that democratic institutions, should be used by workers by participating in elections, forming labour, social democratic parties and pushing measures using governmental authorities for the benefit of the workers. When out of power, as an opposition party it should pressurise the government to give concessions to the workers. Thus, socialism can be brought about gradually, and capitalist state would give way to a socialist state peacefully.

23.6.1 Lenin's Criticism of Revisionists

Needless to say that Lenin had serious disagreement over the 'supplementing' of Marxism by the revisionists. He called these revisionists as opportunists and stooges of the capitalists. Lenin held that the phenomenon of imperialism helped the imperialists to obtain immense profits from the exploitation of colonial countries. The part of the profits, they amassed in their coffers, distributed as crumbs to the so called working class leaders — the labour aristocracy. The better conditions of the working class in advanced capitalist countries projected by the spokesmen of social democracy is nothing but the reflection of the opportunism of these labour leaders who are benefitted by collaborating with imperialist exploitation of the colonies.

23.6.2 The New Left

The New Left philosophers combat the Marxist-Leninist theory that the condition of the working class will deteriorate with the advance of capitalism. They hold

that in fact in advanced capitalism, working class power has increased and they are no more exploited, but through their united power dictate their terms to employers as well as political system. They are called as "New Men of Power".

The New Left feels that in the advanced capitalist countries workers are no more revolutionary and that they are bourgeoisified and consumerism has overtaken them. This society, according to Marcuse, is based on an alliance between big business and the working class which has been brain washed into chasing an ever expanding flow of goods and inessential gadgets that their relative affluence enables them to purchase. Marcuse holds that working class is no more a negation of capitalism, but is in collusion with it in protecting the present system. According to him, "The very classes which were once the absolute negation of the capitalist system are now more and more integrated into it".

What role should the trade unions play in politics? No doubt, there is wide range of differences. The capitalist system has been compelled to allow trade unions to exist, but there is always an emphasis, which is reflected by the theorists, who consider western democratic system as an ideal system as well as inevitable, that trade unions are only bargainers, and their role in politics is confined to putting pressure on the political system to gain benefits for the workers. On the other side, Marxists are emphatic that workers should be politicised, and trade unions are not only an instrument to extract concessions for the workers but also they have to transform the capitalist system into a socialist system, and build a socialist society. The world has been thus divided in the capitalist world, the socialist world and the newly independent countries which have overthrown the foreign yoke very recently. What role workers' unions have played in these countries? Are they confined to their economic role and limited themselves to putting pressure on the government to shorten their working hours, asking for various facilities and wage increase? Nevertheless, the situation in these colonial countries had been very different. Working class also has to undergo immense suffering along with the other sections of the society due to the ruthless exploitation by the colonial rulers. Therefore, they also joined with other sections in their struggle for freedom. Trade unions also are involved along with other classes in these colonies with the national movement as in India; thus the most remarkable feature of trade unions is their linkage with political movements.

Check Your Progress 6

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

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

- 1) Examine revisionism as an improvement on Marxist theory of trade unionism.

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23.7 SPECIFICS OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The contradictions within imperialism compelled the imperialism to allow the industrialisation to take place in these colonies. In India, industrialisation did take

place despite the discouragement by the colonial ruler. Reluctant, tardy, uneven and limited it might be, imperialists had to start industry. The railways industry was started by the British bourgeoisie to appropriate raw materials and to have access to the markets. Why and how this took place had been explained by Marx. "I know that the English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures. But when you have introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, then it becomes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants to railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with the railways." Thus, "All that the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the production power but on their appropriation by the people."

Thus, the phenomenon of imperialism, its relationship with the indigenous emerging bourgeoisie, its attitude towards the working class, the attitude of indigenous bourgeoisie towards working class and imperialists and the responses of working class to indigenous bourgeoisie and imperialism is very intricate and complex. The nature of trade unionism in India, therefore, reflects the complexity of the socio-economic reality of the erstwhile colonies. Nonetheless, political factors exert a very important influence on trade union movement. The commentators on Indian trade union movement however, overlook the role of imperialism in complicating the nature of trade unionism. They take into account the social background of the workers, their religion, caste, age, financial condition, family size, etc. but not the socio-economic forces as the result of complex condition "created by field of labour and social legislation", which in turn were obviously determined by the political factors. In advanced capitalist countries, the non-Marxist western scholars trace the links of trade unions with politics only as groups concerned with the economic policy of the government as it affects their interest. In colonial countries, the fact has been admitted that the politician mobilised the workers to form trade unions and these trade unions played an important role in the national movement. Subrata Ghosh says "In the beginning of the twenties, the trade unions movement was strongly influenced by nationalists and humanists." "In fact, from our experience of trade union situation in the underdeveloped countries where trade unions are more recently born, we may safely consider that it is more possible that trade unionism first originates due to the impact of direct strains upon the workers, which tend to curtail their already low standard of living, rather than their desire to participate in the rule-making process." Ghosh refutes Kerr and Siegel's view that trade unions are formed by the workers "to participate in the rule making process in the country." This may be true in developed countries but not in the developing countries. Scholars, who looked at societies as only 'free societies' or 'totalitarian societies', have not paid attention to the vast society which was very recently under the dominance of imperialist powers. They talk of trade unions in a free society and assert that they are an expression of the fundamental right of men and women to organise themselves in order to protect and promote their interests by collective action. It cannot be assumed, however, on the basis of mere existence of trade unions that the societies of both right and left have made use of trade unions to achieve their ends.

Check Your Progress 7

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

- 1) What are the specificities of trade union in developing countries?

23.8 TRADE UNIONISM IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

"Trade Unionism" writes G. D. H. Cole "is shaped not only by the stage of economic development but also by the general structure in which it has to act" The dominant trade unionism in developed countries has different goals and structures. They are considered as pressure groups and not part of state structure; they are considered to be apolitical. The socialist countries emphasise the political role of trade unions. They are considered to be part of state structure, and are assigned to carry out the work of socialist transformation. The trade union movement in the developing countries emerged and progressed in different circumstances and therefore are different in nature.

23.8.1 Trade Union Movement in U.S.A.

The Trade Union Movement in the United States of America is today an accepted and permanent part of American social scene. After decades of intense struggle, organised labour is now an admitted fact in economic, political and social life.

With the growth of industries the U.S. workers and factory system workers have realised that only through collective action could they bargain on anything on equal terms. They began to organise. Philadelphia printers appears to be the first trade union which in 1786 went on a strike for a minimum wage of \$6 a week, and after six years a kind of permanent formation took place among shoemakers of Quaker city. The scattered unions were formed in two decades and only in 1827 a labour movement appeared and workers in different trades came to form one central labour union - The Mechanics Union of Trade Association. After this Central bodies sprang up in New York, Boston and other cities.

During Civil war new factories were established to supply the armies. There was an expansion of markets from one locality to the nation. The development of national market compelled labour to organise increasingly on a national as well as local scale. However, they did not survive long. In 1869 another national labour organisation was formed - the rights of labour. It became very important but by 1894, its decline started, because of the emergence of another organisation American Federation of Labour in 1886. Samuel Gompers was its president. In 1905 apart from American Federation of Labour some other strong trade unions also came up as Industrial workers of the world, which espoused French syndicalism.

In 1935 John L. Lewis organised industrial unions inside the A.F.L. named Committee on Industrial Organisation-CIO. Bitter struggles followed after this with A.F.L. which resulted in the expulsion of these two leaders related to this Committee of Industrial Organisation, and shortly, thereafter, the committee changed its name to Congress of Industrial organisation C.I.O. The labour scene at national level is dominated by these two front organisations A.F.L. and C.I.O. They often try to come closer to each other. These trade union organisations are not closely associated with any specific political party of U.S.A., however at

times they are in forefront in declaring their choices for presidential candidates and express opinions in favour or against the specific policies of the state, and are affiliated to International Confederation of Trade Unions.

28.8.2 Trade Union Movement in United Kingdom

The British Trade Union Movement is the oldest in the world. With the emergence of industrialisation and development of capitalism, the workers realised the fact that they could not withstand the power of the employer alone and have to bargain collectively. The employer did not like the workers to join hands with each other and form a combination. The State helped them in this. G.D.H. Cole writes "there were, already in the eighteenth century a number of statutes forbidding workers. The workers faced persecution and repression. Yet against all odds they were able to win their right to unionise."

Interestingly the early manifestation of unionisation of workers expressed itself in a fear of modern industry. The workers feared that mechanisation in the production process would result in the loss of job of the workers. This led the workers to wreck the machine. This form of protest was called Luddism, and was severely dealt by the state. Ultimately the workers reconciled with the fact that modern industries would stay and they have to adjust with them and workers entered another phase of unionism. Apart from fighting for economic betterment in terms of wages and other facilities, the workers realised the importance of share in political power. The national Association for the protection of labour established in 1830. Robert Owen founded the Grand National consolidated Trade Union in 1834.

For the protection of workers rights through political process a charter of demands was prepared. This was called Chartist movement. During this period industrial workers obtained the representation of people's Acts of 1867, and 1884. In 1868 the Trade Union Congress, a central organisation of the English working class was formed.

At the present juncture British Trade Union Congress is the apex body of the workers of Britain. Most unions are affiliated to it. It separates itself from political parties of U.K. However generally labour party draws bulk of its support from trade unions. However, there are some unions which are staunch supporters of conservative party. By and large trade unionism in Britain is mainly 'economic' like U.S.A.

28.8.3 The Trade Union Movement in Socialist State: Former Soviet Union

The role of trade unions is considered very different in socialist countries from a capitalist system, where they are considered as pressure groups. The purpose of trade unions in socialist countries is to ensure workers' participation in socialist production management. Therefore the workers associations were considered the most important social force in the vast land of Soviet Union. The Trade Unions of the U.S.S.R. enlisted the working people in coping with tasks connected with the further development of production, teach the masses socialist discipline and communities attitude to work and public property, and instill in the industrial and office workers a sense of being masters of their own country.

A brief sketch of history of trade union movement brings out the fact that prior to Bolshevik revolution in Russia, Trade Unions had come up quite late. Capitalism got a very late start in the Russian Empire and the protective organisations of the workers were correspondingly late in making their

appearance. The first All Russian Trade Union Conference, composed chiefly of delegates from Moscow unions was held in October 1905. There was ruthless suppression of their activities by the Russian authorities. As a consequence it was difficult to withstand the ruthlessness of Russian State power and by the winter of 1916-1917 the membership of unions dwindled to 1500. After March Revolution a council of trade unions was formed in Moscow and one in Petrograd. In Petrograd, and Moscow and other cities union workers carried out final seizure of power which followed famous October revolution.

The new role of all Russian Congress of trade unions was discussed in 1918 at petrogard in its first congress. With the introduction of New Economic Policy, the unions became economic collaborators and advisers in the management of industry. Before October revolution there existed a large number of small unions that had sprung up mostly after march days which were later united in a central organisation known as the All Union Central Council of Trade Union/Central Council of Trade Union (ACCTU or simply CCTU).

Check Your Progress 8

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

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

- I) What are the main national trade unions in USA, UK and the former Soviet Union?

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23.9 TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES — INDIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The Trade Union Movement in the developing countries developed very differently from the advanced capitalist countries and socialist countries. There are some specificities in the growth of trade union movement in these post-colonial societies.

One of the features of trade union movement is its belatedness. In real sense trade union movement emerged on national scene only after the first world war. Because of late development of industries, the workers are new to the industrial culture and dominated by rural moorings. Besides, there are strong political linkages with the trade union movement in the developing countries with national movement. Generally during the colonial period the trade unions were in the forefront of freedom struggle, and therefore apart from trade union activities were deeply involved in the politics of the country.

Indian Trade Union Movement reflects the special nature of the trade union movement of an erstwhile colonial country.

Before first world war the trade unionism in India was very negligible. Generally there were some organisations which came up but they were very short-lived. During the war some efforts were made to organise workers on modern trade

union lines which ultimately culminated in an All India Trade Union Organisation called All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1920, so that India could be represented at International Labour Organisation.

A.I.T.U.C. had close links with the national movement. Many of its presidents were active in the national movement. Before Independence it was the front organisation of the workers, just like Indian National Congress which was an umbrella for different shades of opinions and ideologies. Similarly in A.I.T.U.C. also there were different approaches to trade unionism that merged in one trade union organisation. At times there were splits also because of sharp differences in view points. Apart from A.I.T.U.C. Gandhi also enunciated a trade union movement based on his ideology of Sarvodaya. Ahmedabad Textile Union or Mazdur Mahajan Sabha was a trade union organisation which represented Gandhian philosophy of industrial relations.

After independence there has been break up of Indian National Congress in many political parties as national movement got fragmented. The trade union movement also broke up in many trade union organisations. A.I.T.U.C has been split in many trade union centres which are strongly linked with one or the other political party such as Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) linked with the Indian National Congress. Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, BMS with Bhartiya Janata Party, All India Trade Union Congress with Communist Party of India, (AITUC), Centre for Indian Trade Union CITU with Communist Party Marxist Hind Mazdoor Panchayat, (HMP) Hind Mazdoor Sabha with socialists. Besides these, there are some other trade union centres which are also affiliated with one or other political parties.

Thus the most important characteristic of Indian trade union movement in developing countries is its close political involvement.

Check Your Progress 9

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

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

- i) How can the political nature of trade union movement in India be traced in Indian National Movement?

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23.10 LET US SUM UP

The working class organises itself in trade union organisations to protect their interests. The workers waged a prolonged struggle to achieve their right to organise themselves in an union. There are varied views regarding the goals of trade unions, their relationship with politics and class consciousness; therefore there are different theories of trade unions such as Behavioural theory, Anarchist Syndicalist theory, Marxist and Leninist theory, and New Left theories. Mostly these theories reflect the social reality of advanced developed countries or socialist countries. The trade union movement in developing countries is different. In India trade unions emerged out of national movement and have close links with politics. There is a multiplicity of trade unions.

23.11 KEY WORDS

Bourgeois	: A term used by Marxist Socialists to denote proprietors (other than agricultural), capitalists, manufacturers, merchants, persons with a business of their own and persons of liberal professions.
Class Conflict	: Conflict between different classes, in the present context particularly between bourgeoisie and proletariat for protection of their interests.
Anarchists	: Believers in the doctrine that every form of government is evil and tyranny. Therefore state should be abolished and instead free association of individuals without arms be established.
Proletariat	: The class of wage earners with little or no property of their own who depend on the sale of their labour.

23.12 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

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23.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Secc Section 23.1
- 2) Seec Section 23.1

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Secc Section 23.2
- 2) Seec Section 23.2

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Secc Section 23.3

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Secc Section 23.4

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Secc Sub-Section 23.5.1
- 2) Seec Sub-Section 23.5.2

Check Your Progress 6

- 1) Secc Section 23.6

Check Your Progress 7

- 1) Secc Section 23.7

Check Your Progress 8

- 1) Secc Section 23.8

Check Your Progress 9

- 1) Secc Section 23.9

UNIT 24 PEASANTRY

Structure

- 24.0 Objectives
 - 24.1 Introduction
 - 24.2 Definition and the Problem of Identifying Peasantry
 - 24.2.1 Categories of Peasantry
 - 24.3 Determinants of Mobilisation
 - 24.3.1 Technological Development
 - 24.3.2 Historical Conjunctures
 - 24.3.3 Ecological Parameters
 - 24.3.4 Agrarian Structures and Communities Role
 - 24.4 Varieties of Peasant Struggle
 - 24.4.1 Nationalist
 - 24.4.2 Anti - Feudal
 - 24.4.3 Anti State/Anti Government Struggles
 - 24.5 Anti Globalisation or New Peasant/Farmer's Movements
 - 24.6 Let Us Sum Up
 - 24.7 Key Words
 - 24.8 Some Useful Books
 - 24.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
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24.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with rural categories called peasantry, how they have been treated as passive conservative forces over the years to a rational, progressive social categories. Can they be treated as a single homogeneous category in the midst of differentiations in land holdings, cultural diversities, social set ups etc ?. The most important question is how to define them. This unit also introduces you to the pattern or determining factors of peasant mobilisation and the varieties of peasant struggles at different places. In addition it focuses on various questions that the peasant movement posed to the polities, the state, the global capital etc. in recent years. This unit should help you in understanding :

- The debate about peasant categories in a comparative perspective;
 - The struggles that the peasants carried out in different countries; and
 - The nature of the peasantry and the issues that they raised in a comparative perspective.
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24.1 INTRODUCTION

Peasantry has been treated as a docile, conservative tradition, value bound, reactionary, status quoist rural categories who have no interest beyond their respective rural areas and their social set ups. They are treated as those categories who are strictly adhering and linked to rural values and thereby closed to all the options of modernity. Further they are also treated as dull heads, "sack of potatoes ", or petty bourgeois categories who cannot form a class in the strict sense, nor can they form their own parties or associations in a schematic manner. All these treatment of the peasantry does overlook their capacity to change the regimes in different places and countries, participation in

the nationalist movement, fight against feudalism and feudal lords, oppression, accepting modern techniques of production, raising the larger issues of nationalism, the state, freedom, development and of course globalisation or liberalisation in recent years.

24.2 DEFINITION AND PROBLEM OF IDENTIFYING PEASANTRY

There is no single definition of the concept of peasantry. This is mainly due to the ambiguities while adding or excluding large number of rural categories and also due to the partial understanding of the historical role that the peasantry played. The term peasant literally means a person working on the land with simple tools. Even the entire rural population including the big landlords and the agricultural labourers have been treated as peasantry. This treatment does overlook the differences between and among the categories both in terms of the land holdings, technology, employment of labour etc.

There are few definitions about peasantry. Eric Wolf, an authority on peasant struggles defines them as “population that are existentially involved in cultivation and make autonomous decisions regarding the process of cultivation”. His definition leaves out certain categories such as poor and marginal peasantry including the share croppers. On the other hand another authority Theodor Shanin defines them as “consist of small agricultural producers who with the help of simple equipment and labour of their families produce mainly for their consumption and for the fulfilment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power”. This definition too does not take into account rich and capitalist farmers who try to maximise the profit by entering into larger market. A simple definition has been given by Irfan Habib. He defines peasantry as “a person who undertakes agriculture on his own, working with his own implements of his family”. Here the definition excludes rich and capitalist farmers / peasants. Taking all these definitions one can define the peasantry as a category of population having certain patches of land, largely dependent upon labour, family or the hiring in - for the production of agriculture, who believes in competitive market or restricted market system.

Nonetheless not all the categories can be called peasantry. There are rural categories like farmers and landless labourers. The farmer, for example exploits alternative uses of factors of production and is always in search of maximum returns and is subjected to market risk. A shift from the peasant to farmer is not only psychological but also materialistic one. However he becomes another name for peasant as he is also linked to the land.

Agricultural labourers can also be included in the category of peasantry for the simple reason that their involvement in the development of land and its allied products is as important a matter to them as those who own and cultivate the land. The land constitutes a common denominator and any change whether social, economic or technological will affect both the owner/cultivator and the agricultural labourers.

A landless labourer is different from the peasantry for the reason that he is psychologically and behaviourally different. He would prefer standardised wages, standard working hours, adequate educational and medical facilities, and increase in purchasing power.

Even tribals are treated as peasantry, especially those who have settled down for a long time in a particular area and have been working on the land. Any change in the land structure also affects them equally.

24.2.1 Categories of Peasantry

Peasants



There are large number of categories within the peasantry : Small, big , rich, middle, marginal etc. This heterogeneity of categories is done depending upon the economic position including the land holdings of the peasantry. Marxists like Engels for example include the classes of feudal peasants , tenants and poor peasants and farm labourers, who respectively perform corvee service to their land lords, make payments of higher rents, cultivate and own small patches of lands.

In a situation of revolution in Russia, Lenin classified the peasantry into five categories— middle, rich, small, agricultural proletariat and semi proletariat. The agricultural labourers were identified as those categories living on hiring out their labour. The semi proletariat were those owning small patches of land, and partly working as wage labourers; small peasants are tenant holders, and living on hiring out their labour. The big peasants, a category of capitalist entrepreneur employing considerable labour. He identified rich with "Kulaks" who are reactionary too. However, the middle peasant is a self supporting , oscillating category who would in due course either be pushed to the ranks of rich peasantry or proletariat category.

In a situation of revolution in China, Mao classified the peasantry into landlord, middle peasantry, poor peasantry and workers. However he did not use the category of capitalist landlords as it was either too weak or was unable to assert itself as a strong force. The landlord is a semi-entrepreneur who exploits the others by extracting rents. Eventhough middle peasants can not exploit the labour of others, however this is not the case with well to do peasants. The poor peasants sell their labour power and are subjected to the exploitation through rent, and interest on loan. But workers live by hiring out their labour.

In the Indian situation the same problems are prevailing mainly due to cultural diversities, differences in agrarian structures, land holdings and also due to the prevalence of numerous castes in India. In the Indian context broadly three categories can be made: Maliks , consisting of large absentee land lords and small proprietors who exploit the tenants and sub-tenants by means of rents ; Kisans who consist of small land owners and subsistence tenants having property interests and finally Mazdoors who include poor tenants and landless labourers who live on selling of their labour.

Check Your Progress 1

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

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

- 1) How do you define and identify the peasantry?

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- 2) Name the different categories of Peasantry?

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- 3) What do you mean by Peasantry?
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24.3 DETERMINANTS OF MOBILISATION

There are many determinants that have helped the peasant mobilisation. Some of the determinants are technology, historical conjunctures, ecological circumstances, agrarian structures and relationships, Government policies, caste and community bonds.

24.3.1 Technological Development

Technological advancement has had an effect on the agrarian relations. The introduction of irrigation, seed technology, high yielding varieties, green revolution, introduction of chemical fertilizers in the place of organic fertilizers, introduction of tractors and tillers in the place of bullock carts etc. has helped in the growth of agrarian capitalism in different countries. In fact industrialisation / industrial capitalism in the Western world developed mainly due to the primitive accumulation from agriculture. This is apparent in the former colonial countries like France, England etc. In other words agriculture in the Western countries had undergone the capitalist transformation much earlier than the third world countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, China, Nigeria etc. In these countries capitalism in agriculture was introduced either during the middle of the colonial rule or at the fag end of the colonialism. Interestingly in these countries capitalism was introduced from above which is why these countries have not seen uniform development taking place. Most of the time agrarian capitalism compromised and co-existed with the pre capitalist social structure. This is the reason why the development remained uneven, lopsided and sporadic. However in the Western world which includes Russia, U.S.A, England etc. the capitalism developed from within either by the destruction of feudalism or by the exploitation of the colonies or by the state policy. There are two paths available for the development of agrarian capitalism— *American path and Prussian path (or Junker Capitalist path)*. The weak agrarian capitalism in the third world has not been able to pose challenges to the Western countries. Nonetheless introduction of agrarian capitalism has given rise to new categories to emerge. In Russia it has given rise to Kulaks, which acted as a reactionary force and also gave spaces to agricultural labourers. In India it has given rise to *bullock capitalist or gentleman farmers or Maliks*. At the same time it has had other effects too: A class of agricultural labourers have been able to demand more wages, fixing of working hours, medical and maternal facilities etc. In other words agrarian capitalism has increased the bargaining capacity of the agricultural labourers as well as the capitalist peasants both at the grassroot level as well as national and international levels. This is apparent in the demand for the protection by the wine brewing peasants in the European continent in the backdrop of liberalisation and integration of European continent in recent years.

24.3.2 Historical Conjunctures

Historical conjunctures like colonial rule, victory or defeat in war, inflation , nationalism, invention of new methods of development have also influenced the mobilisation. Even the issues like land reforms, while changing the social relations, have also affected the moblisation process. In China, India, Algeria, Vietnam, etc. colonial rule had the larger bearings; In Japan, Taiwan, the land reforms have affected the mobilisation. Interestingly increase in the oil prices during the early seventies slowed down the pace of green revolution in different continents including India and Pakistan.

24.3.3 Ecological Parametres

Ecological parameters like cropping pattern, adoption of improved seeds, irrigation pattern also have affected the peasant mobilisation. In recent years new cropping pattern that the multi-nationals are introducing in the third world countries have created the fear of loss to the peasants. In third world countries like India the peasants are resisting such seeds as terminator seeds by way of destroying and uprooting the saplings.

24.3.4 Agrarian Structures and Communities Role

Agrarian structures that include land rights, distribution of land, social relations, patterns of tenancy or tenancy rights , control over lands etc. also have bearings on mobilisation. These factors have helped in raising issues like tenancy rights, land to the tiller, land reforms, security of tenants etc. This also includes such other issues as abolition of serf-dom or feudalism, slavery and bondedness. These issues are apparent in the mobilisation of peasants in different stages of history : In India in 1950-60, England (15th Century onwards), Russia in early 1900's , China (1920-47), Philippines 1946-52.,Germany (15th Century onwards).

The role of the communities or the caste can also not be ruled out. Although caste is a predominant feature of India, community too has played a dominant role over the years. This shows that peasant mobilisation either in India or elsewhere is not an exclusive class phenomena. In India during the British rule castes like Wattars, Jats, Koilis etc. mobilised themselves against the landlords. Even communities like Mopillas, Kunbi and Pattidars etc. mobilised themselves against the issues of feudal oppression, high rents, cesses etc. In other parts of the world communities like Huks in Philippines and Cheapas in Latin America have mobilised on the basis of communities against the state, Government , land lords etc.

Even the Governmental policies like industrialisation, liberalisation, land reforms, bank nationalisation etc. have been viewed as anti-peasant in different places like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria etc.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.
- 1) What are the determinants of agrarian mobilisation?

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- 2) Differentiate between the agrarian capitalism of Western countries and India?

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- 3) Explain the common issues in agrarian mobilisation India and the Western world.

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24.4 VARIETIES OF PEASANT STRUGGLES

Given the factors that determine the mobilisation of peasants, it is true that the peasant struggle can take different forms. However, there are differences of opinion as to the class that takes the leadership in the peasant struggle or revolution. One opinion is that in the peasant struggles most of the time the “middle peasant” takes the lead because of vulnerability and the economic autonomy that the category has vis-a-vis other categories. Second opinion is that in the situation of nationalist movement, the “rich peasants” take the lead for two obvious reasons : one, its larger agenda to capture the larger market. Thereby they emerge at the national level as a big power or the force. And two, eliminate any obstacles coming its way of development. This can be done either by directly participating in the nationalist movement or supporting it. However, it is also true that many a times in the history the poor peasantry(China) has taken the lead. At the same time it is a fact that peasants sometimes rather than becoming revolutionaries become reactionaries. The role that the “Kulaks” played in the former Soviet Union is a classic case, wherein they opposed tooth and nail the very Soviet state. Nonetheless, in Indian context three factors have been attributed to the relative passivity of peasantry when compared to the other parts of the world: Caste system, influence of bourgeoisie and the influence of Gandhi. This cannot be fully comprehended mainly because of the sheer number of struggles that the peasants waged or undertook over the years. One scholar has estimated seventy seven peasant revolts between Mughal period and 1970s. Even Ministry of Home Affairs in 1960s had estimated 5 agitations in Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Uttar Pradesh, three in Bihar, Orissa and Rajasthan and two in Tamil Nadu. In the European continent between 1736 and 1789 one scholar has estimated 125 peasant revolts (excluding the German Peasant War).

In a comparative perspective peasant struggles take different forms and they can be divided into four categories: 1) Nationalist, 2) Anti Feudal, 3) Anti-state/Anti Government and finally, 4) Anti-globalisation or new peasant/ farmers' movement. They may also take the form of terrorist, religious, banditry, and liberal reformist etc. However all the struggles can be treated under the broad four categories given above.

24.4.1 Nationalist

This variety is also called anti colonial/ anti imperialist struggle which the peasants carried out either independently or as part of the nationalist movement. Their participation was prompted by the fact that they were directly exploited by

the colonialist or the different agencies of the colonialism including new social relations that the colonialists introduced in the colonial countries. Peasants wholeheartedly participated in the nationalist struggle of Cuba, Russia, Vietnam, China, Algeria, and India. In the Indian context colonialism exploited the peasantry both by direct methods and by introducing new agrarian structures like Zamindari and Ryotwari system. This system in turn created a hierarchy of feudal structures which made the life of peasants miserable. During the British period a large number of anti colonial struggles came to surface which were either part of the larger nationalist struggle or independent of it with many of them being spearheaded by the tribals and the poor peasants. Following are the major tribal as well as the peasant struggles against the Britishers or the British colonialists or their colonial agencies.

• Sanyasi Revolt	1771 - 1789
• The Munda uprising	1797
• Rajas of Dalbhum	1769-1774
• The Kolis, Hos and Mundas of Chotanagapur	1831-32
• Tarar revolt	1820
• The Santhals of Bihar	1855-56
• The Bhokta Uprising	1857
• The Birsa Uprising	1890-95
• The Kol Insurrection	1831-32
• The Deccan Revolt	19th century
• The Struggle of Worlis	19th century

Nonetheless, during the British rule peasant issues also became part of the nationalist discourse especially when Gandhi as well as Congress took up the issues of peasants. Gandhi, in fact, led three important struggles which made the peasants to become a part of political discourse/struggle waged by the nationalist movement under him. Gandhi led struggles in Champaran(1918), Kheda(1919) and Bardoli (1920). In these struggles the main issues were remissions at the time of calamity, revenue concessions, or concessions in rents or Thinkatiya system (Bardoli). However, in 1936 Congress adopted famous Agrarian Programme at the Faizpur Congress. However, the failure of Gandhi and the Congress prompted many independent peasant organisations to emerge in India - especially Kisan Sabhas came into being initially under the Congress and later under the influence of Communists. The peasant struggle under the communist ideology is not a new phenomenon specific to India. In Philippines the communists during 1946-52 in central Luzon fought for tenancy rights, or change in the tenant -landlord relations etc. In China, Cuba, and Vietnam they fought against the imperialist/colonialist forces or its various agencies and brought in complete change. In Russia during the time of revolution they aligned with the industrial working class/ or the party led by Lenin. In India during the colonial and post colonial period peasants either under the Kisan Sabhas or under the Communist Parties undertook many struggles: in 1920 Kisan Sabha launched agitation against the Zamindar Zulum, communist led the struggles in Kayyur in 1940s; they also led the struggle in Tebhaga and during the post independence period they led the famous Telangana struggle in Andhra Pradesh between 1946-51 and in 1967-71; they led another heroic struggle in Naxalbari, which became popular as Naxalite movement.

24.4.2 Anti - Feudal

Second important form of struggle is the anti feudal struggle. These struggles were aimed at opposing the atrocities committed or perpetrated by the feudal

classes by way of serfdom, corvee service, slavery, high taxes, abwabs, rents, forced labour. Medieval Europe witnessed large number of anti feudal struggles in Germany, Hungary, Austria, England etc. One famous anti feudal struggle was Dozsa Struggle of 1514. In India anti feudal struggle became a common feature after the inauguration of British rule. Their struggle was prompted by the fact that British rule or administration introduced new agrarian structure, which created a new hierarchy of feudal structure or relations. In many places a structure of Zamindars or feudal lords with varying degrees of relations came into being, who had very little interest in augmenting agricultural production than exploiting the peasants or tenants. For example *Wargadars* in coastal belt of India.

Following are some important anti-feudal struggles waged during all these years—beginning from colonial period to post colonial period.

- Nagar Peasant Uprising in Karnataka 1830-33
- Pabna Revolt against the Zamindars 1870
- Mopilla Revolt against the Zamindars 1920s
- Ellarindi Struggle against the Zamindars 1941
- Nadiyanga Struggle in Kerala 1940s
- Kodagu Satyagraha in Karnataka 1951
- Worli Revolt in Maharashtra 1945
- Kotiyoor Struggle of Kerala 1945

24.4.3 Anti State/Anti Government Struggles

Anti state/Anti government struggles were of two kinds: one opposing the state structure in toto or opposing certain policies of the state or the government, thereby, in the process negotiating with the political apparatus for larger concessions. Anti colonial struggles were primarily anti state struggles, mainly because peasants perceived in colonialism a threat to their own existence. Even after the independence/revolution the struggles have been waged against the new state or the government also. The classic case is the opposition of Kulaks in Russia. In India the Telangana and Naxalite movements contained the spirit of anti state/anti government, however, the movement could not sustain for a long time due to the state oppression. However, there is one more dimension to the anti state/anti government struggles in India: this was visible when large number of peasants joined hands with different forces demanding integration of the Princely states into Indian Union before and after the independence.

Finally anti state/anti government struggles also combined the spirit of appropriating large number of concessions from the state /government to the peasantry. They are in the form of demanding industrial status to the agriculture, remunerative prices, effective implementation of land reforms. This form of struggle in the process has given space for different categories to demand concessions from their immediate classes. Agricultural Labourers for example, after the inauguration of Green Revolution has been demanding more wages or scientific wages on par with industrial classes, bonus, medical facilities, fixed working hours. This has led to violent incidents in different parts of the world. The classic case in India is the incident of Tanjore in Tamil Nadu wherein the houses of agricultural labourers were burnt down, and were butchered.

24.5 ANTI GLOBALISATION OR NEW PEASANT/FARMER'S MOVEMENTS

This is a new form of peasant movement in recent years. In fact it is a part of new social movement of the western world. More than the traditional struggles—for example the labour—this struggle covers large number of new issues—women, ecology, nuclear, human rights etc. In India it all started during 1980s, although its genesis can be traced to 1970s. The New Peasant /Farmers Movement can also be seen in England, France, Germany etc. However, they are not so veciferous as that of India—mainly because they are more vocal than any other countries.

They are new for some specific reasons: one, they address the larger issues like development, deprivation, economy, terms of trade, urban versus rural etc. Two, their activism is not confined to rural area alone, rather they stand for the broader alliances cutting across the state and the nations; they address those issues which are common to all the categories of peasantry like remunerative prices, debts, loans, electricity supply and also the larger issues like the consequences of globalisation or liberalisation on the life of rural population in particular countries in general. Three, these movements believe in unity among different categories , irrespective of social set ups or milieus. In other words these peasant movements oppose the differentiation of peasantry as small, big, rich etc. Fourth, unlike the previous peasant movements in India or elsewhere these movements eschew the notions of radicalism or violence as the core of their strategy, although in one or two instances they have resorted to violence to oppose the entry of multinationals or globalisation.

Most of the time they adhere to non violence, satyagraha, long marches, peaceful agitations, strikes etc. Some time they resort to new strategies like Gav Bhandi, Chakka Jam etc. Most important is their support or opposition to the international capital entering the country and displacing large number of categories.Their opposition also combine rationalist arguments/discourse about the World Bank WTO, IMF, Structural Adjustment Progammes etc. initiated by the world bodies or the Western countries. At the same time New Peasant Movements are also concerned about the opposition growing from within the Western countries to their policies vis-a-vis the third world countries.These oppositions are expressed within the larger ideological frame work of third world dependency theory although they focus on the ideologies of Gandhi, Marxism, Rosa Luxemburg internal colonialism etc. In fact, one particular movement, mainly Shetkari Sanghathan has coined the word “Bharat Versus India”, to understand the relationship between urban/Western influenced India and the Rural India, which has become its ideological premises.

Symptoms of New Peasants/Farmers movement can be located in the formation of Khetbari Zamindari Union in Punjab during the early 1970s and Tamiliga Vyavasaigal Sangam in Tamil Nadu. During the same period peasants in different parts of India were also organising conferences, meetings under the banner or umbrella of different political parties. In one of the conferences in 1970s they demanded procurement prices, peasant representations in different bodies, bridging the gap or disparities between the industries and the agriculture, subsidies for the agricultural goods, reducing the income disparities , allocating more funds to the rural areas etc.

Nonetheless, during the same decade of 1970 Punjab Khetbari Union resorted to six major struggles:anti single food zone (1974), against power rate hike (1974-75) against the increase in water rates and cess (1975) against defective

tractors, against unremunerative prices for sugar cane (1975) and diesel prices (1975). Meanwhile Tamiliga Vyavasaigal Sangam resorted to many struggles: against hike in electricity charges, against agricultural income taxes, land tax, cess, debt relief, subsidies to the agricultural labourers, remunerative prices to different crops.

A new twist to the movement came during 1980s when Shetkari Sangthana in Maharashtra, Bhartiya Kisan Union in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha in Karnataka resorted to series of agitations in their respective states. A large number of issues have been brought to the centre stage : remunerative prices, writing off the loans, scientific wage policy, bridging the gap between the urban and rural areas, etc. Most important is the opposition to the globalisation on the grounds that it would depeasantise the categories, increase the unemployment, create cultural crises, convert the peasants into commodities, change the agrarian economy, introduce the regime of patenting and finally convert India into a Neo-Colony of the western countries. However, not all the peasant movements oppose the globalisation. Maharashtra movement supports it on the ground that it would help Indian peasants to earn huge profit from the international market by entering into it. It is hopeful of creating competitive capitalism. Nonetheless, the opposition has been expressed both by way of undertaking large number of agitations and by way of directly attacking the multinationals operating in different places. In Karnataka alone peasants have attacked Cargil Company, Kentucky Fried Chickens and Monstano's Terminator seeds. Nonetheless their opposition has received acclaim when different organisations at the global level have joined them in opposing the globalisation. They also received the support from the peasants, feminists, human rights activists, Zapatista supporters, intellectuals and a host of organisations like Anti nuclear groups, peace march, greens etc. of France, England, Germany, Italy, etc. During 1999 nearly 500 peasants of Karnataka, Uttarpradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab etc., demonstrated, squatted, in front of international organisations, multinational corporations, in front of G-8 Conference in France, England, Italy, Germany.

This is done by resorting to what is called Intercontinental Caravan(ICC) or Totally Crazy Project. This shows that peasants in the present context cannot be treated as docile categories whose interests are confined to village areas.

Check Your Progress 3

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

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

i) What do you mean by New Peasant/ Farmer's Movement?

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2) Explain the varieties of peasant movement.

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- 3) What do you mean by anti feudal struggles of the peasantry?

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24.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have studied about rural categories called "Peasantry". You have also studied about how to differentiate them into small, big, rich etc. and also the historical role that they played in different countries, including India. What are the varieties of struggles that they waged against the state, feudalism, globalisation etc., and also the determining factors of mobilisation. Now it is a fact that the peasant can not simply be reduced and treated as rural bumpkins, or docile categories; they have to be treated as active forces of history. Therefore any reference to history of people's struggle should also have reference to peasants.

24.7 KEY WORDS

Peasants	: A person working on land for his survival.
Feudalism	: The economic, political and social system in which land was held by vassals in exchange for military and other services to overlords.
Capitalism	: Economic system where means of production are privately owned.
Colonialism	: A system of subjugation by foreign powers for the economic means.
Market	: A place of selling and buying goods.

24.8 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Eric Wolf, *Peasant Wars of Twentieth Century*, London, 1975

Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, Bombay, 1963

Theodor Shanin, *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, Harmondsworth, 1976

Tom Brass, ed., *New Farmer's Movement in India*, England, 1995

Muzaffar Assadi, *Peasant Movement in Karnataka, 1980-94*, Delhi 1997

24.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Peasant can be defined in terms of the land holdings, capacity to exploit others' labour, and hold over techniques of production.

- 2) Marginal, poor, small, rich, middle, and big. This includes agricultural labourers and landlords.
- 3) Peasant is a person who works on land for his sustenance.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) They are technological development, agrarian structure, ecological changes, caste and community bonds, governmental policies and historical conjunctures/incidents etc.
- 2) Western capitalism in agriculture developed from within by destroying the feudalism and by exploiting the third world countries, however in India it is imposed from above.
- 3) Common issues are development, parity, feudalism, globalisation etc.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Both in terms of the strategy, ideology, discourses and issues they are new. They believe in class collaboration and unity among the peasantry. They debate issues of globalisation, international capitalism etc.
- 2) Nationalist, Anti-Feudal, Anti state and Anti Globalisation.
- 3) Anti feudal struggles against the landlords who had least interest in the development of agriculture, and they depend upon exploiting the tenants.

UNIT 25 WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Structure

- 25.0 Objectives
 - 25.1 Introduction
 - 25.2 Global and Local Contexts of Women's Movements
 - 25.3 Background and History
 - 25.3.1 Variety of Historical Forces
 - 25.3.2 First Wave Feminism
 - 25.3.3 Women's Mobilisation and Women's Participation in Movements
 - 25.3.4 Women's Movements for Suffrage
 - 25.4 Contemporary Women's Movements
 - 25.4.1 The Western Context
 - 25.4.2 The Non-Western Context
 - 25.5 Phases and Approaches
 - 25.6 Organisation of Women's Movements – Autonomy and Gender Specificity
 - 25.6.1 Specificity of Gender – Implications for Party Politics
 - 25.6.2 Women's Movements and Women in Movement
 - 25.6.3 Issues Related to Difference between Practical Interest of Women vs. Strategic Interest
 - 25.7 Politics of Women's Movements – Diversity and Differences
 - 25.7.1 Specific and Simultaneous Exploitation
 - 25.7.2 Black Women's Movements – The Dilemma
 - 25.8 Strategies Underlying Women's Movements
 - 25.9 Economy, Development, Democracy and Women's Movements
 - 25.9.1 Economy and Development
 - 25.9.2 Democracy, Civil Society and Women's Movements
 - 25.10 Let Us Sum Up
 - 25.11 Some Useful Books
 - 25.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
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25.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this unit is to deal with the nature of women's movements with reference to the issues involved, organisational basis of the movement, its politics, diversities both vis-à-vis the nature of women's problems as well as the nature of resistance. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the nature of the women's movements;
- Elaborate various issues around which the women's movements are organised in different parts of the world;
- Point out the diversities and differences within the women's movement politics; and
- Explain the basis of the theoretical debates arising out of and connected with these movements.

25.1 INTRODUCTION

Women's movements in the contemporary context, are a part of a new style of politics of the New Social Movements that have become the basis of active participation of the community in public life. Organised around the issues

including those of civil liberties, ecology, identity, ethnicity, education, health etc., these movements operate outside the party politics and shift the nature of participation from the traditional methods of representation to a direct collective action. The traditional methods of representation like elections based on party competition have not been found to be fulfilling the democratic requirement of extensive participation. It has been generally observed that even in the most institutionalised democracies of the world, the marginalised and powerless sections of the society are left out by the system of power. The New Social Movements giving voice to these marginalised people, create alternative political spaces and fulfil their quest for participation. By their very nature, these movements are extensive in their scope. While the traditional politics operates only in the public sphere, the new social movements operate even in the social and cultural sphere. Hence the boundary between the public and the private or between the political and non-political does not exist for the new social movements. For the marginal and the powerless sections of society [like the women], whose roots of powerlessness lie in the social and cultural spheres, these new movements acquire special significance. It not only provides them a basis for direct participation in the political system but also helps them challenge the dominant social and cultural values which underlie their oppression.

25.2 GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL CONTEXTS OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The phenomenon of women's movements is universal because it represents the resistance of women all over the globe. Women across the continents have been organising themselves against the conditions of oppression they face being women. Hence, from this point of view, the women's movements of the twentieth century reflect the common concerns of women and therefore the need for a common platform across the boundaries of state, nation, race, community and culture. Yet despite the global nature of women's movements, most of the movements are located in the local contexts and represent the local responses of women to their *specific conditions of oppression*. Hence, despite their global context, the women's movements represent the differences of political, economic and cultural nature.

25.3 BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The women's movements are essentially modern phenomenon. The contemporary context of women's involvement based upon the notion of their rights and interests was not to be seen in the pre-modern times. It was the particular political condition of the west Europe and North America that led to the emergence of earliest of the women's movements. In the initial period, women's response followed the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. It was a response against the efforts of the white male leaders of these movements to restrict their newly won rights to men only. Olympe de Gouges was one of the earliest female leaders who was beheaded in 1793 for having organised the working women of Paris against their exclusion from the rights guaranteed to men. In her famous pamphlet 'The Rights of the Women and the Female Citizen', she demanded women's access to social and political rights. It was in this context that the demand for equal rights was raised. In 1868 the first international women's organisation, the International Association of Women was established. Its early demands included equal rights, access to education, equal pay for equal work etc.

It was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that women in many other regions of the world also started organising themselves against inequalities based on sex. Among the early demands were those related to removing of the sex-based barriers to rights within the family and the society - a response against the patriarchal system of family rights. These movements were aimed at legal reforms. Meanwhile the suffrage issue was raised in the North America and European countries.

25.3.1 Variety of Historical Forces

It was not a single circumstance but a variety of historical forces and conditions that led to the organised collective action of women in different parts of the world. Besides the historical situation of the Western Europe, the response of women in many other countries was created by the conditions of colonialism, nationalism, socialism, modernisation, etc. In many colonial countries, the influence of the colonial powers on subject states led to the consciousness among women for their rights, while in many others, it was the result of the liberal constitutionalism that resulted in the movements for the rights of women. In some cases of revolutionary activism, it was even the exclusion of women from the revolutionary activities that led to women's protest and organisation. In many other cases the women's movements were linked with the political movements organised at the national levels.

25.3.2 First-wave Feminism

The germination of the women's movements can be traced to the *first-wave feminism*. It was the organised response of the middle class women in Europe, Latin America and United States, who felt excluded from the political and professional organisations formed by men of their class to represent their interests. The basic concern of the first wave feminism not only in the Western Europe but also in other parts of the world, (for instance, Peru, the Caribbean, Trinidad and Indonesia,) was equal rights and votes for women, though there were many other debates that underlay the movement in this early period. As the women were integrated into the paid work in Europe and North America, the context of the women's movements was changed and a number of women's groups were organised for representing 'women's interests'. It was this changed context of the socio-economic conditions of women that led to the formation of explicitly feminist organisations. One of the leading feminist organisations was formed in 1966 by American women – the National Organisation for Women [NOW]. Numerous other feminist organisations were formed in the USA and in the West European countries. The agenda before these organisations was equal rights for women, greater opportunities, economic independence and greater freedom for women to work. They challenged laws and practices enforcing sex-discrimination especially in the areas of employment, wages, contract, property rights, contraception, abortion, etc. They also challenged the prevailing stereotypes representing women as sex objects or as weak, passive and dependent beings. Among the most important influences on the modern women's movements was that of Simone de Beauvoir's book, *The Second Sex*, published originally in French in 1949 and Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*.

25.3.3 Women's Mobilisation and Women's Participation in Movements

Even before organisation of women's movements, women were mobilised in many countries for participation on issues, which did not precisely touch their gender interest. Thus, women participated in large numbers in national liberation struggles in many colonised countries. In countries like Indonesia, Somalia and

Sudan, women's movements were concerned with the nationalist causes. In many countries, which witnessed the movements against discrimination based on race, women participated actively. They also participated in labour movements organised all over the globe.

Such kind of participation in the movement activities may not have directly led to the organisation of the women's movements or even to the articulation of the feminist agenda or raising of feminist issues, yet it might have had its impact on the evolution of the gender consciousness. In organising women around issues of general nature, these movements initiated the process of their politicisation and mobilisation – a process that was to lead to the potentiality of their organisation around the gender-specific issues later.

25.3.4 Women's Suffrage Movements

One of the most important issues that became the focus for the organisation and participation of women in movements was the demand for suffrage. Continued denial of women's right to vote in many countries where the franchise was extended led to organisation of women's groups around the issue. The most intense form of the struggle for women's right to suffrage, however, took place in countries like England and USA. In England, the ground for the struggle was prepared right from the time that Mary Wollstonecraft published her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). In 1840, the demand for women's right to suffrage was raised by the Chartist movement. English Liberal thinkers like John Stuart Mill also forcefully pleaded the cause for women's rights.

Nineteenth century witnessed sufficient mobilisation of women around this issue. Women's suffrage societies were formed in almost every major city of England. As there was lot of resistance to the idea of women being granted vote, every suffrage bill presented before the Parliament till 1869, was defeated. In 1869, the taxpayer women were granted the right to vote in municipal elections. In 1897, the women's organisations consolidated themselves into National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. It was in 1918 that women aged 30 or above were granted the complete right to franchise. Later this age was reduced to 21. It was in 1928 that the women of England were granted the right to vote on equal basis with men.

In USA, it was during the agitation against slavery that the demand for the suffrage right for women and the black slaves was raised. In 1869, the National Women Suffrage Association and the American Women Suffrage Association were formed. The major objective of these associations was to secure the right to vote for women through a constitutional amendment. These organisations joined together in 1890 and formed the National American Women Suffrage Association. Because of the sustained endeavour of this organisation, women of USA were granted the right to franchise on equal basis with men in 1920.

In many other countries also, the struggle for women's suffrage was launched. By the beginning of the twentieth century, women had been granted the right to vote in countries like New Zealand, Australia, Finland, Norway. Women of Soviet Russia, Canada, Germany, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary etc. were also granted the right to suffrage by the 1930s. After the Second World War, the equal right to suffrage was granted to women in many other countries of the world. Though, women have been enfranchised in most of the countries of the world yet there are some countries where women are still denied the voting rights.

Check Your Progress 1

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

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

- 1) What is the global and local context of the women's movements?

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- 2) Mention some of the background conditions in which women's movements were organised in countries other than USA and Europe.

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- 3) When did the English and the American women get the right to suffrage on equal basis with men?

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25.4 CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

Contemporary women's movements became visible in the 1960s. It was in mid-sixties that the impact of the women's movements could be felt in the United States when various women's groups attacked those norms and laws which were discriminatory against women and which had the effect of reproducing women's subordination in society. By the 1970s, the phenomenon of the women's activism was perceivable in many countries of Asia and Latin America as well. Yet, it was with the declaration of the International women's year (1975) and the women's decade (1975-1985) that the women's movements actually evolved in different parts of the world. It was during this time that the national commissions on the status of women were formed in many countries and the United Nations called upon the non-governmental organisations to participate actively in the process of abolition of sex discrimination. So widely entrenched was the phenomenon of women's movements across the continents that by the beginning of the decade of the nineties it had acquired global form and the impact of the women's politics could be seen not only in several African countries but also in the post-communist states in Eastern and Central Europe.

It is in the global context of the women's movement that the First World Women's Conference was organised in Mexico in 1975. In this conference, emphasis was placed among other things, on increasing literacy, employment and policy making positions for women, on the goals of elimination of discrimination and providing equal opportunities and parities in social and political rights, etc. The Second World Conference on Women was held in 1980 in Copenhagen and the third Conference was held in 1985 in Nairobi. What was so significant about the Third Women's Conference was that this marked the presence of the women representatives from Non Governmental Organisations, women's groups and mass movements. By the time the Fourth World Women's Conference was organised in Beijing in 1995, the women's movements had already become a global reality.

25.4.1 The Western Context

The second-wave feminism emerged in the west during the decade of seventies. In the United States, the feminist organisations, especially the National Organisation of Women (NOW) became very active. During the same time, there was a mushroom growth of the women's organisations in the West European countries. In many of these countries, there was the expansion of the middle class base of women's organisations, which led to the intensity in the women's movements. In many of these movements, the middle-class women were joined by the working women.

In most of the movements of the North America and Europe, the two demands which were focused by the women's groups were those related to women's control over their bodies and the access to economic independence. The first demand in fact, aroused sufficient response in countries like USA, France, West Germany and Britain. The National Organisation of Women in USA emphasised upon the demand for reproductive right. It was a demand for a right to safe and legal abortion. There was similarly an impassioned movement around the issues of abortion and contraception in France. The French women campaigned against the existing law that banned contraception and abortion. They used a number of strategies to put forth their demand including legislative lobbying for the repeal of the law and the mass demonstrations. The West German women similarly organised around the issues of family planning and abortion. In a nation-wide campaign they demanded abolition of the existing abortion law. In Britain as well, the movements of women were based upon the issues of body and representation of women.

25.4.2 The Non-Western Context

Movements for the emancipation of women have continued to emerge in many countries beyond Europe and the US. What is notable about these movements is that these have not necessarily followed the pattern of the western movements but on the contrary, have located their struggles in their own social and economic perspectives. Hence, these movements are at variance with the Western feminism in terms of their demands and perspectives. The difference in perspective is a result of the differing circumstances in which the women in the other countries, especially the women in the developing countries perceive themselves. While the key issues for the women's organisations in the North America and the European countries have been focused around the reproductive rights, especially the right to abortion and contraception, the women of the developing Southern countries have not responded to these issues very enthusiastically, for two reasons. Firstly, there have been other issues, which they considered more important in the context of their poverty and underdevelopment. Secondly, the question of the reproductive rights for women of the South have been linked with the family planning programmes. The family planning programmes generally controlled by the state in some of the Southern countries have been pursued in such a manner that these have harmed the interest of women themselves. The women's organisations therefore have not responded to the birth control programme in an unproblematic way. Hence, along with the right to control fertility, the issue of reproductive health has emerged as a very crucial issue for women of the South. Here women's organisations have been campaigning against hazardous contraceptives, irrational drugs; and adverse impact of globalisation on women's health and have been emphasising on the need to pay attention on the general health, education, economic advancement and raising of the level of awareness of women. Emphasis is also being placed on strengthening of traditional systems of knowledge including the knowledge of traditional medicine and indigenous health practices.

The issues raised by women's groups in non-western countries are also influenced by their cultural, social, economic and political specificity. Following are some of the examples, which point out the specificity of the women's movements in the non-western contexts.

An example of cultural specificity can be provided in the context of Japanese women. Even though the movements of the Japanese women influenced by the women's movements in the North America have raised issues related to suffrage, free love, lesbian rights, contraception, etc. yet, the local social and cultural contexts remain important for them. The most crucial issue raised by the Japanese women's movements has been the double burden of work and the continued social discrimination against women. Women here have entered the market with less pay and poor working conditions and still have to manage domestic front without the help of man.

The women's movements in India were initially organised around the issues of sexual and domestic violence against women but gradually other gender-specific issues were also incorporated in the agenda of women's groups. During the period of eighties and early nineties the feminist issues related to sexuality of women, right to choice and control over their fertility and bodies, reproductive health, violence on the images of women, sex-stereotyping and sex-objectification of women in media etc. also assumed importance. Yet, the challenges posed to women's organisations by the population control programmes and the impact of medical technologies and the global and commercial interests underlying these technologies on women's health resulted in a critical approach to the issues related to women's right to control their fertility. The issues like amniocentesis, female feticide, women's reproductive health, also emerged as crucial areas in the women's movement politics. As the women's movement matured in India, it was also faced with the complexity underlying the relationship between gender on the one hand and the caste, class and community, on the other. Women's politics was therefore extended in the context of their 'dalit', 'tribal', 'peasant' or the 'worker' existence. Thus the issues specific to the context of the dalit women or the tribal women or the peasant women were also raised.

The Pakistan women's movement has been located within the larger framework of the political movement for democratic politics. Women have been the major victims of the political regime that is still struggling to institutionalise its democratic structure. The periods such as those of authoritarian regimes of Zia-ul-Haq specifically have been harsh upon women. Women's movements in Pakistan, therefore, have been organised against the imposition of the religious restrictions on the women's public behaviour and their occupational choices.

Women's movements in countries of Latin America have reflected the diversity and complexity of these countries. Women's movements of Peru echoing the diverse realities of women represent multiple voices and disparate issues. While one can see the feminist organisations raising the issues related to conditions that women face because they are women, their sexuality and sex-objectification, at the same time the women's groups have also been involved in the movements of the miners, workers and teachers. Women have also been organised around issues of specific nature mainly dealing with problems that they face due to their poverty and deprivation. Women have also used the forums provided by the trade unions and the political parties to raise their voices.

Check Your Progress 2

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

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

- 1) What have been the most important issues of the contemporary western women's movements?

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- 2) Mention some of the issues underlying the Indian women's movements?

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- 3) In what ways are the issues raised by women of the south different from the issues raised by the women of Europe and North America?

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25.5 PHASES AND APPROACHES

On the basis of the directions followed by the women's movements in their varied periods of evolution and development, we can identify three distinct phases that have coincided with three distinct approaches towards the goal of women's emancipation.

Firstly, the visionary and utopian period of the movements. There was two-fold emphasis of the women's movements at that time – i) the demand for *women's equality with men* and ii) the sisterhood among women. The phase emphasised consensus among women's organisations in different parts of the world and stressed upon the need for solidarity at the global level.

This phase was followed by a period when emphasis was shifted from the equality of women with men, to the *difference between men and women*. This was a phase when womanhood was celebrated and significance of woman's own experience was highlighted. This phase further strengthened the idea of commonality of the women's problems and highlighted the need for common platform to organise their resistance. The oppression of women was located in the structure of patriarchy. These features specifically defined the western women's movements in the period of seventies. At that time three concepts were evolved – firstly, the concept of '*woman*'. It implied that the oppression of women emanates out of condition of their '*womanhood*'. Second was the concept of '*experience*'. This concept implied that women being women share the common experience of womanhood and oppression at the universal level. Third was the concept of '*personal politics*' and emphasised the need to abolish the dichotomy between the public and the private. In accordance with this concept, the women's politics brought to the public sphere the power exercised upon

women in the private and the domestic spheres. Women's organisations therefore demanded the intervention of the state in dealing with issues relating with women's position within the sphere of family and culture. Since the assumption underlying the women's emancipatory politics in this period was the universalisation of oppression, it was emphasised that women should band together irrespective of their differences on the basis of class, race, ethnicity or any other category.

The present period forms the third phase of the women's emancipatory politics. The peculiarity of this phase is emphasis on plurality and *differences* among women. The assumption, that women are a homogenous group and therefore share the common experiences, has been challenged by the contemporary women's movements located specifically in the South. Instead of commonalities, emphasis is placed on the differences among women on the basis of their specific contexts of their nationalities, races, classes, cultural situations etc. The underlying contention is that women do not form a single group and their oppression is not rooted in their universal condition of 'womanhood'. On the contrary, there is a more contextualised basis of women's oppression. The way white women perceive their oppression may be quite different from the way the women of colour experience it. The nature of oppression of the women of one class may be different from the other class. Hence there are different 'sites of oppression' and therefore, different 'sites of resistance'.

25.6 ORGANISATION OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The contemporary women's movements have been defined by their autonomous nature. Autonomy implies that women organise themselves, set their own agendas and pursue their own strategies. Many of the women's organisations formed during the period of seventies and eighties were totally independent in their organisational structure. As against the hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of the traditional organisations, these organisations were mostly small group collectivities and were defined by their non-structured nature and represented the plurality and multiplicity of voices within. These organisations had no linkage with any political party or any other kind of existing social movements. What made the politics of these organisations unique, was a conscious effort on their part to distance themselves from the political parties or other organised groups.

The question of autonomy of women was also linked with the emphasis on the specificity of gender-issues. The politics of the autonomous women's movements was therefore defined by a basic commitment to resist gender subordination. In ideological terms, the oppression of women got located in the structures of patriarchy. Hence, emphasis was placed upon those issues which specifically revolved around women's gender interest and which aimed at resistance to the patriarchal norms and structures.

Such a politics of autonomous nature of women's movements with exclusive emphasis on gender-specific issues has initiated a debate regarding the very nature of female activism and the issues related to it. It is argued that the boundary of the women's movements is neither defined by the autonomous nature of women's organisations nor by the specificity of gender interests. Thus, women activists within the political parties are as much a part of the women's movements as the women members of any social movement organised around issues other than gender-specific ones. In fact, the whole issue of what forms the gender interest of women is also debated. It is argued that not only the issues related to the sexuality of women but also the issues

related to their poverty and economic deprivation form the gender interest. Following is an overview of the various issues related to the movement politics of women.

25.6.1 Specificity of Gender – Implications for Left Party Politics

The question of autonomy and specificity of gender issues has been crucial for the women party activists especially of the leftist leanings. Ever since the rise of the contemporary women's movements they have been faced with the issue whether women's struggle for equality should be a part of the overall struggle for a new socialist order or should women be autonomously organised to fight specific gender based oppression. In other terms what is the basis of oppression of women – whether class, gender, or both class and gender. The radical women activists who formed the autonomous women's organisations believed that women themselves form an exploited class and therefore rather than becoming a part of a wider political organisations, they should devote their energies exclusively to the women's specific politics. The leftist political parties on the other hand, hold that the women's struggle for equality should be a part of the overall struggle for a new socialist order.

Following inner debates within the left-oriented organisations in many countries, many socialist-feminists came around the idea that fight against oppression of women has to be organised both around the issues based on gender and the issues based on class. The reasons for oppression of women, according to them, lay not merely in structures of capitalism but also in the structures of patriarchy. Many left organisations, consequently, have been persuaded to incorporate gender-specific issues in their agenda. The women's wings of many of these organisations have also been activated.

25.6.2 Women's Movements and Women in Movement

There are many who argue that the definitions of women's movements as autonomous and representing only the gender interest of women are restrictive by nature and do not incorporate other kind of activities where women act in pursuit of common ends, be they 'feminist' or not. While the movements that pursue the gender interests of women are significant in development of feminism, yet these are not inclusive enough and do not incorporate the full nature of women's mobilisation. In this context, one may refer to the phenomenon of 'women in movement'. It is a phrase used to describe other kinds of female mobilisation, which though not directly pursuing the specific gender interest of women represent the basis of female mobilisation and even female solidarity. These include the variety of social movements, trade unions, revolutionary and nationalist movements.

The 'women in movement' politics is a pointer towards the complexity underlying the nature of the women's issues and the nature and direction of women's movements. One of the posers that this complexity raises relates to the linkage between wider movements of the oppressed classes of which women are a very significant part and their struggles around their gender-specific interests. It is important to acknowledge that these other forms of female mobilisations, excluded from the consideration as 'women's movements' nonetheless constitute a large proportion of female solidarity in much of the modern world. What is important to note in relation to the gender agenda is that many movements that involve women in large number, at a particular stage of their participation undergo the process of gender-sensitisation. Because of such sensitisation, women in these movements articulate women-specific demands and exert pressure on the leadership to take cognisance of women and their demands. It is the result of

such a pressure that many mass movements raise situation-specific issues of women. Such gender sensitive politics of the ‘women in movement’, therefore, forms an important part of the women’s movements.

25.6.3 Issues Related to Difference Between Practical Interest of Women vs. Strategic Interest

Gender sensitivity within mass movements can be placed in the context of the debate related to the very question as to what exactly is implied by the gender-specific interest. This is a debate focusing on the relation between the practical interests of women and their strategic interests. The practical interests of women, according to Molyneux, are those that are ‘based on the satisfaction of needs arising from women’s placement within sexual division of labour’. The strategic interests are those that involve ‘claims to transform social relations in order to enhance women’s positions and secure a more lasting re-positioning of women within the gender order and within society at large’. [Molyneux, p.232] Seen from this perspective the issues of daily survival and strategies related to this, form the particular interest of women while, the issues categorised purely as their gender interest, like the issues related to sexuality, reproductive health and control over their fertility, form their strategic interest. The issues of practical interest are as important to women’s movement politics as those of strategic interest. One may point to the frequency of struggles of poor women over consumption needs and their protest against social injustice in countries like those of Latin America, Indian sub-continent, and of Africa and East Asia. During the conditions of economic recession in 1970s and 1980s, women’s activism in countries like those of Peru and Kenya was organised around the basic needs of women rather than their specific gender interest.

Check Your Progress 3

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

- 1) What are the characteristics of the autonomous women’s movements.

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- 2) What is the difference between the women’s movements and the women in movements.

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- 3) What is the difference between the practical interest of women and their strategic interest.

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25.7 POLITICS OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS - DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

Women's movements may be characterised by a diversity of interests, forms of expression, and spatial location. A number of distinctions, therefore, need to be drawn among women's movements of varied kinds. For instance, the nature of the educated middle class women's movement may acquire different nature as compared to the working class women's movement or the movements of peasant women. In this context, one may find not only the difference around the issues but also the strategies.

It is in the context of the plurality and diversity within the women's movement politics that the idea of universal basis of women's movement is resisted. It is felt that any understanding of universal experience of women is bound to actually reflect a Euro-centric bias. Already such a bias has resulted in defining the women's concerns from the limited experiences of the white, middle class women. It is the result of such a bias that the western stereotyped notions have entered the vocabulary of global development related initiatives. One of the consequences of such notions is that the woman's contribution in the Southern economies, in the subsistence agriculture has been totally devalued. Many women activists from the South therefore are quite critical of the western tendency to gloss over differences among women. They ask for recognising the differences and situating women's movements within the cultural, economic and political contexts of specific societies. Recognition of differences enables women to approach their exploitation from a position of strength.

25.7.1 Specific and Simultaneous Exploitation

It is therefore, important to acknowledge that women are not undifferentiated mass and do not constitute a monolithic category. They are placed in different socio-economic contexts provided by the categories of class, race, caste and community and are implicated in many forms of domination and oppression. Gender plays a crucial role in the subordination of women, yet it is intervened by these categories. Women, as Gail Omvedt notes, are caught up in different categories and they are exploited both as women and as members of these categories. Their exploitation therefore is both 'specific' and 'simultaneous'. Thus the dalit woman's exploitation is specific to her reality of being a 'dalit woman' and that of the black woman is specific to her reality of being a 'black woman'. In the first case the dalit woman is simultaneously exploited both as 'dalit' as well as 'woman' and in the later case she is exploited simultaneously both as 'black' and as 'woman'. The crucial point is that though both are exploited as women, yet the nature of exploitation of each is located in the specific context of their being 'dalit' or being 'black'.

25.7.2 Black Women's Movements – the Dilemma

Such a situation of specific as well as simultaneous exploitation of women and the paradox that it raises for the movement politics can be explained further with reference to the black women. Bell hooks refers to this paradox. She notes that for a long time, the black women confronting the issues of oppression arising out of racism as well as patriarchy could not deal with both the situations of oppression. In the initial phase they became the part of the black people's movements and did not recognise 'womanhood' as important part of their identity. Rather than acknowledging that sexism could be just as oppressive as racism, they expected that liberation from social oppression would free them

from sexual oppression as well. Gradually they became conscious of the sexism of the black men. Even when these women recognised the gender basis of oppression and became part of the global women's movements they were confronted by racism of white women. Hence caught between the racism of women's movements led by the white women and the sexist basis of black people's movement led by men, they found themselves in a double bind. Supporting only women's movements would have implied allying with white women's racism and supporting only black movement would have meant endorsing a patriarchal social order. Compelled to choose between 'a black movement that primarily served the interest of black male patriarchs and a women's movement that primarily served the interest of racist white women', the great majority of black women joined the black movement while a few of them allied with the feminist movement. Many black women were disoriented while many others started black feminist groups. [hooks, pp.4-9]

This experience of black women reflects a paradox faced by women all over the world in limiting their experience of oppression to any one of the categories, here either race or sex. Over the period, it has been realised by many that there are multiple sites of oppression and multiple sites of resistance. What is important is to understand the relationship between these different sources of oppression and the response of collective resistance. In case of black women, it is being increasingly asserted that race and sex based oppression cannot be treated as two separate issues. The two get intertwined and hence the struggle to end racism and sexism has also to be intertwined.

Check Your Progress 4

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.
- 1) What is the nature of diversity in women's movements?

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- 2) What is the nature of paradox faced by the black women's movements?

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25.8 STRATEGIES UNDERLYING WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE STATE

Women's groups use plural strategies for pursuing their agenda. Besides adopting the strategies of resistance against the structures of power, they also use opportunities to gain access to various levels of power to use the same for pushing the cause of women. Women's groups also negotiate with institutions and governments for defending women's interest.

It is this context of the multiplicity of the strategies followed by the women's groups that one can perceive variegated approaches towards the state. On the one hand, there is a feeling of criticality and scepticism regarding the patriarchal nature of the state and on the other there is also an attitude of dependence upon the state.

Women's movements approach the state with sufficient suspicion. This suspicion is about the gender bias that may exist within the policies of the state. The state is perceived to be a major agency reproducing and modernising the patriarchal structures. State's regulatory powers over women's productive and reproductive lives have also made women critical of the state.

Yet, at the same time, women's groups all over the world have been addressing their issues to the governmental agencies of the state with a view to get new laws, administrative actions or judicial interventions. The issues raised by women in terms of equal rights, fertility control, maternity protection, equal pay for equal work etc, have been specifically directed towards the state.

Such a scepticism and yet the dependence of much of the movement politics of women upon the state has led many to define the attitude of women's movements as that of 'strategic ambivalence'. The intervention of the state is sought when there is a need to introduce change through laws and welfare policies and yet it is realised that the state can play only a very limited role in dealing with many of women's problems of powerlessness and gender-discrimination.

Yet there may be some cases where there may even exist a smooth relationship between feminism and the state. Threlfall, has noted a process of institutionalisation of women's movement in Spain which has resulted in making state institutions gender-sensitive. In her opinion, the women in Spain have been able to raise their voices through the state institutions. The Spanish bureaucracy, specifically is very sympathetic to the issues raised by women's groups. [Threlfall, p.145]. But this smoothness in the relationship between the women's movements and the state is not to be found in many other countries. There are, in fact, varied contexts in the areas, specifically those related to modernisation and development where the tension between the women's movements and the state continues to exist.

25.9 ECONOMY, DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRACY AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

25.9.1 Economy and Development

One of the crucial concerns of the contemporary women's movements especially in the countries of the South relates to the impact of the global political economy and the developmental policies upon women. Here, the issues like those of inflation, displacement, deforestation, unemployment, poverty have been raised by the women's organisations because all these issues have affected women. These issues are the fall-out of the process of economic modernisation, increasing mechanisation, liberalisation and globalisation. The new international economic order that aims at one unified global market with no barriers to trade and that has forced the countries of the South to follow the Structural Adjustment Programmes [SAP] with its emphasis on privatisation, trade liberalisation and cuts in subsidies has long term impact on women. They have been dislodged from their traditional source of employment in the small scale industries as a result of the competition that these industries face from the organised industry

and have been forced to work under increasingly exploitative conditions. Meanwhile, they have also been facing the brunt of the deforestation, displacement, unemployment, poverty etc.

Of late, the women's organisations have started voicing their concern over the inherent gender bias underlying the development strategies and techniques. Hence, they have been raising the demands for sustainable development based on principles of equality and equity. They are also asking for basic rights of survival, right to livelihood, right to common property resources, right to identity and the need to regenerate the environment. Women's groups have been actively raising the issues like those of displacement resulting from the process of development. It is the result of the voices raised by women's organisations all over the world that women, instead of being viewed merely as the recipients of the development programmes, are now being considered as the key actors of the development process. Women's movements along with other mass based movements therefore, are in the process of redefining development and offering alternative paradigms. Calling the present form of development as anti-people and anti-women, the women's groups call for a pattern of development based upon principles of equality and linked with nature. It is this concern of women for nature that has taken the form of a unique form of movement commonly known as 'Ecofeminism'. Attempting to voice the concerns of the marginalised, especially the women, ecofeminism calls upon women to act against ecological degradation. The presumption is that when nature is destroyed, women get affected the most. Ecofeminism, therefore, is that form of women's movement that addresses inequality between humans and nature as well as between men and women. It not only merely questions the perspectives of development, but it also challenges the dominant idea that science and technology are measures of progress. It therefore lays emphasis on the alternate knowledge systems.

25.9.2 Democracy, Civil Society and Women's Movements

Women's movements along with other social movements, all over the globe, have contributed to the process of democratisation of the polity and society. This process of democratisation has also resulted in reassessing some of the concepts related to emancipation, rights and social justice for women. It is the result of such reassessment that the discourse of women's movements has become focused on issues based on 'rights'. Demand has been raised for women being treated as full citizens enjoying the social, civil and political rights and gaining institutional power. [Molyneux] Citizenship is understood in a broad way extending beyond the political realm. Hence the question of women's rights does not remain limited to the public sphere but gets broadened to include the social and the private spheres governing women's lives. Hence, the issues related to women which were earlier considered as falling in the 'private' sphere are very much part of the politics of the women's movements. The women's movements therefore have challenged the distinction between the political and the non-political, public and the private.

Check Your Progress 5

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
- ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.
- 1) Why are women's organisations generally critical of the state?

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25.10 LET US SUM UP

Ever since 1975, there have been remarkable landmarks in women's movements. Women all over the world have organised themselves into numerous organisations and have raised myriad issues that go even beyond their gender interest. The movement politics of women is therefore, multi-dimensional and impinges on issues that lay in the domestic, cultural, social, economic and ecological spheres of society. It has on its agenda the objectives of transformation of the social order and democratisation of the political space. By organising resistance and manifesting social critique, it challenges not only the established practices but also the dominant discourse.

Seen from this perspective, the women's movements have been described as 'discursive practices'. A discursive practice can be understood as that process of resistance which also produces new meanings. Women's movements, through their collective resistance, have been successful in challenging the traditional meanings of womanhood and contesting the essentialist notions about their gender roles.

The plural issues raised by women's organisations all over the globe indicate that women do not necessarily have identical direction of politics. Women do not speak in a single voice. On the contrary, the women's movements, especially in the decades of eighties and nineties have emphasised differences among women. Therefore, the movement politics of women is defined by diversity. Diversity within the discourse of women's movements is considered a positive point because it allows for recognition of multiple patterns of domination and enables women to simultaneously resist such patterns of domination at various levels and from multiple sites.

25.11 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

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Omvedt, Gail, 1993, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*, New York, East Gate.

Saskia Wieringa, ed., 1995, *Subversive Women: Women's Movements in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean*.

25.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 25.2
- 2) See Sub-section 25.3.1
- 3) See Sub-section 25.3.4

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 25.4.1
- 2) See Sub-section 25.4.2
- 3) See Sub-section 25.4.2

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Section 25.6
- 2) See Sub-section 25.6.2
- 3) See Sub-section 25.6.3

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See Section 25.7
- 2) See Sub-section 25.7.2

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) See Section 25.8
- 2) See Sub-section 25.9.1