

- 
- Nation, democracy and citizenship
  - Political parties, pressure groups, social and political elite.
  - Regionalism and decentralization of power
  - Secularization
- 

## NATION, DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP

### What is a nation?

A nation is a community which considers itself one. It is held together by many ties. One of its ties is that of territory; they live on the same land. Another tie is language; sometimes nations have single language. The people of Bangladesh for instance, speak Bengali. Sometimes a nation may have more than one language. Yet it may have a feeling of unity and can be called a nation. Nation has a common tradition or history and a common consciousness of right and wrong. They also have a common heritage of memories of glory or of sacrifice and suffering.

In a nation people have feelings which are unique and valuable to group. They have a right to enjoy means in order to realize certain communally cherished goals. This feeling is called nationalism. Though such feeling might be present earlier, it was during the British rule that the nationalism arose prominently. It was the common feeling of all Indians that they were one and that British rule was unjust. It was unjust because people should rule themselves and have their own state. They must have independence or self rule. So one of the major aspects of Indian nationalism was its claim that India should not be a colony of Britain. It should be an independent state. But nationalism is not just a negative feeling. It was not just the feeling that the British should go back and leave the government to Indians. They thought of this also because they felt that all Indians were one nation, one people. This feeling of commonness and of unity is called nationalism.

But nationalism in India grew slowly. It did not appear all of a sudden. The story of how India became a nation is linked with our history. From early Indian civilization one set stories, epics, symbols flowed down into different areas.

Sometimes this tradition blended itself with religious and local customs. The epics were the epics of the whole country, not only of one group or one section. The rulers who set up empires in India in the medieval period belonged to different religions including Islam. The cultural traditions that Muslim rulers brought with them from Central Asia slowly mixed the then existing patterns of India. Fusion happened in many fields and not only in the field of art. In north India, the language of Urdu developed out of a mixture of Hindi, Arabic and Persian. The musical forms that are known as Hindustani classical music today were created by both Hindus and Muslims. These two cultures mixed so completely that they formed a new Indian culture. A modern India feels instinctively proud of the temples of Konark, the cave painting of Ajanta and the Taj Mahal. But these are cultural objects of three different religions – Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. They are magnificent pieces of India culture.

This is how culture helped shape the Indian nation. Of course, when these monuments were built and paintings were done, no one thought of nationalism. But these symbols of a shared past give Indians a sense of belonging together. The British rule helped the growth of nationalism in two ways.

- As we saw politically, India became one for the first time under the British. India gradually came under one system of law, one type of administration and a uniform type of educational system.
- The second result the British never foresaw. Since British imperialism represented foreign rule in India, it gradually led to a united nationalist movement.
- Our national movement provided a number of directions to our country. For more than fifty years, the national movement was the most significant unifying factor in Indian politics. It created a national feeling in two waysA
- First it was a movement for national freedom. The movement wanted to make India free and independent of the British. It nurtured the urge for freedom – the feeling that a country should be governed by its own people, not by foreigners.
- But it united Indians in another way too. People of different areas, different religious, different languages made a united attempt to bring freedom to India. It created a sense of belonging to the nation.

The national movement was spread over the whole country. Consider first its leadership. When we think of Surendranath Banerjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Azad, we think of them as leaders of our national movement. They were not leaders of particular communities or religious. They came from various parts of the country, spoke different languages and wore different dresses. But that did not hinder them from working for our Indian nationalism. Surendranath Banerjee was a

Bengali; Tilak came from Maharashtra, Gandhi from Gujrat and Rajagopalachari from Tamil Nadu.

But the national movement was successful because the Indians identified with India as a whole and not with its particular parts.

Culture had heightened our feeling of unity all along. The national movement fostered it consciously. Since people really felt united, Indian culture grew more and more unified during the twentieth century. Poems written by poets from different parts became symbols of nationalism. 'Sare Jahan Se Achcha' was written by Iqbal in Urdu and 'Jana Gan Mana' by Tagore in Bengali. But all Indians accepted them and expressed their national feeling through them. So the national movement united Indians not only in politics but also in culture. Nationalism is not a feeling that is needed only in the struggle for freedom against foreign colonialists. For a nation to develop, the feeling of nationalism is necessary. In independent India too, citizens must feel that they are one nation. The process of creating and strengthening this feeling of national unity is called national integration.

When the British rulers had gone, the task for Indians was to stay together as a nation and work for a better life. How has India performed this task?

The national movement set some ideals before the Indian people. After freedom came, the Indian people initiated efforts to turn these ideals into reality. These ideals, at least the most important political ideals among them, are set out in our Constitution. The Constitution clearly shows that the task after independence was not only to stay together as an independent nation but also to set up a society which was secular, democratic and socialist. Let us try first to see democratic and socialist mean-what kind of society would it be.

## UNDERSTANDING RELATION BETWEEN NATION/STATE AND SOCIETY

### NATION

The term refers to a group of people who have developed solidarity on the basis of common

identity of culture, region, language and state etc. The national identity of any group, which defines itself as such, may be based on any number of criteria, such as, the place of residence, ethnic origin, culture, religion, language.

## STATE

The state is a political associating which is characterized by:

- Territorial jurisdiction
- A more less non-voluntary membership
- A set of rules which define the rights of its members by way of a constitution
- Claims to legitimacy of power over its members.

The member of a state is usually referred to as a citizen. More often than not, the state is coterminous with national.

## SOCIETY

It is the broadest category of social organization which includes a large number of social institutions like kinship, family, economy and polity. In this sense, the term society refers to social relationships which are interlinked. In interacting with each other people form social relationships. Repeated and regularized patterns of social relationships become institutionalized and hence as a relational concept society includes the study of social institutions.

On the other hand, as a substantial concept the term society is a general term which may encompass the state or the nation. It can also be coterminous with either or both of them. For example, the Germanic Society may include the German speaking people of East Germany, West Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland etc. Take another example, Hindu society may include the citizens of Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The state may similarly include a number of societies. For example, the Indian state includes diverse societies based on region, religion or language. The tribal societies, such as the Bhil, the Gond or the Naga, form an integral part of the Indian State.

## WHAT IS A NATION STATE?

A nation state refers to a state organized for governing a nation, or perhaps two or more closely related nations. The territory of such a nation is determined by national boundaries and its law is determined, at least in part, by national customs and expectations. In this sense, India can also be discussed as a nation state and to discuss the nature of its national politics, we must first look at the way in which the Indian nation state emerged.

## EMERGENCE OF INDIAN NATION

Indian national politics is influenced by the historical experience of nation-building. This experience is marked by efforts to bring together a large number of social groups in a common national identity. The nature of national politics in the post-independence period can be easily grasped if we outline a brief sketch of the historical experience.

Before the advent of the British rule in India and establishment of sovereign rule of the British crown in 1858, India was characterized by a large number of small and large political units. These units waged a constant struggle to maintain their authority over the dominions and protected themselves from the attacks by other political units. Although there were some large scale empires such as the Maurya, the Gupta, the Chola and the Pandya, the entire country that we know of as India was never united politically under any rule. As such, we had no Indian State to speak of until the British imposed their hegemony of India.

However this does not mean that we had no Indian national identity, even without a politically unified territory, many factors combined and gave the country an identity of oneness. As stated by **Kothari** although people live all their lives in villages, there villages were not as self-contained isolated islands as was made by some Western scholars. People moved for marriage; for pilgrimage and for trade. The religious beliefs, practices and institutions provided the people unifying force. One example of the unity can be

seen in the setting of four seats of religious authority in four corners of India by Adi Sankaracharya.

We may thus see the awareness of commonality, however nebulous it may be. This awareness grew out of one's participation in the world which existed beyond one's immediate geographical area. This consciousness did not, however, get translated into the political domain and we had therefore, no national identity as a nation and not as a political identity as a nation.

The establishment of the British rule, although it enslaved us, paradoxically also started a process of our liberation. It made us think of ourselves as not only a cultural unity but also as a political unity. The growth of nationalism can be seen in the efforts made by Indians for removing the British rule from this country.

Although we were always divided in numerous ways in terms of language, religion, ethnic composition, and two factors facilitated the emergence of Indian nationalism.

- One was the presence of common enemy, i.e., the British rule, and
- The other was the existence of a common cultural identity that preceded the unification of India as one state.

The various struggles—violent, non-violent, constitutional, extra-constitutional—against the British further unified the diverse groups in India. Thus, Nehru's well-known phrase 'unity in diversity' was not merely a cliché but a factual description of the Indian experience.

The process of nation-building was not complete on attaining independence. It is, in fact, a continuing process and is reflected in the nature of politics. We can also say that it is a process of translating cultural identity into a political national identity.

**Nation Building Continued After Independence.** The major task for the independence movement was not merely to attain political independence from the British rule but

also to develop a modern nation state. We can say that some definite steps in this direction were taken at the political level while others were at the economic level. We can discuss both types of strategies followed in India for nation-building.

### **Strategy at the Political Level**

The political organization, which was carrying out the activity of nation-building in India, was mainly the Congress Party. This political party consisted of diverse sections of population and activists, in some cases, with diametrically opposite political ideology. The members of the Congress Party belonged to different strata of society from the so-called untouchables, on the one hand and to the Brahmin and Thakur, on the other. There were those who swore by Marxism and some others who wanted 'Hindu Rashtra' and yet others who wanted to promote Islamic nationalism. Such diversity was not accidental. The leaders of the party were drawn from the urban professional classes. They were convinced that nation-building was as important as political independence. Hence the major thrust of their political activity was to bring together as many diverse groups as possible. The same theme is also visible in the politics after the independence of India.

- The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, was the first attempt at nation-building. We have a written Constitution which is a comprehensive document. It provides the foundation or the design of the government.
- India has a federal government. A federal government in India implies that authority is divided between the centre and the states.
- The Constitution has established a parliamentary system of government, at both the centre and the states. The word 'Parliament' has different connotations, the important ones being that it is an assembly of representatives of the people and it is a body of persons gathered for discussion. In our context, Parliament refers to the legislative organ of the government. The President is the

constitutional head of the country and the council of ministers headed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the head of the executive which is responsible to the Lok Sabha. The Parliament consists of the President and the two Houses, namely the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the House of the people (Lok Sabha).

- In the states, the council of ministers is headed by the 'Chief Minister' who is responsible to the Legislative Assembly. Every state has a legislature. Some states have one House while others have two. Where there is one House it is known as the Legislative Assembly or Vidhan Sabha and where there are two Houses, one is called the Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad) and the other is known as Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha).
- India is a parliamentary democracy and this means that the government is derived from public opinion. It requires parties, rule by the majority and a responsible government through discussion.
- By way of building up a united nation state the Constitution of India also lays down, among other things, some "Fundamental Duties" of Indian citizens. Some of them are—to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions—the National Flag and the National Anthem, to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all people of India, to protect natural environment, to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform, to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture and so on.
- Our Constitution not only provides fundamental rights to citizens but also gives directives to the state to provide the necessary economic, social and political benefits to the citizens. It goes to the credit of the leaders of the early phase of independent India who were sensitive to the potential disruption of the Indian polity. Our national leaders believed that

the Constitution of India will help to integrate the people into a united nation.

- The adoption of socialist pattern of society in order to reduce inequalities in society constituted another attempt of the Indian polity toward nation-building. This tool helped to contain divisive tendencies. The inclusion of as many segments of the population as possible was achieved by granting special privileges to the scheduled caste, the tribals, the backward classes and the religious minorities.

One of the remarkable features of the early phase was that despite the struggle for political power, political parties had no major dissension regarding the thrust of politics. The thrust was to keep together diverse elements of the population and to include the hitherto excluded categories into the mainstream of national politics.

The process of nation-building is not yet complete. This is one reason why we cannot and should not say anything much with finality about this process. Instead, we should now turn to the process of nation-building at the economic level.

### **Strategy at the Economic Level**

The second major step taken by the political leadership was the economic resurgence of the country. Any political regime gains legitimacy when it can satisfy the needs of the people. The satisfaction of the people in turn depends upon the availability of goods to be distributed. Hence the first task for the Indian state was to build the economy. This was more so in the light of the bad shape of Indian economy at that time. The colonial policies of the British were largely based on exploitation of the raw materials available in India at cheapest possible rates, to be used by industry in Britain. India was used as market place for their finished goods. The result of the policy was that industry did not develop in the country. The little industrialization that took place during the British rule was due to its importance in international politics. This did not at all help the economic development of the country. Thus, it was inevitable that after the independence, definite steps were

taken to revise the economy. Formulation of Five Year Plans for regulating the economic activity was one such step. For this purpose the Government of India established the Planning Commission.

- The planning process is not merely an economic activity. It is also a political activity. The Planning Commission not only decides about which sector has to produce how much, it also allocates projects to various states. This is where political decisions have to be made. Let us take a concrete example. Suppose the government decides to establish a steel plant. It is not only in terms of the economic viability of location of a steel plant that a decision is made. The Commission takes into account the costs and benefits in economic terms and it also considers the decisions in terms of possible offsetting regional imbalance in location of industries.
- Similarly, the balance has to be maintained between the various interest groups which have emerged around different sectors of the economy. For this purpose, take the simple example of the use of electric power. How much electricity should be made available to industry as against agriculture is a political decision. In the economic sphere, as in the social and political spheres, national politics has followed the policy of reconciling different interests and thereby avoiding conflicts to surface.
- The Indian nation state not only concentrated on making available goods for distribution, but is also decided to follow the path of distributive justice. Distributive justice refers to achieving a fair and equal distribution of goods and services and all people. The intentions for distributive justice are clear in India's adoption of a socialist pattern of society.
- A socialist pattern of society denotes that people have equal opportunities and equal rights. The state as an administrative device guarantees individuals their rights. It

distributes goods and services equally and fairly for the welfare of the people.

- It also strives for elimination of rigid systems of control. For example, private property is permissible in India, but only in so far as it does not amount to a system of control of the owner over another who does not own it. We can also find instance of distributive justice in much social legislation, such as the Industrial Disputes Act, which protects the rights of the industrial workers, or the Untouchability Offences Act, which protects the untouchable castes from discrimination or the Hindu Marriage Act, which grants rights to Hindu women. Thus our nation-building efforts involve not only goals of development but also equality and social justice.
- Now let us look at the factors which have challenged our efforts for nation-building.

### **FORCES WHICH CHALLENGE NATION-BUILDING EFFORTS**

A host of inter-related factors have disrupted efforts to achieve goals of equality and social justice as well as building a nation state. We can see at least three main forces,

- the diversity of groups which constitute Indian society,
- regional and cultural identities, and
- Casteism.

#### **Diversity of Constituents**

India is a heterogeneous society. It is made of a number of diverse groups. The first potential threat to the Indian nation state lies in this plurality. The Indian society was and is divided in terms of religion, caste, language and ethnic origin.

The British were able to somewhat control the diverse groups by following the policy of pitting one group against the other. But the divisive tendencies were sharply manifested even during the nationalist movement when different groups apparently united to remove the British rule from India.

One of the more serious challenges that Indian national leaders in India face even now is how to integrate the interests of the divergent groups. Each of them has its own distinctive aspirations, history, and way of life. Attempts to minimize confrontation between conflicting groups do not always succeed. As we have already seen, the adoption of an egalitarian model of society is one important strategy to contain the divisive tendencies. It is, of course, necessary that these divisions are not allowed to threaten the nation state.

### **Regional and Cultural Identities**

The task of nation-building has also faced a threat from regionalism. We find that national politics in our country is still marked by emergence of regional nationalities. This is quite evident in the formation of states on linguistic basis. It is also evident in demands by some regional identities such as the Gorkha for Gorkhaland or demand for separate Telangana state.

This does not mean that the regional identities should not be emphasized. Some may like to argue that regionalism does not augur well; it harbours political disintegration of the country. But as the nation has faced such problems earlier, the process of reconciliation has given its polity the ability to accommodate regionalism within its orbit. The politics of reconciliation harmonises the diverse interests of various groups in a national framework.

Despite the early gains of consolidation of the nation state, diverse cultural identities asserted themselves. One example of this is the opposition in the southern states to Hindi as the national language. Another example is the demand for reorganization of state. Yet another example is the assertion by religious minorities of their right to regulate the lives of their members.

As a matter of fact, the national level politics has recognized the existence of regional and cultural identities and the central government has been provided legal sanctions. India recognizes fifteen national languages. It allows each state to carry out its administration in the regional

language. It does not interfere in the religious, social and political activities of the minorities. To some people this may appear to be catering to the minorities. The number of people holding this view is not very small. But then there are others who consider protection of the rights of minorities as a major gain for the nation. This keeps the nation state together and forges a political unity.

### **Casteism**

The issue of casteism in national politics has been discussed again and again by a number of people, public men, scholars and laymen alike. Caste is one of the more distinguishing institutions of Indian society. Its role in the political sphere is of recent origin. It is widely observed that caste has become the major basis for political articulation. This is so mainly because caste provides the mechanisms for bringing people together. This is also the requirement for a successful democratic state. By politicizing the institution of caste, political process in India has assumed a unique character. Political parties in India are formed on the basis of caste alliances and voting behaviour of the Indian electorate can be described in terms of caste identity.

As casteism is considered a social evil and caste ideology does not go well with the egalitarian model of a socialist society, role of caste in national politics is viewed as a necessary evil. It is seen a factor which poses a challenge to the task of nation-building. All the same in the absence of an alternative basis for people to come together, caste continues to play a decisive role in Indian national politics.

From the above discussion, it is obvious that the task of building a nation state is not an easy exercise. A growing realization is that national integration is the key to achieving a political identity.

### **Nation Building Through National Integration:**

National integration is a process of developing the different parts of the national social system into an integrated whole. In an integrated society,

social institutions and values associated with them have a high degree of social acceptance. However, linguism, communalism, social inequalities and regional disparities are some of the factors which threaten the ideal of national integration in India.

### **Linguism**

India is a multi-linguistic nation. Language has become, specially since Independence, a powerful source of political articulation. For instance, in the South, particularly in Tamil Nadu, language sentiments have been prorogated among the people for getting power within state politics. The language problem has two aspects, namely

- medium of instruction at the level of school, college and public service examination, and
- meeting the demands of non-Hindi and Hindi-speaking radicals.
- Responding to the first aspect, the Government of India decided to implement a three-language formula. This consists of
- teaching the regional language, or mother-tongue when the later is different from the regional language,
- Hindi or another Indian language in the Hindi speaking area, and
- English or another modern European language. Today for the Union Public Service Commission in India, examinations can be written in Hindi or English or in any regional language of the country.

Regarding the second aspect of the language problem, namely, demands of Hindi and non-Hindi speaking radicals, the Government of India passed the Official language (Amendment) Act, 1967. This act decided that English will continue to be the official language of the Indian union for all the non-Hindi speaking states until these states themselves would opt for Hindi. Thus, Hindi is today only one of the official languages of the Indian union. The provision made under the above mentioned act and the three-language formula have helped to reduce the possibility of conflict on the basis of language.

### **Communalism**

Broadly defined communalism refers to the tendency of any socio-religious group to maximize its economic, political and social strength at the cost of other groups. This tendency runs counter to the notion of the secular nation state that India purports to be. Secularism in the Indian context is defined as the peaceful co-existence of all religions without state patronage to any of them. The state is to treat all of them equally. Yet, in a secular state like India, we very often hear, see and read about communal conflicts. While making conscious efforts towards the goals of democracy and socialism, the Indian nation state has not been free of communal clashes (Kishor).

### **Social Inequalities**

In every society, there is a system of social stratification. Social stratification refers to inequality in society based on unequal distribution of goods, services, wealth, power, prestige, duties, rights, obligations and privileges. Take for example, the social inequalities—created by the caste system. Being a hereditary and endogamous system, the scope for social mobility is very little. Social privileges and financial and educational benefits are by and large accessible to only upper caste groups.

Processes of change, such as democratization, westernization and modernization, have helped to broaden the accessibility to privileges to a wide range of people. Today, caste and politics are also very closely associated. Various commissions for backward castes have been formed for reserving seats for their members in educational and occupational sphere. This is a reflection of the politicization of caste affiliations. While measures to uplift the hitherto exploited and suppressed section of the population are necessary, overemphasis on caste identities has a disintegrative effect on the process of nation-building.

### **Democracy and Indian Nation**

Our system of government is a democratic one. Democracy means, above all equality of all



citizens. It means the end of inequality. Before democracy came, most societies were based on unequal political inequality. In Europe, democracy evolved slowly from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. In India democratic government was set up after we got independence.

Democracy is an excellent ideal. But it is not easy to achieve this. It is particularly difficult in a society like ours, in which there have been many kinds of traditional inequalities. The inequalities based on caste and class, and the conflicts between religious or language groups, make it difficult to run a democratic government. So these are sometimes called challenges before Indian democracy. If Indian democracy is to become strong, we must overcome these challenges.

Democratic government is built two very important ideas/ **freedom and equality**. Democracy is a form of government which gives people freedom. Within limits they can do what they want. They can think and say what they like. They have right which the government cannot take away. But all these are also related to the ideas of equality. Two people can be free together only if they are equal and if both of them have the right to freedom. So the ideas of freedom and equality are linked to each other. We talk of three types of equality—Political, Social and Economic.

### **Political Equality**

Equality can mean many different things. First, of course, is political equality. This means that in a democratic country everybody has equal political rights. For instance, between two persons one be rich, the other poor; one can be a Muslim caste, the other to a lower caste; one may be a man, the other a woman political equality means that despite these differences both will have one vote.

### **Social Equality**

Besides political equality, our Constitution places a lot of emphasis on social equality. This is because political is not the only field in which people come in touch with each other. Besides, elections, campaigns, voting or entering into legislatures, people have other types of social

contacts. At places of work in their everyday lives, citizens have to constantly interact of traditional Indian society which market these day-to-day activities with great inequality between people. The worst form of this inequality was the caste system, and particularly the inhuman practice of untouchability. This meant that people could not treat each other as equals. There were restrictions placed on marriage. People from different castes could not eat together. Most serious of course was that whatever the achievements of a person are, if she or he came from a lower caste, she or he would be treated as inferior by the upper caste people. Usually the different types of occupations were so divided that people from the lower castes were also the people with lower incomes. Quite obviously a society which practices this sort of social inequality cannot run a democratic system which requires that. Therefore, of the ideals of the Constitution is to establish social equality in India.

### **Economic Equality**

Democracy does not mean just political and social equality. Our Constitution says that the Indian state has several objectives. These objectives are—liberty or freedom, equality, secularism and socialism. All these objectives are related to each other and to the ideals of a democratic society. Let us see how they are related. Political equality is equality in matters of government and enjoying rights. But today democracy has come to have a much wider meaning. Some people would ask: why should democracy and equality be restricted only to the political sphere? Why not extend it to other spheres of life too? Politics after all is not the only important aspect of our lives. Our economic life, i.e., how much money we earn and what we can do with that is equally important. Do we not need equality in that sphere too? Only having the right to vote is not enough. If some people are very rich, and others live in poverty, that kind of society is bad and should be improved. Individuals should be equal not only in politics but also in economic life. They should have equal opportunities to enjoy various things which money

can get. It is called economic equality. Without it democracy cannot be complete.

### **Secularism**

Our Constitution mentions another goal called secularism. It has specific reference to our situation. Unlike some other countries, India has number of religious groups. People belonging to all the religious co-exist in this country. It is therefore, essential for the Indian state to be secular. For a democracy to work well, it is very important that the government should treat all citizens equality, whatever their religions be. This is what is called the principal of secularism. Among Indians there are people of almost all important religions in the world. We have Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis. But their religions are matter of their private belief. In matters of politics, such distinctions are irrelevant. A secular state means two things.

- Firstly, it means that all citizens are equal before law whatever their religions are. To put it different religion should not be mixed with political life.
- Secondly, this also means that people of all religions have equal right to practice their religions.

Indian democracy has been moving ahead since independence. We feel satisfied with the functioning of our democratic system. We know that in many other countries democracy has failed. As we have seen in previous chapters, the democratic system in India has been built upon the basic principles of equality, egalitarianism, socialism and secularism. The Constitution of India has made adequate provision to ensure that these principles are realized. It has also tried to reflect the major concerns of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by United Nations in 1948. When all these ideals are realized substantially the democratic system becomes sound, successful. But history teaches us that these are not realized easily. Our democracy also faces a number of difficulties.

## **FACTORS THAT HINDER THE SUCCESSFUL FUNCTIONING OF INDIAN NATION AND DEMOCRACY**

### **Inequality**

As we understand, democracy means equality among citizens; all kinds of inequalities are detrimental to a democratic society. Unfortunately there are deferent types of inequalities in our society. Democracy is not against variation between people. On the contrary, it implies that differences between people—in their habit, customs, beliefs and opinions—ought to be respected. One group should not try to improve their way of life on others. There are lots of differences among Indians. Indians speak different languages; belong to different regions having distinct culture, follow different religions. But here we are mainly concerned with the inequalities—which are creating obstacles in the working of a democracy. There are various kinds of inequalities in our social life. There is inequality between the rich and the poor, inequality of income or of wealth. There are inequalities between the so called upper castes, the so called lower castes and those who are called the untouchables. There is inequality between man and woman, between literate and illiterate. Here it is important to note that people suffer from these inequalities because of no fault of theirs. It is the responsibility of a democratic society to ensure equal opportunities to all citizens, so that they do not suffer from these inequalities.

### **Communalism**

The greatest danger to a democratic society comes from the tendency to place one's community above others. There may be communities based on religions, caste, language or region. But if one community is placed above the other communities, it will mean that the particular community will have more rights and opportunities than other communities. This is clearly against the principles of democracy. One great hindrance to Indian democracy is religious communalism. Communalism means placing

one's own community above others, even above the nation. During British rule, India was one country/ during national freedom movement people belonging to all religions fought against the British for national freedom/ those who led the movement, those who fought for it on the streets, the martyrs who died for it, belonged to different religions. However, at the time of independence, the British split the country into two states—India and Pakistan. At the time of partition of the country ghastly communal riots broke out, and thousands of innocent people were killed and many more were forced to leave their homes. Thousands of Hindus from Pakistan and Muslim from India had to leave their homes in which they lived for generations. They had to leave their jobs, their property and had to flee to an unknown area to live as refugees. This left a long trail of mutual hatred among the two religious communities. It was very unfortunate that independence had to come to us this way. But communal problems did not and with the riots at the time of independence. Even Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, was assassinated by religious communalist.

Some People want India to be a Hindu state, because they feel that Hindus are in a majority but this is a wrong idea. Because India is as much a country of the Hindus as of the Muslims, Christians and others who have born and culture Precisely because it is not the culture of any one community, but of many. Take two examples. First of all we are Proud of the beautiful architecture of our Past. The whole world marvels at them. But these are the contributions of different communities. The great stone temples of Konark or Khajuraho were made by People who were Hinds. Many of the figures carved out on them are Gods of Hindu religion. The Taj Mahal was made by a Muslim equally feel Proud of the Taj built by Muslims and the great built by Hindus. Now, take the example of our classical music. We have great Muslim and Hindu musicians. Everybody honours them because they are artists of Indian music, not because they are Hindus or Muslims. We have similar feelings for our respect

for the unique and composite culture sustains our democratic system. Our culture and our secular state would be destroyed if all People belonging to different are not treated equally.

### **Minority Rights**

India is a land of many religions and languages. This creates some special problems for our democracy. Democracy works on two Principles which are of equal importance. First, it is a government based on the majority Principle. Only government based on tolerance and consensus. It does not make People do things by force. This second Principle of democracy is the basis of minority rights. Our Constitution makes provision for such minority rights. These rights have been guaranteed by the Constitution. These cannot be taken away. These rights are universally Human Rights.

The question of minorities has come up very much in two fields—religious communities and cultural groups. If you take India as a whole, number of minority communities like Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, excite is because of this situation that the Constitution gives a fundamental right to the religious and linguistic minority communities to establish their own educational institutions. It is important to note that in our country the rights of the minorities are adequately protected. The intolerance of the majority can also harms democracy.

### **Regional Aspirations and Regionalism**

Our country is so large that there is a great diversity among its many different regions. A region is an area, the inhabitants of which have a sense of unity and a feeling that they are distinct from others. But of late the more common use of this word refers to a sense of unity based on language, culture and economic interests.

After independence, states in India were reorganized on the basis of language. But regions do not always coincide with states. Within a state with a majority of citizens speaking one language, there may be other citizens speaking other languages. Moreover, People with different cultural

background having different economic interests live within the boundary of state. Therefore, regions and regional problems are not confined within the boundaries of the state. These in fact cut across the state boundaries. Unfortunately we have been facing a number of regional problems throughout the length and breadth of the country. In a democracy, regional aspirations are not always wrong or bad which are related to our history of colonial exploitation. During British period, some areas which were close to ports, or towns which were important centres of administration were developed by the Government. Industries grew in and around them. In such places facilities like good educational institutions, transport system and other civic amenities were provided. By contrast, other areas which were often parts of the same region where people spoke the same language were left very backward. Tribal areas experienced very little effort at development. This kind of backwardness is the cause of inequality between regions.

Popular feelings against regional inequality have led to movements for regional autonomy or for a new state. Sometimes, people have demanded comparatively more economic and political autonomy for a particular region. In fact, this is called a demand for regional autonomy. Even such feelings have led to movements demanding creation of new states.

However, this also leads to what is known as the problem of regionalism. Sometimes demands of political parties or groups against neglect of a region appear to be against the unity of the nation as a whole. At times, this leads people to say that a particular region is only for its own inhabitants, it becomes a seriously wrong approach. First, this idea clearly goes against some constitutional provisions. Our Constitution gives us right to live or work and equality of opportunity, which would be harmed, if such idea is promoted. We all believe that we are, despite all differences, one single nation. If every region is supposed to belong only to the people of that region and not others, the idea of India as a nation

itself will be destroyed. In fact, regionalism does not always do well to the region itself as contribution of other regions is essential for its growth and development. Regional aspirations therefore are quite natural, and should be respected. But regionalism, as a feeling of hatred against other simply because they do not belong to the region, goes against the feeling of all Indians constituting one nation.

### **Caste and Untouchability**

It is good to be proud of one's heritage. But one must not do it blindly. It is equally important to be critical about it. A practice is not good simply because it has been there for a long time. Whereas we have a great cultural heritage, many things in our traditional society are bad, and these must be changed, if we are to progress and have a democratic society.

One of the great problems facing our democracy has been the rigid caste system. It had divided our society into so called high and low castes. Thousands of years ago the Hindu society was divided into four categories: Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. These categories have been known as Varna. However, the caste system, and not so much the Varna system, has been responsible for maintaining the social inequality in India. The caste system had ordained professions by the accident of birth in a given family and jati. It has been believed that the four major caste categories have had types of work in every society. The Brahmins would do rituals, worship and educate the young. The Kshatriyas would learn warfare and defend the country. The Vaishyas were supposed to carry on trade. And finally, the Shudras the lowest of the four categories were to do all other types of work which needed physical labour-like agriculture and other menial work. We all now accept that such a system is not good for our society. This kind of inequality is entirely unjustifiable as the most important activities of a society include agriculture and the production of other necessary things. Do people not need food or clothes or other

to survive? And is it not very unjust to treat those people who produce these things for the rest of the society as the lowest of all? Besides, how does one say that the skills of mind and body travel in the family? As the sons of great poets or players do not necessarily become poets and players by virtue of their birth, similarly, what is the guarantee that the son or daughter of a Brahmin would like to study and be a scholar. Or, that the son of a warrior would also be good warrior? The caste system which existed in ancient India was thus a very unjust system.

With the passage of time, this caste system has become very complicated. Instead of four castes now there are innumerable castes. Each caste has its own rites and ceremonies that distinguish it from others. They ask their boys and girls to marry within their caste and not to outsiders. Each caste has many sub-castes. Accordingly people have to lead their lives under very odd restrictions. They cannot eat from others, or with others. It means that people belonging to one caste treat others with hatred and suspicion.

Worst of all has been the system called untouchability. People of upper castes would not even touch those of lower castes. It was shameful and inhuman aspect of our old society. People belonging to the lowest castes would not be given education. They could not eat with others. They had to live outside the villages. Sometimes they could not eat with others. They had to live outside the villages. Sometimes they could not even use the wells from which other people drew water. Yet often they were doing some of the most important works for the society. They tilled the land of other people because they were too poor to have land of their own. Society treated them most unjustly although it benefitted out of their labour. But it did not treat them as equal to others.

There were sometimes protests against such injustices. At times, lower caste people rebelled. Later, social reformers tried to abolish these practices. Nationalist leaders, especially, Gandhiji tried hard to abolish untouchability. But to abolish a system that has continued for hundreds of years

is not easy. Those who benefit from the system—the so-called upper castes would not let it go. After independence, laws were passed making untouchability an offence. But laws are not enough. It is important for others to respect the rights of those who belong to lower castes in your society. And, it is equally important for those of the so-called lower castes to assert their equal rights.

Ordinarily, people of the lower castes were poor. Because of their poverty, they were unable to have education and as a result, they could not get better jobs. To offset this, our Constitution has included certain revisions under which, some jobs are reserved for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes. This category is known as Scheduled Castes because the names of these lower castes are put into a schedule or a list prepared by the Government. Some seats can be reserved for them in educational institutions also. This is a way of undoing the injustices that the society had done to them for centuries. Like the Scheduled Castes the Constitution also guarantees some reservations for the Scheduled Tribes in jobs and admission in educational institutions. As long as discrimination against these castes and tribes remain, there can be no real democracy. It violates the principle of dignity of the human being. It goes against the main principle of a democratic society that all human beings should be regarded as equals.

### **Inequality of Women**

Traditionally, another negative aspect of our male dominated society was the way it treated women. This has been the situation not only in India but also in any other societies of the world, but in the Indian society it has some peculiar forms. Society's laws and customs were made primarily by men which went in their favour. Women have sometimes been treated as little better than slaves. Often their own families would consider women as fit to cook, work in the household and look after their children. They had been given to understand that they can not do

important work outside the house, or take important decisions for themselves. This kind of view is doubly wrong. Firstly, these types of work-cooking for the family, keeping the house, or looking after children are not at all unimportant work. In fact, these are most important of all being extremely necessary for the society. To consider these types of work unimportant precisely show the prejudices that men often have against women. Secondly, it is also not correct to say that women need not work out of home. If one travels through the countryside during planting or harvesting time, one would find women working in the fields. Those who live in cities must have also seen women working in offices, schools and factories. So we see everywhere, in almost all walks of life, women do as much work as men. Although they do so much for the society, our traditional society often treated them very cruelly. They are even not allowed to take decisions for themselves. They have little say in the matters of the family. At one time, there was a horrible practice of sati. A woman whose husband died was burnt to death with him.

Another strange system was the purdah. In some homes, women were not allowed to come out in front of outsiders, or come in contact with any man who did not belong to their own family. Women could not go out of their house very often. And the potential they might have had was never realized. Of course, these practices have declined now. But still, if you look carefully around you, you will find many instances of people treating women differently from men. For example, even in the cities, among educated people, dowry is being demanded from the family of the bride. This practice treats the girl unequal to the boy. Discrimination against women also occurs in economic practices. Quite often women are paid less amount for doing the same work as compared to men. So, although the situation has changed, and some of the terrible practices of the past have gone, the question of raising the status of women still remains.

The change in the status of women that are coming, are the outcome of various factors. Living in cities is one of them. Education of women is another. Women now go to schools and colleges just as much as men. They work in offices. They often join politics, and become parliamentarians, ministers, even the Prime Minister. Still in our vast countryside, women are ruled by tradition and are bullied and oppressed. As democracy means equal treatment to all, such acts of inequality and prejudice against women have to be stopped.

### **Inequality between the Rich and the Poor**

What we discussed till now are types of social inequality. One of the major problems before a country like ours is economic inequality. One of the most obvious forms of inequality is the inequality between the rich and the poor. This is inequality of income and wealth. As money helps buy all other goods and services, this extends to all aspects of peoples lives. The coming of industries helps reduce some inequalities, for example, caste discriminations in modern cities. But the most important question before our country is the question of economic inequality. A poor man is politically equal to a rich man. Both have a single vote in elections. But his equality does not mean that they are equal in other equally important fields.

The problem of poverty is the result of economic inequality. It is the question of some people having a large income that makes it easy for them to live comfortably and others being too poor to even eat properly once a day. Poverty exists in different forms in cities, industrial centres and in villages where people depend on land. In cities, the poor are mainly workers. In villages poor are small peasants or those who have no land. Let us look into the problems of poverty in villages as well as cities or industrial places.

Still, there are certain things that have not changed. A poor man can become rich now, but the distinction between the rich and the poor remains. Formerly, it was rank and birth, now it is wealth and money. An industrial society left to

itself, continually increases this distinction. The socialists claim that in such societies, the rich become richer and the poor still poorer. Growth of industries improves the productivity which in turn improves the economy of a society, no doubt, but it also leads to greater inequality between various classes. Although advantages of industrialization cannot be denied, its capacity to create new problems cannot be overlooked either. Due to industrialization new classes arise, and with them new types of oppression, exploitation and inequality. In the cities, the problem of poverty is very acute among workers in industries. Indian democracy also faces challenges from wide spread rural poverty.

### **Poverty in the Indian Villages**

The poverty in villages has a pattern quite different from that exist in cities. In Indian villages men tilled the same land for the same kinds of crops, with the same kinds of implements for years together. They lived in the same kind of houses, had the same kind of thought, and had exactly the same superstitious beliefs. Some changes have taken place in our village life after independence. The efforts of improved agricultural production have brought about such changes. But many of the problems still remain, particularly, there has been very little change in those aspects of village life, which cause poverty.

### **Land Reforms**

One of the major problems in rural life has been related to land ownership. The man who actually tilled the land did not own it. On the other hand the owner of the land, without doing any work received benefit through his tenant's labour. This was a very unjust system. It reduced productivity of land causing poverty to sustain. Changes in such a system in favour of the actual tiller of the land that produced the crop was essential. This required measures which came to be known as Land Reforms. After independence, a number of land reform laws were passed by state government. But those who owned land have often managed to thwart the process of

implementation of such laws. When land ceiling laws were made to limit the extent of ownership, land was transferred in the names of other members of the family. So the law could be satisfied, but land still remained with the same people. Land reform legislation has thus not been able to remove the inequality in holding of land among peasantry in all the states of our country. Poverty is much greater among the landless rural folks who work for others who have land, and live on the wages. Wages are usually very low. During lean season, having no works the poor peasants and agricultural workers suffer great hardships. This can be removed if land is more equally distributed. Some relief is sought to be given to the poorer section of the village people by various programmes. Many states have the integrated Rural Development Programmes which are meant to help them. Sometimes some states run the food for work programme which can also be of great benefit to the rural poor at the time when they find it difficult to get work.

Besides inequality of land ownership, some other evils in the countryside were even more unjust. Sometimes, people were compelled to do bonded and forced labour. Sometimes, peasants or landless workers had to borrow money from the local landlords or money-lenders when they were hard pressed. They were charged incredibly high rates of interest. As they were never able to pay off the money, they were asked to work for the money-lenders to pay off their debts. This practice resulted in rural poverty due to indebtedness. Many of the debtors had to work for their whole lives for the landlord or the money lender, for a small sum of money they had to borrow at one time. This was called bonded labour. Now bonded labour has been abolished by law. But still one comes across occasional reports of such practices.

Such problems are also related to illiteracy. Many people in our countryside still cannot read or write. They are often cheated in matters of contract and employment as they cannot read what is written in the paper. So the powerful and

moneyed class exploits the poor. Thus the main problems in the countryside are unequal land distribution and debts of the peasantry.

### **Poverty in Towns :**

Towns are usually centres of industry or trade. In both these sectors, there are thousands of labourers who migrate to cities in search of jobs. But cities have no plan or provision to accommodate such people, workers, therefore, have to live in vast slums which lack even the basic facilities like electricity and drinking water. Actually most of our industrial cities are vast slums with comparatively smaller pockets of better housing and sanitation. Workers often do hard labour for long hours but get low salaries with which they cannot buy good food. If they are sick, they often cannot afford medicine. Unhygienic conditions make their lives even worse. Once a worker gets too old or too sick to work, there is no provision for any kind of security.

### **Unemployment :**

The problem of poverty has been a great hindrance to the successful functioning of democracy in India. Another major factor of poverty is the prevalence of unemployment. Our economy has not been able to create adequate employment opportunities. As a result, the number of the unemployed has been increasing. Besides, there are a large number of people who are unemployed. These people do not have opportunities to work to their potential. The problem of unemployment is very much visible in cities, but is less visible though equally acute in villages. Where three persons are enough to cultivate a plot of land, we find four or five person involved in that work. This kind of situation leads to disguised unemployment. The solution of the problem of unemployment lies in faster economic development.

### **Population :**

Population has been a great challenge to development. Although population is considered an asset, the faster pace of its growth has been a cause of great concern. The population of India has grown three times since independence. If the

present trend of growth continues, the present population will double itself with the next three decades. The pressure of growing population in our country has been generating a lot of problems for its economy as well as environment. Even when the pace of economic development is accelerated to meet the needs of the growing population, the problems are not going to be solved. The faster pace of economic development will require more use of our limited resources. The best way of economic development is to utilize our resources carefully. The resources should be utilized in a way that adequate resources remain to be utilized by the coming generations. This kind of development is known as sustainable development. With this kind of development, we can be able to save environment from being polluted. It is therefore essential for us to reduce the rate of growth of population.

The causes of population growth in countries like ours are many. The main reasons for growth of population in India are prevalence of poverty and illiteracy, low status of women, high rate of deaths of people and particularly of infants and mothers. Because of these factors, the birth rate remains high, resulting the faster growth of population. The increasing population puts a lot of pressure on agricultural land in villages. In cities population grows due to large scale migration from rural areas in search of jobs. In order to ensure population stabilization four important steps are necessary. First, urgent steps are needed to remove poverty and illiteracy. It is more important to make our population literate. Females in particular are to be made literate. Secondly, there is a need to ensure gender equality. To attain this goal, it is necessary to provide special opportunities of education for girls. Females are as important members of society as males. Women must be given equal opportunities to work outside homes. Their potentials are to be fully utilized by the society instead of confining them to home. Thirdly, the health facilities need to be extended to all so that, greater care of the health of infants, children and mother can be taken



Fourthly, the country needs to adopt and realize the policy of sustainable development. It means that the development processes are to be promoted in a way which enables the economy to meet the requirements of all the people but does not lead to an over-utilisation of resources.

### **Nepotism and Bribery :**

Many other types of problems also add to the challenges to Indian democracy. Some practices like nepotism and bribery reduce the efficiency of the government. This also causes frustration for the ordinary citizens, because, at times they fail to get their dues. Sometimes these result in violence among the youth. Certain degrading business practices like hoarding of goods and commodities for profits also lead to problems. There are some malpractices like smuggling and accumulating black money which make the administration corrupt and inefficient and hinder the development of the nation.

### **MEASURES TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS :**

There are many types of measures which can be taken up to solve these problems.

- Education can improve people's economic conditions and pave way for better understanding. But it is not only formal education that is needed to fight the ills from which our society suffers. Literacy, of course, is of great help. A literate person knows more about rules and laws and her/his rights and duties.
- Awareness of laws can be created even among illiterate people. But the crux of these problems are essentially economic and these economic problems have to be tackled by measures like land reforms, reduction of unemployment or by providing under employment benefit to those who are out of jobs. This will bring greater social equality.
- The government has to legislate on these measures. But just legislation is not enough. It must also see that people do not find loopholes as to slip away through those.

- Increase in productivity is necessary both in industry and agriculture. In agriculture productivity is increased by use of better seeds and fertilizers, by the use of farming machines, etc. This has happened in some areas of our country through 'Green Revolution'. As a result of this, India has become self-sufficient in food. Earlier, we did not produce enough food for all Indians. Over the last many years, we have not only produced enough food but we have produced more than we need. So some of it is now exported.
- Productivity has to be increased also in industries. This can be done in two ways. If the machinery is improved, this can lead to more production by the same worker. Another way of improving productivity is by the worker learning more skills. Usually, these two have to go together. To use a more efficient machine, the worker has to be more skilled. Therefore, increased productivity also needs that education should be spread among workers. They should have the knowledge of new techniques and skills.

### **DEMOCRACY IS SUPPOSED TO**

- Promote equality among citizens;
- Enhance the dignity of the individual;
- Improve the quality of decision-making;
- Provide a method to resolve conflicts; and
- All room to correct mistakes.

Are these expectations realized under democracies? When we talk to people around us, most of them support democracy against other alternatives, such as rule by a monarch or military or religious leaders. But not so many of them would be satisfied with the democracy in practice. So we face a dilemma: democracy is seen to be good in principle, but felt to be not so good in its practice. This dilemma invites us to think hard about the outcomes of democracy. Do we prefer democracy only for moral reasons? Or are there some prudential reasons to support democracy too?

Over a hundred countries of the world today claim and practice some kind of democratic politics: they have formal constitutions, they hold elections, they have parties and they guarantee rights of citizens. While these features are common to most of them, these democracies are very much different from each other in terms of their social situations, economic achievements and their cultures. Clearly, what may be achieved or not achieved each of these democracies will be very different. But is there something that we can expect from every democracy, just because it is democracy.

Our interest in and fascination for democracy often pushes us into taking a position that democracy can address all socio-economic and political problems. If some of our expectations are not met, we start blaming the idea of democracy. Or, we start doubting if we are living in a democracy. The first step towards thinking carefully about the outcomes of democracy is just a form of government. It can only create conditions for achieving something. The citizens have to take advantage of those conditions and achieve those goals. Let us examine some of the things we can reasonably expect from democracy and examine the record of democracy.

### **Accountable, responsive and legitimate government**

There are some things that democracy must provide. In a democracy, we are most concerned with ensuring that people will have right to choose their rulers and people will have over the rulers. Whenever possible and necessary, citizens should be able to participate in decision-making that affects them all. Therefore, the most basic outcome of democracy should be that it produces a government that is accountable to the citizens, and responsive to the needs and expectations of the citizens.

Before we go into this question, we face another common question: Is the democratic government efficient? Is it effective? Some people think that democracy produces less effective

government. It is, of course, true that non-democratic rulers do not have to bother about deliberation in assemblies or worry about majorities and public opinion. So, they can be very quick and efficient in decision-making and implementation. Democracy is based on the idea of deliberation and negotiation. So, some delay is bound to take place. Does that make democratic government inefficient?

Let us think in terms of costs. Imagine a government that may take decisions that are not accepted by the people and may therefore, face problems. In contrast the democratic government will take more time to follow procedures before arriving at a decision. But because it has followed procedures, its decisions may be both more acceptable to the people and more effective. So, the cost of time that democracy pays is perhaps worth it.

Now look at the other side democracy ensures that decision-making will be based on norms and procedures. So, a citizen who wants to know if a decision was taken through the correct procedures can find this out. She has the right and the means to examine the process of decision-making. This is known as transparency. This factor is often missing from a non-democratic government. Therefore, when we are trying to find out the outcomes of democracy, it is right to expect democracy to produce a government that follows procedures and is accountable to the people. We can also expect that the democratic government develops mechanisms for citizens to hold the government accountable and mechanisms for citizens to take part in decision-making whenever they think fit.

If we wanted to measure democracies on the basis of this expected outcomes, we need to look for the following practices and institutions: regular, free and fair elections, open public debate on major policies and legislations, and citizens' right to information about the government and its functioning. The actual performance of democracies shows a mixed record on this.

Democracies have had greater success in setting up conditions for open public debate. But most democracies fall short of elections that provide a fair chance to everyone and in subjecting every decision to public debate. Democratic government does not have a very good record when it comes to sharing information with citizens. All one can say in favour of democratic regimes is that they are much better than any non-democratic in these respects.

In substantive terms it may be reasonable to expect from democracy a reasonable that is attentive to the needs and demands of the people and largely free of corruption. The record of democracies is not impressive on these two counts. Democracies often frustrate the demands of a majority of its population. The routine tales of corruption are enough to convince us that democracy is not free of this evil. At the same time, there is nothing to show that non-democracies are less corrupt or more sensitive to the people.

There is one respect in which democratic government is certainly democratic government is legitimate government. It may be slow, less efficient, not always very responsive or clean. But a democratic government is people's own government. That is why there is an overwhelming support for the idea of democracy all over the world. As the accompanying evidence from South Asia shows, the support exists in countries with democratic regimes. People wish to be ruled by representatives elected by them. They also believe that democracy is suitable for their country. Democracy's ability to generate its own support is itself an outcome that cannot be ignored.

### **Economic growth and development**

If democracies are expected to produce good government, then it is not fair to expect that would also produce development? Evidence shows that in practice many democracies did not fulfil this expectation.

If we consider all democracies and all dictatorship for the fifty year between 1950 and 2000, dictatorship have slightly higher rate of economic growth. The inability of democracy to achieve higher economic development worries us. But this alone cannot be reason to reject democracy. As you have already studied in economics, economic development depends on several factors: country's population size, global situation, cooperation from other countries economic priorities adopted by the country, etc. However, the different in the rates of economic development between less developed countries with dictatorship and democracies is negligible. Overall, we cannot say that democracy is a guarantee of economic development. But we can expect democracy not to lag behind dictatorship in this respect.

When we find such significant different in the rates of economic growth between countries under dictatorship and democracy, it is better to prefer democracy as it has several other positive outcomes.

### **Reduction of inequality and poverty**

Perhaps more than development, it is reasonable to expect democracies to reduce economic disparities. Even when a country achieves economic growth, will wealth be distributed in such a way that all citizens of the country will have a share and lead a better life? Is economic growth in democracies accompanied by increased inequalities among the people? Or do democracies lead to a just distribution of goods and opportunities?

Democracies are based on political equality. All individuals have equal weight in electing representatives. Parallel to the process of bringing individuals into the political arena on an equal footing, we find growing economic inequalities. A small number of ultra-rich enjoy a highly disproportionate share in the total income of the country has been increasing. Those at the bottom of the society have very little to depend upon. Their incomes have been declining. Sometimes they

find it difficult to meet their basic needs of life, such as food, clothing, house, education and health.

In actual life, democracies do not appear to be very successful in reducing economic inequalities. The poor constitute a large proportion of our votes and no party will like to lose their votes. Yet democratically elected governments do not appear to be as keen to address the question of poverty as you would expect them to. The situation is much worse in some other countries. In Bangladesh, more than half of its population lives in poverty. People in several poor countries are now dependent on the rich countries even for food supplies.

### **Accommodation of social diversity**

Do democracies lead to peaceful and harmonious life among citizens? It will be a fair expectation that democracy should produce a harmonious social life. We have seen in the earlier chapters how democracies accommodate various social divisions. We saw in the first chapter how Belgium has successfully negotiated different among ethnic populations. Democracies usually develop a procedure to conduct their competition. This reduces the possibility of these tensions becoming explosive or violent.

No society can fully permanently resolve conflicts among different groups. But we can certainly learn to respect these differences and we can also evolve mechanisms to negotiate the differences. Democracy is best suited to produce this outcome. Non-democratic regimes often turn a blind eye to or suppress internal social differences. Ability to handle social differences, divisions and conflicts is thus a definite plus point of democratic regimes. But the example of Sri Lanka reminds us that a democracy must fulfil two conditions in order to achieve this outcome:

It is necessary to understand that democracy is not simple rule by majority opinion. The majority so that governments function to represent the general view. Majority and minority opinions are not permanent.

It is also necessary that rule by majority does not become rule by majority community in terms of religion or race or linguistic group, etc. Rule by majority means that in case of every decision or in case election, different persons and groups may and can form a majority. Democracy remains democracy only as long as every citizen has a chance of being in majority at some point of time. If someone is barred from being in majority on the basis of birth, then the democratic rule ceases to be accommodative for that person or group.

### **Dignity and freedom of the citizens**

Democracy stands much superior to any other form of government in promoting dignity and freedom of the individual. Every individual wants to receive respect from fellow beings. Often conflict arise among individuals because some feel that they are not treated with due respect. The passion for respect and freedom are the basis of democracy. Democracies throughout the world have recognized this, at least in principle. This has been achieved in various degree in various democracies. For societies which have been built for long on the basis of subordination and domination, it is not a simple matter to recognition that all individuals are equal.

Take the case of dignity of women. Most societies across the world were historically male dominated societies. Long struggles by women have created some sensitivity today that respect to and equal treatment of women are necessary ingredients of a democratic society. That does not mean that women are actually always treated with respect. But once the principal is recognized, it becomes easier for women to wage a struggle against what is now unacceptable legally and morally. In a non-democratic set up, this unacceptability would not have legal basis because the principal of individual freedom and dignity would not have the legal and moral force there. The same is true of caste inequalities. Democracy in India has strengthened the claims of the disadvantaged and discriminated castes for equal status and equal opportunity. There are

instances still of caste-based inequalities and atrocities, but these lack the moral and legal foundations. Perhaps it is the recognition that makes ordinary citizens value their democratic rights.

## CONCLUSION

Expectation from democracy also functions as the criteria for judging any democratic country. What is most distinctive about democracy is that its examination never gets over. As democracy passes one test, it produces another test. As people get some benefits of democracy, they ask for more and want to make democracy even better. That is why, when we ask people about the way democracy functions, they will always come up with more expectations, and many complaints. The fact that people are complaining is itself a testimony to the success of democracy: it shows that people have developed awareness and the ability to expect and to look critically at power holders and the high and the mighty. A public expression of dissatisfaction with democracy shows the success of the democratic project: it transforms people from the status of a subject to that of a citizen. Most votes make a difference to the way the government is run and to their own self-interest.

## CITIZENSHIP

**Who is a citizen?** In brief a citizen is a person who enjoys rights and performs his duties in a State. Anyone who lives in India is not an Indian citizen. Because besides citizens, aliens also live here. Therefore, every inhabitant of the country is not a citizen. A citizen is one who is a member of the State and who participates in the process of government. In a democratic society there must be two way traffic between the citizens and the government. All governments demand certain duties from its citizens and all citizens have to observe those duties. But in turn, the State must also admit some demands of its citizen on itself. There are called rights. A person who is ruled by laws but who has no political rights is not a citizen.

People who live in States which are not democratic often do not enjoy political rights. In such a State the government expects the subjects to perform their duties to pay taxes, to obey laws and do whatever else the government wants of them. But they cannot question their rules or ask them to explain their action. Politics in these societies is like a one way traffic. The government tells the people what to do and what not to do but does not listen to them in return. Only the rulers have rights. The ruled have none and hence they are not citizens.

## Democracy and Citizenship

Historically, the term 'citizen' was linked with the rise of democracy. The demand for democratic government came up first in a few western societies, like England, France and the United States of America. Democracy means that everybody should have political rights. When one has political rights, the right to vote and the right to participate in decision-making on important questions facing one's society, one is a citizen. Of course, all these ideas did not grow up all of a sudden. It took a long time for them to mature. They grew up gradually. Universal suffrage a system in which literally everybody can vote – is a fairly recent development. The ideals of democracy made people fight for their rights against monarchical government. Many of the ideas of which democracy is made up are accepted after great revolutions. For instance, after the revolution of 1789 France became a republic. All citizens, it was said, were equal: they had equal rights.

Not surprisingly, the word 'citizen' was made popular by the French Revolution in 1789. Later on, this word was used whenever democracies were set up.

- At present it is common to treat people in democratic societies as citizens. It means, above all, that in relation to the government, the individuals are active participants in the process of governance. They not only obey and listen to what the government says the government must also listen to them in turn.

- They have the right to express their opinion freely, to be consulted and to be involved in the politics of the country. In democratic politics, the common human being no longer is treated as an outsider.
- A good citizen is one who is conscious of both rights and duties. For instance, the right to vote is one of our most important rights and it is our duty also to exercise the right to vote. If a person does not vote she or he cannot be considered a good citizen, though otherwise she or he may be a good person.
- Good citizen should not only be conscious of their own rights alone, but also give the government what is its due they should obey laws that are made by the legislature and pay taxes. These are their duties towards the government. But they must also perform their duties to other citizens. And the most important duty of every citizen is to respect the rights of others.
- Our Constitution gives every one the right to practice one's religion. Every citizen, should practice religion in her/his own way; but in doing so one must respect the right of other citizens to practice their religion in the way they like.
- The qualities of good citizens must, therefore, include a consciousness of their own right tolerance for others and respect for laws.
- A democratic state particularly depends on the quality of its citizens. If citizens do not take interests in politics, a democratic state might also gradually become undemocratic.
- Conversely democracy can be strengthened if the citizens have a clear view of their own rights and the rights of others; if they demand what they can claim from the government; and if they know what the government can claim from them.
- Many social evils cannot be fought only by the government passing laws against them.
- There is a need to create an intense social

opinion against them. A society is after all made by humans and not by laws.

- One essential condition for a democratic state is that citizens must participate in the governing process. The quality of democracy improves if citizen from all walks of life participate in its activities and if they take interest in the basic processes of making importance decisions for their society. Democracy implies that the decision affecting the whole society should be taken as far as possible by the whole society.

### Understanding Citizenship in Detail

- The idea of citizenship means that not only the government has some claims on the citizen but the citizen also has claims on the government. A government, after all, is an association like many others in the society. But it is an association of a special kind.
- One can decide not to have anything to do with other associations. We may not join an political party, a religious organization, college or a cricket club. All these associations have their special fields of activity and also their special rules. We may not like their rules and decide not to join them. If we are not a member of these groups, we need not observe their rules. But government is different from all other associations. Its law will apply to you whether we like them or not.
- Governments in modern society have much power to control the ordinary people. This is something that can-not be escaped. But there should be some mechanism by which the people can also control the actions of government. According to them, the best form of government is one which runs the country according to the wishes of its people. This type of government is called participatory government or responsible government.
- The idea of citizenship is closely linked to the participation of people in government. This is how the ideas of democracy and citizenship are linked to each other.

### How one become citizen of India?

As we know, anyone living in the territory of a State is not automatically its citizen. Many people living in India are not Indian citizens; they are aliens. Aliens are – those who live on Indian Territory but who are citizens of other countries. Students from other countries, particularly Asian and African countries, often come to India to study. They sometimes live in India for several years. But that does not make them citizens of India. Similarly, tourists from other countries visit India. During their stay here they cannot claim all the rights that an Indian citizen enjoys. Businessmen from other countries may come and stay here for long periods. Diplomats who represent their countries also often do so. But they are not citizens. They cannot vote in the elections, and would not have the same rights that a citizen will enjoy.

Most of us do not have to try to become citizens of India. We are citizens simply because our parents, whether both or at least one of them, are Indian citizens. This kind of citizen is called a natural born citizen. Some countries have another rule for being a natural born citizen. Anyone born in the territory of that country, even if her or his parents are not citizens of that country, is automatically given citizenship. But the Indian Constitution does not follow that rule.

There is a second form of citizenship which is called acquired or naturalized citizenship. A person who is not a citizen of India can apply for Indian citizenship; and when this is granted the person is called a naturalized citizen. The procedure for acquiring citizenship is determined by a law made by the Parliament. To acquire citizenship a person has to fulfil some conditions, like living in the country for a fixed length of time or by marriage. A person can also lose her/his citizenship in certain cases. For some types of legal offence, the government can take away a person's citizenship. Besides a person accepting the citizenship of another country loses the citizenship of her or his own country.

### POLITICAL PARTIES, PRESSURE GROUPS, SOCIAL-POLITICAL ELITES

#### Political Party

Political party is a group of people who come together to contest election and hold power in the government. They agree on some policies and programmes for the society with a view to promote the collective good. Since there can be different views on what is good for all, parties try to persuade people why their policies are better than others. They seek to implement these policies by winning popular support through elections.

Thus, parties reflect fundamental political divisions in a society. Parties are about a part of the society and thus involve partisanship. Thus a party is known by which part it stands for, which policies it supports and whose interests it upholds. A political party has three components:

- the leaders,
- the active member, and
- the followers.

Political parties are easily one of the most visible institutions in a democracy. For most ordinary citizens, democracy is equal to political parties. If we travel to remote parts of our country and speak to the less educated citizens, we could come across people who may not know anything about our Constitution or about the nature of our government. But chances are that they would know something about our political parties. At the same time this visibility does not mean popularity. Most people tend to be very critical of political parties. They tend to blame parties for all that is wrong with our democracy and our political life. Parties have become identified with social and political divisions.

Therefore, it is natural to ask – do we need political parties at all? About hundred years ago there were few countries of the world that had any political party. Now there are few that do not have parties.

## Functions of Political Parties

What does a political party do? Basically, political parties fill political offices and exercise political power. Parties do so by performing a series of functions:

- Parties contest elections. In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties. Parties select their candidates in different ways. In some countries, such as the USA, members and supporters of a party choose its candidates. Now more and more countries are following this method. In other countries like India, top party leaders choose candidates for contesting elections.
- Parties put forward different policies and programmes and the voters choose from them. Each of us may have different opinions and views on what policies are suitable for the society. But no government can handle such a large variety of views. In a democracy, a large number of similar opinions have to be grouped together to provide a direction in which policies can be formulated by the governments. This is what the parties do. A party reduces a vast multitude of opinions into a few basic positions which it supports. A government is expected to base its policies on the line taken by the ruling party.
- Parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country. Formally, laws are debated and passed in the legislature. But since most of the members belong to a party, they go by the direction of the party leadership, irrespective of their personal opinions.
- Parties form and run governments. As we noted last year, the big policy decisions are taken by political executive that comes from the political parties. Parties recruit leaders, train them and then make them ministers to run the government in the way they want.
- Those parties that lose in the elections play the role of opposition to the parties in power, by voicing different views and criticizing

government for its failures or wrong policies. Opposition parties also mobilize opposition to the government.

- Parties shape public opinion. They raise and highlight issues. Parties have lakhs of member and activists spread all over the country. Many of the pressure groups are the extensions of parties among different sections of society. Parties sometimes also launch movement for the resolution of problems faced by people. Often opinions in the society crystallize on the lines parties take.
- Parties provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes implemented by governments. For an ordinary citizen it is easy to approach a local party leader than a government officer. That is why they feel close to parties even when they do not fully trust them. Parties have to be responsive to people's needs and demands. Otherwise people can reject those parties in the next elections.

## Why We Need Political Parties?

This list of function in a sense answers the question asked above: we need political parties because they perform all these functions. But we still need to ask why modern democracies cannot exist without political parties. We can understand the necessity of political parties by imagining a situation without parties. Every candidate in the elections will be making many promises to the people about any major policy change. The government may be formed, but its utility will remain ever uncertain. Elected representatives will be accountable to their constituency for what they do in the locality. But no one will be responsible for how the country will be run.

We can also think about it by looking at the non-party based elections to the panchayats in many states. Although, the parties do not contest formally, it is generally noticed that the villages get split into more than one faction, each of which puts up a 'panel' of its candidates. This is exactly what the party does. That is the reason we find



political parties in almost all countries are big or small, old or new, developed or developing.

The rise of political parties is directly linked to the emergence of representative democracies. As we have seen, large societies need representative democracy. As societies became large and complex, they also needed some agency to gather different views on various issues and to present these to the government. They needed some ways, to bring various representatives together so that a responsible government could be formed. They needed a mechanism to support or restrain the government, make policies, justify or oppose them. Political parties fulfil these needs that every representative government has. We can say that parties are a necessary condition for a democracy.

#### **How many parties should we have?**

In a democracy any group of citizens is free to form a political party. In this formal sense, there are a large number of political parties in each country. More than 750 parties are registered with the Election Commission of India. But not all these parties are serious contenders in the elections. Usually only a handful of parties are effectively in the race to win elections and form the government. So the question then is: how many major or effective parties are good for a democracy?

In some countries, only one party is allowed to control and run the government. These are called one-party system. In China, only the Communist Party is allowed to rule. Although, legally speaking, people are free to form political parties, it does not happen because the electoral system does not permit free competition for power. We cannot consider one-party system as a good option because this is not a democratic option. Any democratic system must allow at least two parties to compete in elections and provide a fair chance for the competing parties to come to power.

In some countries, power usually changes between two main parties. Several other parties may exist, contest elections and win a few seats in the national legislatures. But only two main

parties have a serious chance of winning majority of seats to form government. Such a party system is called two-party system. The United States of America and United Kingdom are examples of two-party system.

If several parties compete for power, and more than two parties have a reasonable chance of coming to power either on their own strength or in alliance with others, we call it a multi-party system. Thus in India, we have a multi-party system. In this system, the government is formed by various parties coming together in a coalition. Even several parties in a multi-party system join hands for the purpose of contesting elections and winning power. It is called an alliance or a front. For example, in India there were three such major alliances in 2004 parliamentary elections – the National Democratic Alliance, the United Progressive Alliance and the Left Front. The multi-party system often appears very messy and leads to political instability. At the same time, this system allows a variety of interests and opinions to enjoy political representation.

So, which of these is better? Perhaps the best answer to this very common question is that this is not a very good question. Party system is not something any country can choose. It evolves over a long time, depending on the nature of society, its social and regional divisions, its history of politics and its system of elections. These cannot be changed very quickly. Each country develops a party system that is conditioned by its special circumstances. For example, if India has evolved a multi-party system, it is because the social and geographical diversity in such a large country is not easily absorbed by two or even three parties. No system is ideal for all countries and all situations.

#### **NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES**

Democracies that follow a federal system all over the world tend to have two kinds of political parties: parties that are present in only one of the federal units and parties that are present in several or all units of the federation. This is the case in

India as well. There are some countrywide parties, which are called 'national parties'. These parties have units in various states. But by and large, all these units follow the same policies, programmes and strategy that is decided at the nation level.

Every party in the country has to register with the Election Commission. While the Commission treats all parties equally, it offers some special facilities to large and established parties are given a unique symbol – only the official candidates of that party can use that election symbol. Parties that get this privilege and some other special facilities are 'recognized' by the Election Commission for this purpose. That is why these parties are called, 'recognized political parties'. The Election Commission has laid down detailed criteria of the proportion of votes and seats that a party must get in order to be a recognized party. A party that secures at least six per cent of the total votes in an election to the Legislative, two seats is recognized as a State party. A party that secures at least six per cent of the total votes in Lok Sabha elections or Assembly elections in four States and wins at least four seats in the Lok Sabha is recognized as a National party.

Over the last three decades, the number and strength of these parties has expanded. This made the Parliament of India politically more and more diverse. No one national party is able to secure on its own a majority in Lok Sabha. As a result, the national parties are compelled to form alliance with State parties. Since 1996, nearly every one of the State parties has got an opportunity to be a part of one or the other national level coalition government. This has contributed to the strengthening of federalism and democracy in our country.

### **Challenges before political parties**

We have seen how crucial political are for the working of democracy. Since parties are the most visible face of democracy, it is natural that people blame parties for whatever is wrong with the working of democracy. All over the world, people express strong dissatisfaction with the failure of

political parties to perform their functions well. This is the case in our country too. Popular dissatisfaction and criticism has focused on four problem areas in the working of political parties. Political parties need to face and overcome these challenges in order to remain effective instruments of democracy.

The first challenge is lack of internal democracy within parties. All over the world there is a tendency in political parties towards the concentration of power in one or few leaders at the top. Parties do not hold organizational meeting, and do not conduct internal elections regularly. Ordinary members of the party do not get sufficient information on what happens inside the party. They do not have the means or the connections needed to influence the decisions. As a result the leaders assume greater power to make decisions in the name of the party. Since few leaders exercise paramount power in the party, those who disagree with the leadership find it difficult to continue in the party. More than loyalty to party principles and politics, personal loyalty to the leader becomes more important.

The second challenge of dynastic succession is related to the first one. Since most political parties do not practice open and transparent procedures for their functioning, there are very few ways for an ordinary worker to rise to the top in a party. Those who happen to be the leaders are in a position of unfair advantage to favour people close to them or even their family members. In many parties, the top positions are always controlled by members of one family. This is also bad for democracy, since people who do not have adequate experience or popular support come to occupy positions of power. This tendency is present in some measure all over the world, including in some of the older democracies.

The third challenge is about the growing role of money and muscle power in parties, especially during elections. Since parties are focused only on winning elections, they tend to use shot-cuts to win elections. They tend to use nominate those

candidates who have or can raise lots of money. Rich people and companies who give funds to the parties tend to have influence on the policies and decisions of the party. In some cases, parties support criminals who can win elections. Democrats all over the world are worried about the increasing role of rich people and big companies in democratic politics.

The fourth challenge is that very often parties do not seem to offer a meaningful choice to the voters. In order to offer meaningful choice, parties must be significantly different. In recent years there has been a decline in the ideological differences among parties in most part of the world. For example, the difference between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party in Britain is very little. They agree on more fundamental aspects but differ only in details on how policies are to be framed and implemented. In our country too, the differences among all the major parties on the economic policies have reduced. Those who want really different policies have no option available to them. Sometimes people cannot even elect very different leaders either, because the same set of leaders keep shifting from one party to another.

#### **How can parties be reformed?**

In order to face these challenges, political parties need to be reformed. The question is: Are political parties willing, what has prevented them from reforming so far? If they are not willing, is it possible to force them to reform? Citizens all over the world face this question. In a democracy, the final decision is made by leaders who represent political parties. People can replace them, but only by other set party leaders. If all of them do not wish to reform, how can anyone force them to change?

Let us look at some of the recent efforts and suggestions in our country to reform political parties and its leaders:

- The Constitution was amended to prevent elected MLAs and MPs from changing parties. This was done because many elected representatives were indulging in defection in

order to become ministers or for cash rewards. Now the law says that if any MLA or MP changes parties, he or she will lose the seat in the legislature. This new law has helped bring defection down. At the same time has made any dissent even more difficult. MPs and MLAs have to accept whatever the party leaders decide.

- The Supreme Court passed an order to reduce the influence of money and criminals. Now, it is mandatory for every candidate who contests elections to file an affidavit giving details of his property and criminal cases pending against him. This information is now available to the public. But there is no system to check if the information given by the candidates is true. As yet we do not know if it has led to decline in the influence of the rich and to decline in the influence of the rich and the criminals.
- The Election Commission passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organizational elections and file their income tax returns. The parties have started doing so but sometimes it is mere formality. It is not clear if this step has led to greater internal democracy in political parties.

#### **Suggestions made to reform political parties**

- A law should be made to regulate the internal affairs of political parties. It should be made compulsory for political parties to maintain a register of its members to follow its own constitution, to have an independent authority, to act as a judge in case of party disputes, to hold open election to the highest posts.
- It should be made mandatory for political parties to give a minimum number of tickets, about one-third, to women candidates. Similarly, there should be a quota for women in the decision-making bodies of the party.
- There should be state funding of elections. The government should give parties money to support their election expenses. This

support could be given in kind: petrol, paper, telephone etc. Or it could be given in cash on the basis of the votes secured by the party in the last election.

### **There are two other ways in which political parties can be reformed**

- One, people can put pressure on political parties. This can be done through petitions, publicity and agitations. Ordinary citizens, pressure groups and movement and the media can play an important role in this. If political parties feel that they would lose public support by not taking up reforms, they would become more serious about reforms.
- Two, political parties can improve if those who want this join political parties are pro-reform. The quality of democracy depends on the degree of public participation. It is difficult to reform politics if ordinary citizens do not take part in it and simply criticize it from the outside. The problem of bad politics can be solved by more and better politics. But we must be very careful about legal solutions to political problems. Over-regulation of political parties can be counter-productive. This would force all parties to find ways to cheat the law. Besides, political parties will not agree to pass a law that do not like.

### **PRESSURE GROUPS**

Pressure Group is any group that attempts to influence legislative or governing institutions on behalf of its own special interests or interests of a larger public that it represents. They influence Governments decision in their favour without participating in politics as such. It acts as a liaison between government and its members.

- Prof Finer characterized them as anonymous empires. To Lambert these are unofficial government which implies that no government can run without them into consideration. It organizes itself around a common interest, of a section of population.

- There are protective pressure groups, i.e., those protecting the interest of the group like FICCI.
- On the other hand promotional pressure groups tries to promote their interest like caste association, trade unions etc.
- Pressure group act behind the seen as they do not try to capture power. They support their candidate, parties in elections to ensure winning candidate backed by them represent their interest in related bodies. They give collective expression to the groups demand and also ensure that the demand should be met. They change their political alliance quickly as to suit their conditions.
- Pressure group's demands can be functional or dysfunctional for society. Presences of anomic pressure groups like terrorist organizations have negative impact. Thus it can be said that presence of pressure group shows pluralism in political system which can be functional as well as dysfunctional.

### **Role of pressure groups in democracy**

- According to Anthony Giddens, pressure groups are the carriers of democracy. With the increase in industrialization division of labour also increases, thus emerged various sections with specialized interest. But modern democracy demands harmonization of interest due to which minority or sectional interest tend to get ignored. Pressure groups represent this interest.
- Its presence shows existence of pluralism making power dispersed and decentralized into the political system.
- Pressure groups also aggregate and articulate interest, thus making government aware of public opinion and interest and working for them.
- The participation of all sections in governance is indirectly achieved.
- Pressure groups can work in anonymity out of the glare of public. So they may provident public censure.

- They may use imitative, educative, non-formal methods to protect and promote their interests.

But in modern democracy they can be dysfunctional too, as by representing sectional interest at times other interests gets marginalized. It may be possible that sectional interest goes contrary to national interest. Certain economic pressure groups have also emerged using illegal methods e.g. terrorists organizations. Thus, being inevitable phenomena in democracy pressure groups have strengthened and weakened democracy side by side.

There are many pressure groups in India. But, they are not developed to the same extent as in the US or the western countries like Britain, France, and Germany and so on. The pressure groups in India can be broadly classified into the following categories.

### 1. Business Groups

The business groups include a large number of industrial and commercial bodies. They are then most sophisticated, the most powerful and the largest of all pressure groups in India. They include:

- Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), major constituents are the Indian Merchants Chamber of Bombay, Indian Merchants Chamber of Calcutta and South Indian Chamber of Commerce of Madras. It broadly represents major industrial and trading interest.
- Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), major constituents are the Bengal Chamber of Commerce of Calcutta and Central Commercial Organization of Delhi.
- Federation of All India Foodgrain Dealers Association (FAIFDA). FAIFDA is the sole representative of the grain dealers.
- All India Manufacturers Organization (AIMO). AIMO raises the concerns of the medium-sized industry.

### 2. Trade Unions

The trade unions voice the demands of the industrial workers. They are also known as labour groups. A peculiar feature of trade union of India is that they are associated either directly or indirectly with different political parties. They include:

- All India Trade Union Congress (INTUC) – affiliated to the CPI;
- Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) – affiliated to the Congress (I);
- Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) – affiliated to the CPM, and
- Hind Mazdoor Parishad (HMP) – affiliated to the BJP.

### 3. Agrarian Groups

The agrarian groups represent the farmers and the agricultural labour class. They include:

- Bharatiya Kisan Union (under the leadership of Mahendra Singh Tikait, in the wheat belt of North India)
- All Indian Kisan Sabha (the oldest and the largest agrarian group)
- Revolutionary Peasants Convention (organized by the CPM in 1967 which gave birth to the Naxalbari Movement)
- Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (Gujarat)
- R.V. Sangham (led by CN Naidu in Tamil Nadu)
- Hind Kisan Panchayat (controlled by the Socialists)
- All India Kisan Sammelan (led by Raj Narain)
- United Kisan Sabha (controlled by the CPM)

### 4. Professional Associations

These are associations that raise the concerns and demands of doctors, lawyers, journalists and teachers. Despite various restrictions, these associations pressurize the government by various methods including agitations for the improvement of their service conditions. They include:

- Indian Medical Association (IMA).
- Bar Council of India (BCI)
- Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ)
- Progressive Students University and College Teachers (AIFUCT).

## 5. Student Organizations

Various unions have been formed to represent the student community. However, these unions, like the trade unions, are also affiliated to various political parties. These are:

- Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) (affiliated to BJP)
- All India Students Federation (AISE) (affiliated to CPI)
- National Students Union of India (NSUI) (affiliated to Congress (I))
- Progressive Students Union (PSU) (affiliated to CPM).

## 6. Religious Organizations

The organizations based on religion have come to play an important role in Indian politics. They represent the narrow communal interest. They include:

- Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS)
- Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)
- Jamaat-e-Islam
- Ittehad-ul-Mussalmeen
- Anglo-India Association
- Associations of the Roman Catholics
- All-India Conference of India Christians
- Parsi Central Associations
- Shiromani Akali Dal.

"The Shiromani Akali Dal should be regarded as more of religious pressure groups than a political party in view of the fact that it has been concerned more with the mission of saving the Sikh community from being absorbed into the ocean of Hindu society than with fighting for the cause of a Sikh homeland".

## 7. Caste Groups

Like religion, caste has been an important factor in Indian politics. The competitive politics in many states of the Indian Union is in fact the politics of caste rivalries: Brahmin versus Non-Brahmin in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, Rajputs versus Jat in Rajasthan, Kammas versus Reddy in Andhra, Ahir versus Jat in Haryana, Baniya Brahmin versus Patidars in Gujarat, Kayastha versus Rajputs in Bihar, Nair versus Ezhavas in Kerala and Lingayats versus Okkaligas in Karnataka. Some in the caste-based organizations are:

- Nadar Caste Association in Tamil Nadu
- Marwari Association
- Harijan Sevak Sangh
- Kshatriya Maha Sabha in Gujarat
- Vanniyakul Kshatriya Sangham
- Kayastha Sabha.

## 8. Tribal Organizations

The tribal organizations are active in MP, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and the North Eastern States of Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland and so on. Their demands range from reforms that of secession from India and some of them are involved in insurgency activities. The tribal organizations include:

- National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)
- Tribal National Volunteers (TNU) in Tripura
- People's Liberation Army in Manipur
- All-India Jharkhand
- Tribal Sangh of Assam
- United Mizo Federal Organization.

## 9. Linguistic Groups

Language has been so important factor in Indian politics that it became the main basis for the reorganization of states. The language along with caste, religion and tribe has been responsible for the emergence of political parties as well as pressure groups. Some of the linguistic groups are:

- Tamil Sangh
- Anjuman Tarrak-i-Urdu
- Andhra Maha
- Hindi Sahitya Sammelan
- Nagarik Pracharani Sabha
- Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha.

#### 10. Ideology Based Groups

In more recent times, the pressure groups are formed to pursue a particular ideology, i.e., a cause, a principle or a programme. These groups include:

- Environmental protection groups like Narmada Bachao Andolan and Chipko Movement.
- Democratic rights organizations
- Civil liberties associations
- Gandhi Peace Foundation
- Woman rights organizations.

#### 11. Anomic Groups

Almond and Powell observed: "By anomic pressure groups we mean more or less a spontaneous breakthrough into the political system from the society such as riots, demonstrations, associations and bureaucratic elite, ever-whelmed by the problem of economic development and scarcity of resources available to them, inevitably acquires a technocratic and anti-political frame of mind, particularistic demands of whatever kinds are denied legitimacy. As a consequence interest groups are alienated from the political system". Some of the anomic pressure groups are:

- All India Sikh Student's Federation
- Nava Nirman Samiti of Gujarat
- Naxalite Groups
- Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF)
- All Assam Student's Union
- United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
- Dal Khalsa.

### SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ELITES

Elite are the most influential and prestigious stratum in a society. The 'elite' are those persons who are recognized as outstanding leaders in given field. Thus, there are political, religious, scientific, business and artistic elite.

- Wright Mills has described them as "those who make decisions having major consequences, who are able to realize their will even if other resist, and who have the most of what there is to have-money, power and prestige".
- Parry Geraint has defined elite as "small minorities who play an exceptionally influential part in the affairs of society in specific fields".
- Nadel maintains that elite are "those who have an influence over the fate of the society because of their superiority". The members of an elite group have important influence in shaping the values and attitudes held by their segment of society.

#### Ram Ahuja has described elite through four features

- a dominant group which possess distinctiveness and exclusiveness,
- the term does not apply to any one person but refers to a plurality, a collectivity of persons, however small it may be,
- this identifiable collectivity has certain attributes and skills which give it not only a certain superiority but also power of decision-making and influencing others.
- elite is a relative term. A group is identified as an elite group in a particular field in which it is 'power exercise influential, or commands 'excellence', but in other groups, these elite may be considered as 'ordinary' members.

On this basis, the term 'political elite' may be defined as "a group of high stratum decision-makers in political culture or concrete political structure which monopolizes political power, influences major political policies and occupies all important posts of political command". If we

were to operationalise this term, we could say, political elite include those who are elected/nominated to central and state legislatures, who occupy important position in national or state-level political parties, individuals who do not hold any formal positions either in the government or in political parties but are still considered as persons of great political prestige and power because they control powers exercisers e.g., Gandhi, Jaya Prakash Narayan.

### Elite in Post-Independence India

According to Ram Ahuja growth of political elite can be analyzed in different phases. Political elite can be analyzed by classifying growth of the political elite into five phases:

- Immediately after independence phase i.e., 1947 to April 1952, in which there was no longer any struggle between the people and the government and in which though the interests of the people and the power elite were one and indivisible (i.e., rebuilding the society), the latter were more preoccupied with the problems of restoration of law and order after partition, refugee resettlement, maintenance of communal peace, and the controversy over the redistribution of territories between various states.
- Consolidation phase (i.e., April 1952 to March 1962 or MPs, MLAs and party office-holders elected in April 1952 and April 1957 elections), in which the political elite worked for the economic uplift and social development through the Five Year Plans.
- Chaotic phase i.e., April 1962 to March 1971 or individuals elected in April 1962 and March 1967 elections, in which non-congress and coalition governments came into power in several states affecting its inter-state and state-centre relations.
- Authoritarian phase (i.e., March 1971 to November 1989 or individuals elected in March 1971, March 1977, January 1980, December 1984, and November 1989 elections) in which one person was catapulted

to the position of supreme national leadership, first Indira Gandhi for 16 years (excluding period from March 1977 to January 1980) and then Rajiv Gandhi for five years and the power-holders came to believe in the personality cult, and in which all plans for change and development of society were centralized.

- Multiple-party phase i.e., December 1989 till April 1999 in which except in Narsimha Rao's period hands to rule the country on a common programme basis (V.P. Singh ministry for 11 months, Chandra Shekhar ministry for about eight months, Atal Bihari Vajpayee ministry for 13 days. United Front governments of Deve Gowda for 11 months and I.K. Gujral for one year and BJP led government of A.B. Vajpayee).
- In the first phase those were the elite who had a stable economic background, were highly educated, mostly belonged to the upper castes, and were committed to societal interests. Their socio-political ideology was based on nationalism, liberalism and religious-cultural reforms. This first generation of power-wielders in free India had earned their reputation for courage, vision and action, and acquired their charisma before they stepped into office as inheritors of political power and earned it more through functioning in office.
- The elite in the second (consolidation) phase, particularly those elected in the 1952 elections, some of whom had only part-time interests in politics. They wanted rewards in the form of a political office for participating in the national struggle for independence. These elite caused a certain amount of disequilibrium in the beginning in their party structures but their pressures for active participation in politics were pitched in such a low key that they were soon integrated in their party systems.
- Then came the 1957 elections when the long established dominance of the so-called political suffers was broken and political power



- was placed in the hands of a new breed of elite who were either petty landholders or traders, businessmen, professional persons, small industrialists or social workers. These elite were not as highly politicized as their older counterparts. They thought that since they could trust the integrity of old professional politicians, they need not concern themselves quite so directly with politics.
- Over the years, yet newer elite further down the social scale appeared in the 1962 elections representing the intermediate and lower castes, middle-class professions, small farmers, industrial workers, or even obscure religious and social sects, to name a few, seeking entry into the political decision-making processes. Though these elite came to seek a greater role in policy formulation, the older elite still retained their influence. There was thus toleration on the part of the new and accommodation on the part of the old elite. Both old and new elite revised their values to fit situations and establish new relationships. This type of interaction between the old and the new elite implies a dilution of the pure force theory group of elite or that the position of the old elite depended upon some sort of bargain. We can thus say that change in the elite structure up to 1967 was slow and 'peaceful', not involving any 'conflict' in Marxian terminology.
  - In the 1967, 1971, 1977, 1980, 1984, 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1998 elections, emerged the elite amongst whom many were found to have politics as their major source of livelihood. According to Ram Ahuja, they believed more in using the ties of kinship, caste and language to smoothen the way through the corridors of power. They were blind to the practicalities of the plans and believed in seeking cooperation of the masses by coining attractive slogans and speaking half-truths. They posed as democrats; even their slogans were democratic but their actions belied their utterances. Democracy as a way of life was foreign to their nature and nurture.
  - According to Ahuja, ideologically, there were four types of elite functioning in 1967-1971, 1971-1989, and 1989-1999 phases: traditionalists, rationalists, moderates and synthetics. The second and the third types had two sub-variations,
    - those who reflected secular but vested national ideology, and
    - those that professed a neo-secular and vested parochial ideology.
  - Since these elite with different ideologies functioned within the party, the variation in their ideologies led to segmentation of the party which affected the functioning of both the party and its elite at various levels. The new political elite who were brought into power first in December 1989 election and then in May 1996 and March 1998 elections got public votes not because of their rationalist liberal ideologies or because their radicalism was greatly appreciated but because people wanted to throw out the government of the day dominated by one political party for about four decades and also the weak political front, United Front government which was based on factions. Even the BJP led government of A.B. Vajpayee which came in power in March 1998 proved unstable because of constant threats from 3 or 4 of its constituent parties.
  - Using this description for comparing the 'new' elite with the 'old' elite and for identifying the present structure of political elite, we could say,
    - the 'intellectual committed politics' of first phase were replaced by 'mediocre, uncommitted, partisan' elite in the following phases.
    - The last one decade political elite are characterized not only by a plurality of structural background but ideologically also they manifest varied shades.
    - Their political affiliations are guided more by their particularists' loyalty rather than by their ideology commitment.

- The old elite wielded power independently, i.e., in their own right as intellectuals, whereas the present day elite are incapable of exercising independent political power.
- Barring a few activity elite, most of the present elite do not believe in militating against the status quo. As such, the task of social engineering becomes far more difficult for those few activist revolutionary elite who are really committed to modernization and believe in economic radicalism, political democratization and social growth.
- Referring to changing elite structure **Yogendra Singh** has stated that "Among the political elite, there existed a high degree of cultural and status homogeneity before Independence. All of them came from upper castes and had an urban, middle-class background of English education. The top group was exposed to foreign culture and was educated there; hence their self-image in terms of expected roles was also that of a generalist rather than a specialist. Following independence, this pattern of elite composition has considerably changed." According to Yogendra Singh,
  - There is increasing influence of rural-based political leaders;
  - There is slight decrease in the influence of leaders drawn from various professions,
  - There is significant increase in the number of persons belonging to the middle class;
  - There is greater articulation of regional and interest-oriented goals in political cultural ideologies, and
  - There is slight breakdown in the exclusiveness or upper castes to the elite position. And what was stated by Yogendra Singh 25 years ago is true even today.

According to Ram Ahuja, in India, the 'governing' elite at a higher political culture base (say national level) are recruited not from the 'non-governing' elite at the same level but from the

governing elite functioning as a lower political cultural base (say state, district or block levels). These elite of lower political base are found holding important posts in state legislatures or state political parties, etc., before becoming office-holders at the higher political base. Once these elite rise from state or district level, they never go back to the old level but continue to function at the higher political level as long as they remain active in politics. This, however, does not mean that they cease to take interest in politics at the level from which they have moved up in the hierarchy. This means, there is no circulation but only an upward movement of the elite. However, if Pareto's theory refers to a process in which one member of the elite group is replaced by another within the group of governing elite, we may concede that his theory does explain the political phenomenon of 'movement' of the elite' in the context of our society also. Bottomore maintains that both conceptions are to be found in Pareto's work, although the former predominates.

According to Ahuja there are two types of movements (not circulations) :

- movement from lower to higher strata of governing elite both functioning at macro-level, and
- movement from sub-category functioning at micro-structural level to sub-category functioning at macro-structural level.

In the former, he found circulation between 'oligarchic' (dominant) and 'subjugant' (dominated) elite and between 'radical, activists and 'passive' activists. Activists functioning at micro-level ultimately joined the ranks of activists at the macro-level with the result that some of the activists already functioning at this level were deprived of their monopoly of power. This elite mobility may be explained in terms of,

- the rise of new political interests, and
- the rise of new elite with more manipulating qualities.

Therefore, both individual and structural factors (caste etc.) are important in the social ascent or

social descent of the elite. **Schumpeter** also believed that both the individual qualities and the social factor are important in the circulation of elite.

The Marxian approach, which is basically non-elitist, views the relations between the elite (privileged class which commands power and wealth) and non-elite (classes which do not possess either of these) as based on conflict, in which effort is made to overthrow the 'power elite' to occupy its position. Ram Ahuja in his study revealed that the process of overthrowing the elite in power and succeeding them is not always based on conflict, but that it involves manipulation, toleration, accommodation, compromise and bargain too. It could, therefore, be maintained that we can neither draw from Pareto's theory of 'circulation of elite', nor from Karl Marx's theory of 'class struggle' to understand the changing character of political elite in India. We have to use different approach for analyzing the recruitment and the changing structure of elite in India.

## REGIONALISM AND DECENTRALIZATION OF POWER

### Regionalism in India

Regionalism is a pre-independence phenomenon. It became predominant in post-independence period. The politics of regionalism started with the implementation of constitutional reform under government of India Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935. The establishment and role of Justice Party in Madras, and to a lesser extent, of Akali Dal in Punjab in pre-independence period are examples of emerging regionalism in India.

After independence there are four major landmarks in the development of regional politics.

- After independence democratic form of government was established. Its main aim was nation-building on the principles of democracy, secularism, national unity and social justice. All parts of the country wanted a fair deal in nation-building. They started competing with each other for their

development. Anything short of expectation led to disenchantment and it resulted in the emergence of regional politics.

- There was integration of the Princely States. Small states were integrated with the big states. People continued to nurse loyalties to old territorial units. This was the most important factor for the success of Princes in elections. The Princes often received overwhelming support in their former territories in the newly created states and relatively much less in other parts of the same state.
- Reorganization of states on linguistic basis also played a very vital role in the development of regional politics. Twenty eight states were reshaped and reduced to 14 states along with centrally administered territories. Later new states were created, then for example Bombay was divided into Gujarat and Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana. But these states were not constituted entirely on linguistic basis. Many other factors like ethnic-cum-economic considerations: (Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura), (Haryana and Punjab), language-cum-culture, (Maharashtra and Gujarat); historical and political factor, (U.P. and Bihar); integration of princely states in and need for viable groupings (M. P. and Rajasthan); language and social distinctiveness (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Mysore, Bengal and Orissa), have played a decisive role in the composition of the Indian federation.
- In spite of all these considerations, language remained the most important factor in the reorganization of states. It became such an important force in the context of regionalism that linguistic regionalism gained ground in Indian politics.
- Another factor which gave rise to regional and parochial tendencies in the country was the personal and selfish ends of politicians. Immediately, after independence the struggle for power started among some parties. For

enhancing their own authority and prestige, the regional and state leaders did not hesitate to weaken the authority of the centre or in some cases of states. The creation of more states meant more governors, chief ministers, M.L.A.'s etc. The professional politicians explored the narrow and sectarian sentiments of ignorant masses for fulfilling their personal and selfish ends. Keeping these landmarks in mind, let us now examine the bases or regional and state politics.

## BASIS OF REGIONALISM

Regionalism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Its bases are varied. Here we will discuss the geographical, historical, cultural, economic and politico-administrative bases of regionalism.

- **Geographical Basis:** Usually people relate their regional identity of certain specific geographical boundaries. After independence integration of Princely States resulted in the merger of small states into new big states. The loyalties of citizens were torn between old territorial boundaries and new territorial structures. As pointed out earlier this was the major factor responsible for the success of princes in elections particularly when they contested from their former territories in the newly created states. However, it would be wrong to over estimate the importance of geographical boundaries. It is true that memories of old geographical boundaries of princely states still haunt the people and are exploited by political leaders but it can hardly be denied that they are yielding place to new and bigger territorial identities like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

**Historical and Social Bases:** Historical and social bases constitute the bedrock of the politics of regionalism. Several components in this category are not only important individually but also in conjunction with each other.

History supported regionalism with cultural heritage, folklore, myths and symbolism. The most striking example is that of Dravida Kazhagam and

the Dravida Munetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. But history cannot be considered as the most important basis of regionalism. Economic and political factors have combined with history to generate regionalism. This can again be seen in the change in the stand of DMK from secession to one of autonomy within the federal framework of the Constitution.

Language is perhaps the most important mark of group identification. Language expresses the shared life, thought structure and value patterns of people. It has the capacity to unite the people together and make them work to improve their common destiny. In this sense linguistic homogeneity strengthens a positive movement.

Establishment of State Reorganization Commission in 1955 was the result of demand for formation of regional units based in linguistic regionalism. SRC could not completely follow the principle of one language one state. This could not be treated as the sole criteria for the demarcation of state boundaries. Bilingual states like Bombay, Punjab, etc., were created. However, splitting up of Bombay in 1960, Punjab in 1966, and Assam since mid-sixties into linguistically more homogeneous states gave further impetus to linguistic regionalism in Indian politics.

If language had been synonymous with region, the political aspiration of every linguistic group would have been satisfied or the formation of separate states. This, however, is neither a reality nor a foreseeable possibility. The first reason being that Hindi speaking people are distributed over a very large territory. Their number is over 200 million. One state cannot be created for them. They have been divided into six states U.P. Bihar, M.P. Rajasthan, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh and a couple of Union territories. There has rarely been a demand for the formation of single state of Hindi-speaking people. On the contrary there have been demands for separate states comprising languages or dialects within this wider linguistic group. This can be found in the occasional demand for a Maithili or for recognition of Rajasthani, Haryanvi, etc., as scheduled languages in the Constitution.

Thus regionalism is closely associated with language but is not synonymous with linguism. Regionalism can take place inside a linguistic state for example creation of Marathi-speaking Maharashtra. The seven states of North East India refer to themselves as seven sisters. They have tried to form common bonds on the basis of their problems of development. They have also tried to develop a regional identity. These seven states include Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. In other words language is not the sole generator of regionalism. It is one of the several bases of regionalism in India. In most cases of linguistic regionalism many inter-related factors are usually found to be working together.

#### **Caste :**

An important example of the caste factor providing impetus to linguistic regionalism can be seen in the case of Tamil Nadu. Tamil regionalism gained ground as a result of non-Brahmin movement. Non-Brahmin castes of Tamil speaking region had been able to provide a powerful, united thrust against Brahmins who had enjoyed unquestioned dominance in economy, society and polity.

#### **Religion**

Religion like caste does not play a significant role except when it is combined with dominance and linguistic homogeneity as in Punjab fed on a sense of religious orthodoxy and economic deprivation as in Jammu and Kashmir.

If casteism reinforced and propelled linguistic regionalism in case of Tamil Nadu, the demand for the formation of Punjabi Suba though presented in linguistic garb had religious overtones. They were mainly responsible for evoking people's political loyalties on massive scale rather than their love for their mother tongue. It is difficult to qualify the mix of communalism and linguism in this particular case. But some studies make it very clear that demand for Punjabi language state was certainly reinforced by regular invocation of Punjab-speaking masses loyalty towards Sikh religion.

Taking into account these three factors i.e. language, caste and religion one can say that the study of regionalism in Punjab and Tamil Nadu makes it very clear that political movements for regional demands were carried out formally in the name of language but in reality they had substantive non-linguistic bases too.

#### **Economic Basis**

Economic factor is the crux of regional politics. India is a developing country. The resources are limited while the demand for resources for the development of various regions is unlimited or disproportionate to resources. Economic policies have led to regional imbalances and wide economic disparities among various regions resulting in discontentment among them. It may be recalled that most of the demands for constituting new states were primarily based on allegedly unfair and unequal distribution of development benefits and expenditure in multi-lingual states. Movement for a separate Uttarakhand state in the hill districts of U.P., a Jharkhand state carved out of parts of Bihar, Orissa and a state of Bodoland comprising a part of Assam are examples of this type. The demands for separate states in these instances are mainly on the belief that these regions have been economically deprived by their respective states. Economic factors have usually assumed prime importance in regional politics.

#### **Politico-administrative Basis**

The politico-administrative basis of regionalism is also important but politics as such does not create regionalism. It only accentuates regionalism. Politicians take advantage of the situation of regional discontentment and unrest. They convert it into movements for strengthening their individual and factional support bases. It is a known fact that fighting within Congress gave rise to Telangana agitation. Shiv Sena was able to flourish in Maharashtra because of the support of Congress bosses. Regional political parties like DMK (Tamil Nadu), Akali Dal (Punjab), and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Jharkhand) are surviving

because of regional sentiments. Border disputes like the one between Maharashtra and Karnataka is also based on regional sentiments. Another important fact of politics of regionalism is the real or assumed charges of political discrimination among various regions by the central ruling elite.

### **Forms of Regionalism in India**

Regional Politics has taken mainly four forms namely:

- Demand for state autonomy
- Supra-state regionalism
- Inter-state regionalism, and
- Intra-state regionalism.

### **Demand for State Autonomy**

The First and the most challenging form of regional politics was in the demand of people in certain states or regions to Indian Union and become independent sovereign states. Such demands occurred soon after independence but they are non-existent now. The important examples in this context are that of the plebiscite by National Front (Kashmir), Akali (not the present parties) in Punjab, Mizo National Front (Lushei Hills of Assam), Nagaland socialist Conference (Naga Hills District of Assam) etc.

### **Supra-state Regionalism**

This implies that more than one state involved in the issue of regionalism. It is an expression of group identity of some states. They take a common stand on the issues of mutual interest vis-à-vis another group of states. The group identity is usually in relation to certain specific issues. It does not in any way imply the total and permanent merger of identity of the states into the identity of group, rivalries, tensions and even conflicts to take place among a few belonging to a group. For example, the rivalry existing between south and north India on such issues as language or location of steel plants illustrates the point. The grouping of the North Eastern States for greater access to economic development is another instance.

South India is separated from North along several differentials. Geographically south is composed of peninsular uplands or Deccan, the mountain ranges of Eastern and Western Ghats and coastal plains. In terms of political history too, south has never been incorporated into the empires of the North. This was done for the first time during the British regime.

After independence a major rift was caused over the issue of the official language for India. The Constitution envisaged the replacement of English by Hindi for official purpose of the Union as the language of communication between the centre and the states and between states. The state legislatures of Indian Union were given authority to adopt one or more languages including Hindi for use as the state language. The Constitution provides that the official language of the union should be Hindi with Devanagari script, with international numerals for a period of 15 years from the commencement of the Constitution. However, Parliament could by law extend the use of English as the link language. The attempt to introduce the provision regarding the official language has generated more intense language rivalry than unity.

The opposition to Hindi found its strongest political expression in the southern states. Most of the people in these states as well as those in the non-Hindi speaking areas of Eastern India objected to the imposition of Hindi. It was feared that their own languages would be ultimately replaced by Hindi, which they considered inferior. The adoption of Hindi as an official language and as a compulsory subject in schools was seen as imposition of a comparatively underdeveloped language upon those whose language contains a richness of thousands of years.

In the 1950s and 60s several movements to oppose the imposition of Hindi sprang up. In 1956, the Academy of Tamil culture convened in Madras the Union Language Convention which stated in a resolution that it would be greatly unjust to make any other language (meaning Hindi) take the place

of English when a population of 100 million are totally unacquainted with that language. Significantly this Convention included representatives from different political organizations i.e. Rajagopalachari (Swatantra), Ramaswami Naicker (D.K.), Rajan (Justice Party), Annadurai (DMK) and many others. At a National Conference held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1958, Rajagopalachari declared that 'Hindi is as much foreign to non-Hindi speaking people as English to protagonists of Hindi.'

### **Inter-state Regionalism**

It is related with state boundaries and involves overlapping of one or more state identities which threaten their interests. River water disputes, in general, and other issues like the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute, in particular can be cited as examples.

### **Intra-state Regional Politics or Sub-regionalism**

This refers to regionalism which exists within a state of the Indian Union? It embodies the desire of a part of a state for the identity and self-development. It may also reflect a notion of deprivation or exploitation of a part of the state at the expense of another. This type of regionalism can be found in many parts of India. The important examples of this kind of sub-regionalism are a Vidharbha in Maharashtra, a Saurashtra in Gujarat, a Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, an East U.P in Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF REGIONALISM FOR INDIAN POLITICS**

Regionalism is not significant merely as disintegrating force. Regionalism is not opposed to national integration. Both can exist together in a creative partnership. Both are in favour of development.

- Regionalism stresses the development of a region and national integration for the development of the nation as a whole. If we want to reconcile the competing claims of regionalism and national integration the political system of the country should remain federal and democratic.

- Regionalism is not disruptive of national solidarity. The important condition for national solidarity is that nationalism should be able to hold the different types of regional sub-nationalities together. In other words, there should be healthy reconciliation between regionalism and nationalism.
- Regionalism can make federalism a greater success. In this aspect the accentuation of regional identities should not become problematic. It is quite natural that regional communities, who are conscious of their distinctive culture, should interact with federal government on the basis of more equal partnership. It will reduce the centralizing tendencies in a nation and power will shift from the centre to the states.

Conceived in any form, regionalism and sub-regionalism are unavoidable in a country as vast and diverse as India. Their existence is not only an important condition for the expression of genuine national sentiment, but it is logically generated because of the establishment of the nation state. Nothing is, therefore, more basic to the concept of federalism than regionalism and sub-regionalism.

### **DECENTRALIZATION IN INDIA**

Decentralization means sharing of decision-making authority with the lower levels in institutions and organization. It is called democratic as this sharing is based on the basic principle of democracy and democratization. It is argued that decentralization is essential for the functioning of a democratic system at different levels.

States in India are as large as independent countries of Europe. In terms of population, Uttar Pradesh is bigger than Russia; Maharashtra is about as big as Germany. Many of these States are internally very diverse. There is thus a need for power sharing within these States. Federal power sharing in India needs another tier of government, below that of the State governments. This is the rationale for decentralisation of power. Thus, resulted a third-tier of government, called local government.

When power is taken away from Central and State governments and given to local government, it is called decentralisation. The basic idea behind decentralization is that:

- There are a large number of problems and issues which are best settled at the local level.
- People have better knowledge of problems in their localities.
- They also have better ideas on where to spend money and how to manage things more efficiently.
- Besides, at the local level it is possible for the people to directly participate in decision-making. This helps to inculcate a habit of democratic participation.
- Local government is the best way to realize one important principle of democracy, namely local self-government.

The need for decentralization was recognized in our Constitution. Since then, there have been several attempts to decentralize power to the level of villages and towns. Panchayats in villages and municipalities in urban areas were set up in all the States. But these were directly under the control of state governments. Elections to these local governments were not held regularly. Local governments did not have any powers or resources of their own. Thus, there was very little decentralisation in effective terms.

A major step towards decentralization was taken in 1992. The Constitution was amended to make the third-tier of democracy more powerful and effective.

- Now it is constitutionally mandatory to hold regular elections to local government bodies.
- Seats are reserved in the elected bodies and the executive heads of these institutions for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.
- At least one-third of all positions are reserved for women.

- An independent institution called the State Election Commission has been created in each State to conduct Panchayat and municipal elections.
- The State government is required to share some powers and revenue with local government bodies. The nature of sharing varies from State to State.

Rural local government is popularly known by the name **Panchayati raj**. Each village, or a group of villages in some States, has a Gram Panchayat. This is a council consisting of several ward members, often called punch, and a president or sarpanch. They are directly elected by all the adult population living in that ward or village. It is the decision-making body for the entire village. The Panchayat works under the overall supervision of the gram sabha. All the voters in the village are its members. It has to meet at least twice or thrice in a year to approve the annual budget of the Gram Panchayat and to review the performance of the Gram Panchayat.

The local government structure goes right up to the district level. A few gram panchayats are grouped together to form what is usually called a Panchayat samiti or block or mandal. The members of this representative body are elected by all the Panchayat members in that area. All the Panchayat Samitis or mandals in a district together constitute the zilla (district) parishad. Most members of the zilla parishad are elected. Members of the Lok Sabha and MLAs of that district and some other officials of other district level bodies are also its members. Zilla parishad chairperson is the political head of the zilla parishad.

Similarly, local government bodies exist for urban areas as well. Municipalities are set up in towns. Big cities are constituted into municipal corporations. Both municipalities and Municipal Corporation are controlled by elected bodies consisting of people's representatives. Municipal chairperson is the political head of the municipality. In a municipal corporation such an officer is called the mayor.



### **Benefits of Decentralization of Power**

- It helps to empower social groups which traditionally have been weak and deprived.
- Decentralization is particularly necessary for a country like ours which is large in size and complex in socio-cultural settings. Diversity exists in India in terms of religion, language, culture.
- Social complexities require decentralization for the purpose of planning and administration.

### **Problems in Decentralization of Power India**

The basic principle on which the Panchayati Raj system has been envisaged is that, whatever can be done best at a lower level must necessarily be done at that level and not at the upper level, and only those things which cannot be done at the lower level must go to a higher level.

But it must be stated here that the first five or ten years of the new panchayats and municipalities is a period in which lot of trial and error is bound to take place. It is a "gestation period" because; it is not easy to change the mindset that has dominated that last six decades of independence. How we can shorten this gestation period should be the major concern of all concerned. Let me identify some issues which pose problems for panchayats to become "institutions of self-government".

- In the State Panchayat and Municipal Acts after 1993, one finds that the States have accepted the letter of the Seventy-third or Seventy-fourth Amendments rather than their spirit. In many State Acts, civil servants are given powers indirectly over the elected body. Transfer of activities and functions to panchayats is taking place very slowly. Only in places where strong demands from below— the Village Assembly (Gram Sabha), Village Panchayats and District Panchayats as well as enlightened citizens' organizations come up, attempts to develop powers are taking place.
- Another problem is that although States have enacted Conformity Acts, many States have

not formulated rules and bye-laws for the day-to-day functioning of Panchayats. Added to this, the necessary infrastructural facilities are lacking for panchayats in many States.

- The reluctance of State level politicians to recognize the importance of the lower levels of governance, their autonomy, their powers and their areas of functioning, is creating a serious problem. The Ministers, the MLAs and senior political leaders are worried that the power they enjoyed so far will diminish if the panchayats and municipalities become powerful. The State level leaders do not like the leadership to emerge from the lower levels, which could pose challenges of them in due course. They do not want active and functioning local bodies to be 'nurseries' of leadership. Therefore, the MLAs put hurdles in the smooth functioning of panchayats to prevent them from blossoming into full-fledged local governments. In Orissa, when the new government came to power in early 1995 it was decided to dissolve the duly elected panchayats and municipalities. The real reason for this action was that the MLAs were impatient to wrest full control of large sums of money coming to the panchayats through the Central Government schemes for rural development. The case of the recent drought relief measures was no different. If panchayats function properly with a large number of elected representatives and under the critical eye of the Opposition at the local level, people will become aware of their rights through regular participation in the panchayat programmes and activities, resulting in the decline of the powerful position the MLAs enjoy today.
- The government officials and government employees prefer to work with a distant control mechanism that is, the State capital. They do not want to be closely supervised under Panchayati Raj. Therefore, their non-cooperative attitude towards elected panchayat members is a major issue. The

the Constitutions. It has the effect of interfering not merely with the federal scheme, but also with the healthy constitutional principle of separation of powers.

## SECULARIZATION

Secularization is a process of social change through which the influence of religion declines in public affairs. Religion is replaced by other ways of explaining facts and events. The importance of religion in regulating social life decreases and it is taken over by utilitarian consideration. The interpretation of reality is in terms of reason and rationality. When secularization advances, science replaces religion as the primary approach to understand natural and social worlds. Thus, the term secularization implies that issues which were previously regarded as religious are no longer the same.

- It has rightly been suggested that secularization in India is the result of almost a century of Westernization in the country.
- The process started with the consolidation of British rule and gradually picked-up momentum with the development of transport and communication.
- Industrialization and urbanization increased spatial mobility. The people migrated from rural areas to urban areas and from towns to cities in large number.
- The spread of education changed value preferences which in turn furthered the cause of secularization.

Both Sanskritisation and secularization are simultaneously operating in contemporary India. Explaining the reason M.N. Srinivas writes, "Of the two, secularization is the more general process, affecting all Indians, while Sanskritisation affects only Hindus and tribal groups. Broadly, it would be true to say that secularization is more marked among the urban and educated groups and Sanskritisation among the lower Hindu caste and tribes."

Historically, secularization of Indian social and cultural life became intense with the new developments in social and cultural arena.

- The struggle for freedom especially in its Gandhian phase unleashed several forces that increased secularization. The civil disobedience campaign launched by Mahatma Gandhi mobilized the masses.
- Likewise, mobilization of people against social evils in Hindu society such as untouchability also contributed to increased secularization.
- This process was further strengthened with the attaining of independence in 1947, and with the adoption in 1950 of a Republican Constitution, India emerged as a secular state.
- The Constitution adopted in free India guarantees freedom of religion. It declares that there will be no discrimination on the basis of religion in employment and education.
- The introduction of universal adult franchise and the equality of citizens before law were some other steps undertaken to ensure the secular character of the Indian State.

## Secularization of Indian social and cultural life

The secularization process has affected every aspect of personal and social life. Some changes are, however, apparent whereas some others may be disguised. Its effects are not uniformly felt. For example, urban dweller is generally much more influenced by it than the rural folk, educated sections are deeply moved compared to the illiterates. Similarly, some regions of the country are more exposed to the secularization process than others.

- The secularization process has made its most effective impact on the ideas of pollution and purity. We are already aware that ideas of pollution and purity are central the lives of people, in general and among the Hindus in particular. The notion of pollution and purity determines the hierarchy of castes. It defines the social distance between various castes. Some castes are considered superior and

others inferior because some are considered pure and others are taken as relatively impure. This idea is not only visible in the structure of caste hierarchy but also in food, occupation, styles of life and daily routine. Meat eating and consumption of liquor are considered polluting but vegetarianism and teetotalism are pure practice. A similar distinction is made in occupations. Occupations that involve manual labour are regarded lower than those which do not require such work. The most conspicuous expression of the prevailing notions of pollution and purity has been the inhuman practice of untouchability in the caste system.

- The process of secularization has considerably reduced and weakened the ideas of pollution and purity.
- People no longer try to know the caste background of fellow passengers in a bus or a train. They hardly bother about it while visiting restaurants and hotels.
- The rules of pollution are not observed at the place of work particularly in the urban settings.
- The styles of life are influenced more by the requirements of jobs and occupations than by caste and religion.
- The orthodox elements of caste and religion are gradually losing prestige in the face of growing secularization of life and culture. As a result of increased secularization and mobility caste system has ceased to sustain those values that were either considered essential.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that while religious values attached to the caste system is disappearing; its role in secular domains like politics is increasing. Now, people are being mobilized on caste lines for political purposes. It is a fascinating sociological question, which needs to be probed, but is currently beyond our scope.

## **Secularization of the family system and village community**

While the gradual structural transformation in family produces change in interpersonal relationships, other elements of family life are equally affected by the process of secularization.

- Ceremonies and rituals performed in family such as marriage rituals, funeral rites and worship of family deities all are assuming a different character. They are either curtailed or shortened to suit the convenience of the concerned family. Now, some of these ceremonies are used on occasions to display and advertise affluence. The ostentation associated with wedding receptions has nothing to do with religious practices, which were earlier observed at the time of marriage.
- Likewise several community festivals have acquired new meaning and observances. *Baisakhi* in Punjab is celebrated more as a cultural festival than a religious one. People from different religious groups join and enjoy its festivity.
- *Durgapuja* and *Dussehra* have assumed new character and their religious rituals have receded into the background. Hundreds of pandals are tastefully decorated displaying various contemporary social and political issues. The latest trend in organizing *Iftar* party during the holy month of *Ramzan* is also a pointer in this respect.
- The village community is also influenced by changes taking place in economic, political and cultural fields. The internal differentiation created by economic forces has altered the harmonious community feelings among villagers.
- Levels of aspirations have heightened in the wake of numerous developmental measures undertaken by the government.
- The attitude of surrender before fate and divine will, commonly found among the poor and deprived, has been replaced by the attitude of defiance. They are the products of the process of secularization.