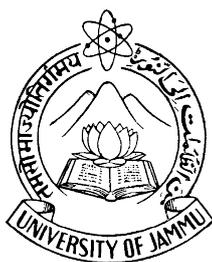


Directorate of Distance Education

**UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU
JAMMU**



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

M.A.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

UNIT: I-IV

SEMESTER - II

COURSE NO. : POL-203

STATE POLITICS IN INDIA

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STATE POLITICS IN INDIA

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1.1 STATE POLITICS IN INDIA: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

1.1.0 Objectives

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1.1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson you will study the reasons for the emergence of State Politics as a distinct field in studying political development in India and how various scholars are used different theoretical perspectives to analyse politics in various states of India. After going through this lesson, you will be able to know:

- The importance states gained in the political development of India from 1960s onwards;

- The reasons for the emergence of State Politics as a distinct field to understand political phenomenon in India;
- the contributions of various scholars in providing theoretical framework to understand state politics in India; and
- the broader trends in state politics of contemporary India.

1.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of 'State Politics' as a distinct academic field emerged in India in 1960s. There are many reasons for this, one obviously being the moment from single party dominant polity to the plural multi-party system. From late 1960s onwards many splinter groups of Congress Party started gaining their own identity and foothold in various states of India. The reorganization of India into various linguistic states also significantly contributed to this process. During the 1970s the newly emerged forces gained further momentum and seriously challenged the authority of the Congress not only at the Centre but also in many states. By 1980s this led to the raise of many regional parties in various states of India, from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in down South to Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir in up North. This changing composition of political landscape in India obviously demanded serious attention from the scholars of various disciplines more so of Political Scientists. Hence, many Political Scientists started studying state politics while focusing on historical identity of the state, its political status before independence, its role in the freedom struggle, the impact of integration of princely states or of linguistic reorganization, geographical location, infrastructure manifesting itself in social pluralism, religious, regional and caste dynamics, the level and pattern of economic development, human resources, the level of education and urbanization, etc.

To understand the dynamics of State Politics in India, many scholars attempted to develop theoretical frameworks through which the realities at the ground level can be captured. Some of the important scholars who have provided conceptual tools to understand contemporary politics in India and its states are Myron Weiner, Iqbal Narain, Rudolfs, Paul Brass, Rajni Kothari, etc. These scholars are analysed political process using various theoretical frameworks such as Democratic Theory, Political Development, Marxism, Post-Marxism and Post-Colonialism, etc.

Myron Weiner organised two seminars in USA, one at University of Chicago in 1961 and other at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1964. Myron Weiner published the proceedings of the MIT conference as a book, *State Politics in India* (1968), the first one on state politics. This was followed by Iqbal Narain's edited book with the same title in 1976 in which an article on state politics of Jammu and Kashmir also appeared for the first time. These two books signalled emergence of State Politics as a distinct academic field. In this introductory lesson we will study these developments in the field of state politics in detail and their importance in familiarising us with diverse patterns and complexities of Indian polity.

1.1.2 STUDYING STATE POLITICS: A FRAMEWORK

State Politics assumes an important dimension in any federal system where states operate as units of the nation, though not as independent and truly autonomous political entities. The creation of a federal structure implies the existence of territorial, cultural, linguistic, religious and socio-economic differences among the people of a nation, which make the states, differ greatly in the degree to which they fit this pattern. In the organization and spirit of their politics the states vary markedly. It is true that the impact of national policies and parties powerfully influence the form and behaviour of state systems. But it is equally true that this impact strikes different states differently, contributing to the oddities and variations in organisation and spirit of state politics. State politics, thus, provides an arena for basic and exclusive study and research.

However, the pre-eminent structure in India, characterised by a distinct bias in favour of the Centre of Union seems to remain a pertinent factor for why the Indian states failed to attract scholarly attention for a long time. But more than the uniformity in the constitutional structures and the unitarized federal set-up, a considerable disinterestedness displayed in the study of State politics may be attributed to a variety of other important reasons. It is argued quite often that states as political systems are artificial categories for analysis. Unlike various other segments of the policy, they are not "natural" functional entities. It is not without a cause that international scholarly attention, with quite a few exceptions, has been directed only to the national systems of new states and not to the subordinate units.

There are many other reasons which are responsible for late arrival of State Politics as a distinct and autonomous field to analyse the political process in Indian states. The following section will pay attention to explain these reasons.

1.1.3 EVOLUTION OF STATE POLITICS IN INDIA: THE EARLY PHASE

The study of State Politics in India is one of the neglected areas till 1960s. Unlike other aspects related to India, the scholarship on India more or less neglected studying the provincial politics during British period though British initially introduced a façade of democracy at the Municipal or local bodies. The constitutional and institutional politics in British Indian provinces were also largely eclipsed by the nationalist movement politics, notwithstanding the fact that the British Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935 introduced federal politics and institutions on India's body politic. The study of State Politics remained an underdeveloped area in the early period of independence, especially till the time Nehru was the Prime Minister.

One of the India's known scholar on State Politics, M. P. Singh, gives the following reasons for the neglect of State Politics in India during the early period of independence. **First**, the nationalist spirit and fervour of the freedom movement continuous to dominate the Nehru era, and for this reason all that really mattered was the politics at the national level. **Second**, the Congress dominance at the centre as well as state levels submerged politics in the states under the grand national patterns. Though mass movements for the creation of linguistic states in various parts of the country during the 1950s and 1960s briefly brought state politics to forefront, but once such demands were accepted, the leaders of these movements in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat tended to rejoin the Congress Party. And, the one-party dominance was easily restored. The splits in Congress Party in the late 1960s and the late 1970s were rather of relatively short spans of time after which Congress dominance was restored. **Third**, the Nehru and Indira Gandhi eras and Rajiv Gandhi years were characterized by a great deal of centralization or "nationalization" of the Indian political system. State politics were then either a subsidiary arena or were parts to national politics. **Fourth**, the distribution of powers and financial resources in the Indian federal system is heavily tilted in favour of the centre, which makes the state governments heavily dependent on Centre. The separation of powers and functions did not prohibit the union government to spend its money even in areas that belong to state jurisdiction. **Fifth**, even though law and order is supposed to be an exclusive state concern, the 42nd constitutional amendment (1976) has made the deployment of armed forces and central paramilitary forces in aid of civil power in a state an exclusive union competence. Incidence of internal disturbances and terrorist activities by external and indigenous groups has resulted in a great deal of

increase in the coercive power of governments and centralization in the political system. These developments tend to overshadow the state governments and subordinate state politics to the imperatives of national politics.

Due to the factors mentioned above, studying politics at state level was not gained the momentum immediately after the independence. However, Sudha Pai, one of the important scholar on State Politics in contemporary times, pointed out that a few studies which focused attention on the states did take place in the 1950s and 1960s. The reorganization of states and linguistic problems are main focus of these studies. A number of election studies were also conducted. The most important being S V Kogekar and R Park's study of the 1951-52 General elections under the auspices of the Indian Political Science Association (IPSA) and studies of the 1957 mid-term elections in Kerala. Kogekar and Park pointed out that the states provided far better level for analysis than the Centre. Similarly, the government organisation of many of the states was also studied.

From methodological point of view, according to Sudha Pai, most studies were conducted under the formal-legal approach. This approach led to many studies which provided an excellent description of the formal structures of the politico-administrative system. However, the use of formal-legal method has its own weaknesses since it doesn't factor the actual functioning of state governments and political processes in the states. As a result, many important political changes or developments in the states were largely ignored. We also find that some areas were hardly touched upon at all, such as leadership patterns in the states, decision-making process in the various branches of state government, economic disparities between and within states, etc.

However, the studies conducted in 1960s somewhat moved beyond legal-formalist approach to document important political developments in the states. The papers presented at All-India Seminar on State Politics in Jaipur in December 1965 were published in *State Politics in India* edited by Iqbal Narain. This marks the beginning of a systematic study of state politics. Mention must also be made of Myron Weiner's edited volume *State Politics in India* published around the same time. The importance of these volumes lies in the fact that they provided a starting point. A history of the formation of many states, their politico-administrative structure, their economic condition, state party systems, patterns of leadership and social stratification etc. were focussed on in detail for the first time. These proved useful for conducting more in-depth studies later on.

Most importantly, the need to study state politics from the ‘state’ rather than the ‘national’ perspective was first felt by the Committee on State Politics in India, “an informal group” organised by Myron Weiner, under the auspices of the Committee on South Asia of the Association for Asian Studies. The conceptual framework of state politics in the U.S.A. was developed by V. O. Key, Jr., and by the latter part of the fifties and the first part of the sixties, the study of state politics had re-entered the mainstream of political research and experienced changes similar to those of other fields in political science.

1.1.4 RISE IN STUDIES OF STATE POLITICS

There has been paradigm shifts in the politics and political economy of India since the late 1980s and early 1990s which have enhanced the role and autonomy of state governments, civil society, and the market forces. The arena of state politics has in this process acquired an unprecedented importance. Many scholars from this period onwards state politics have really come into their own for the first time in the contemporary history and politics of India.

Since the beginning of 1990s attention has been more sharply focused upon the states because state governments, more than the central government are in charge of functions relating to public welfare and the political system is so structured that a large part of political activity takes place in the states. This underlines the importance of a theoretical framework would provide a direction, a focus and a framework of analysis to the increasing research on State Politics.

According to Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Palshikar, the state politics has broken free of the logic of national politics and has acquired a rhythm and logic of its own from the beginning of 1990s due to various developments. Some of these developments are mentioned here.

First, states have emerged as the effective arena of political choice. If the people voted in state assembly elections held in 1970s and 1980s as if they were choosing the prime minister, they now vote in the parliamentary elections as if they are choosing their chief minister. Though the rise of Narendra Modi in national politics has altered this trend to some extent, however, trends in the state elections from 2019 onwards pointed out the importance and popularity of state level leadership. The popularity of Narendra Modi has not worked in favour of the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra Assembly elections in gaining the majority.

Second, the nature of political choice now varies from state to state. We have moved a long way from the old Congress vs. Opposition scenario that was replicated all over the country. Nor have we entered a multi-party system in all the states. At the state level we can find all kinds of contests: bipolar, triangular, four cornered or even more fragmented.

Third, 'regional parties' or state-wide parties, have become more salient than ever before. The regional parties are now playing a larger role in the functioning of national politics. Though the BJP has massive mandate in the Lok Sabha, however, it has to negotiate and use all its political skills to gain support from the regional parties to get Bills passed in the Rajya Sabha. The state units of national parties too are more independent, at least in terms of the issues, strategies and styles, if not leadership, than used to be the case.

Fourth, governmental outcomes have become more variegated at the state level. Citizens' access to various goods and services varies across the country, within each state, district and town and even village. But the most significant variation now is the one among different states, which is a function of how everyday politics, including social movements and political struggles, relates to the governmental apparatus.

Fifth, state level politics is freer of the control of national politics and is often in a position to dictate terms to national politics. This happens in the most visible manner when state-wide parties determine the agenda of national politics or enjoy an upper hand in their bargain with national parties.

Finally, a long-term process of differentiation of political community has ensured that the citizens' identity has crystallized around states. The reorganization of states along linguistic lines had set off this process. But a political community by that time had not emerged along the boundaries of states. The recent era in the evolution of democratic politics has witnessed the emergence of states as the markers of political identity. Each state has developed a distinctive political culture, its own vocabulary of politics. Some of the long-term political trends and patterns have also differentiated along state lines.

The 1989 Lok Sabha election, in particular, greatly accelerated the federalization process throughout the country, when a multiparty system with federal coalition / minority governments was ushered in at the national level. In the new party system regional parties have gained considerable power at the cost of national parties that have been diminished, fragmented, or have been unable to grow beyond a certain threshold of power. Led by one of the national parties like the Janata Dal, Bharatiya Janata Party, or Indian National

Congress, federal coalition governments have been particularly vulnerable to the making and breaking power of the regional parties. Whereas regional parties accounted for 8.10 percent of votes and 6.95 percent of parliamentary seats in the popularly elected house before the 1952 general election, their corresponding shares have gone up respectively to 14.39 percent and 27.97 percent in 2009 general election.

1.1.5 DIVERGENT THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVES

The development of State Politics as an autonomous space to study political processes also, simultaneously, led to the many scholars opting for a variety of theoretical perspective to analyse developments in India's states. Though most of the scholars opted the dominant theoretical approach, democratic / political development, to analyse the political process, however, others are used the lenses of Marxism, Post-colonialism, etc. as an analytical tools to document political process.

1.1.6 DEMOCRATIC / POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT / SYSTEMS / MODERNIZATION THEORIES

Most of the scholars worked on state politics in India, more or less, broadly analysed the political processes from the dominant theoretical paradigm Modernization of Political Development. Developed in American Universities by scholars like Lucian Pye, Almond and Powell, Samuel Huntington, the political development or Systems approach focuses a set of categories, viz. political culture, political socialization, political mobilization, political development to analyse the political progression in "Traditional" vs "Modernist" paradigm. The scholarly works of Myron Weiner, Iqbal Narain, Rajni Kothari, Rudolfs, Atul Kohli, etc. are mostly fall under this broader category.

1.1.6.1 MYRON WEINER: ELITE VS MASS CULTURES

Myron Weiner was Ford International Professor of Political Science at MIT and a specialist in the fields of political development, political demography, migration, ethnic conflict, and child labour. He was one of the early thinkers on the problems of democracy in newly independent states. His award-winning book, *Party Building in a New Nation*, detailed how the Congress Party operated in five districts to ensure popular participation and to accommodate local interests and thereby reduce social tensions in the whole country. He

was deeply involved in the comparative study of electoral behaviour in developing countries. As much as he valued democracy, he also clearly saw that modernization, rather than eroding ethnic and religious identities, could strengthen such loyalties and thus intensify internal conflicts. He documented the problems of ethnic conflict in *Sons of the Soil*.

In 1963, Myron Weiner published an article that regarded as one of his most important short pieces on Indian politics. In that article, he posited the existence in India of what he called two 'political cultures', one that manifested itself in the districts and localities, 'both urban and rural', and the other that inhabited the national capital, whose denizens occupied the Indian Civil Service, the Planning Commission, and the leading body in the governing party, the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress. Weiner clearly thought carefully when he chose names for these two cultures. He rejected the idea that one was a modern culture, the other traditional because, as he said, "there are aspects of both modernity and traditionalism penetrating both views". He chose instead the terms, 'elite' political culture and 'mass' political culture. The former was elite not only or even primarily in social background, but in its outlook which, despite Weiner's recognition that it contained traditional components, was modernistic and rationalistic.

The mass political culture reflected the social organisation and attitudes of the bulk of the country's population; local politicians who inhabited this culture understood and knew how to operate within the categories of caste, tribe, ethnicity, and local and regional languages. The elite culture operated largely in English, had a vision for the country as a whole, and was attuned as much to the outside, western world as to Indian society. Weiner thought it inevitable that the two cultures would clash as they expanded in opposite directions towards each other. He thought there was a danger to be feared from such a clash, which might arise especially from the conflict between the 'utopian' elements in the elite modernising vision and the orientation of politicians in the mass political culture towards their caste, kin, and ethnic groups and the demands for 'patronage and power' that emanated from them and their clients.

According to Weiner both cultures were also expanding: the elite culture was radiating out from its political centre in New Delhi, while the mass culture was expanding from the localities up to "the state legislative assemblies, state governments and state administrations". This resulted in the emergence of state as an important factor in the political arithmetic of Indian politics.

Recognising this reality, he organised two conferences on state politics and brought out a book out of it. He prepared a framework for the authors to analyse the political process within the state. The essays in his book compare and analyse the political processes of eight of the seventeen states. The contributors have attempted to treat the various states within a common framework, illuminating the changing patterns of political participation in India, the problem of integration within the states, the many state party systems that they have developed, and the performance of the state governments. Myron Weiner's approach treats each state as a constituent unit within a larger system, but nonetheless also as a separate political system. Thus, he says that the states can be studied "as constituent units of a larger system, and the units themselves are large enough to be studied as a total system". In fact, he tries to describe and analyse "the political process in a single state" and relates that process to (a) the socio-economic environment in which politics occurs, and (b) the performance of the Government.

Myron Weiner's framework, thus, reflects distinct biases towards the 'systems approach', but with an explicit difference. He has built Systems approach "with a difference in so far as it insists on its application with a development and hence, essentially dynamic perspective." While developing the framework, he delineates the conceptual image with five determinants: institutional, physiological levels of politics, socio-economic and political, and the elite structure. He then proceeds to construct a three-dimensional framework consisting of the contextual, structural and operational. In the contextual dimension, he includes following components: 1) history of a state; 2) the geographical locale; 3) infrastructure manifesting itself in social pluralism; 4) the level and pattern of economic development; 5) human resources; 6) the level of education; and 7) urbanisation. The structural dimension, according to Myron Weiner, consists of formal constitutional structure (Governor, Chief Minister, Legislature, political institutions and political parties, pressure groups, administration framework, etc.). However, Weiner limits the third category of operational dynamics to the role orientation of the actors, political behaviour and functional dimension, etc.

1.1.6.2 IQBAL NARAIN: THREE DIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK

An analytic framework evolved by an indigenous political scientist like Iqbal Narain for the study of state politics in India, though draws heavily upon "systemic approach", is added by quite a few relevant dimensions. He has built it "with a difference in so far as it insists on its application with a development and hence, essentially dynamic perspective".

He organised seminar in Rajasthan and invited scholars from most of the states in India to present a study on their respective states. As already pointed out, the State of Jammu and Kashmir also covered in this project and a first academic study on State Politics of Jammu and Kashmir was undertaken. He developed a framework and asked the participant to present papers on their respective state politics following the same framework. While developing the framework, Iqbal Narain delineated the conceptual image which consists of no less than five determinants: institutional, physiological levels of politics, socio-economic and political, and the elite structure. He then proceeds to construct a three-dimensional framework consisting of the contextual, structural and operational. In the contextual dimension, he includes following components : (1) history of a state: historical identity of the state, its political status before independence, its role in the freedom- struggle, and the impact of integration of princely states or of linguistic re-organisation: (ii) the geographical locale; (iii) infra-structure manifesting itself in social pluralism, (iv) the level and pattern of economic development; (v) human resources; (vi) the level of education; and (vii) urbanisation. The structural dimension, according to him, consists of formal constitutional structure-office of the Governor, office of the Chief Minister, the Ministry and the Legislature; political institutions and processes- political parties, pressure groups and elections; and administrative framework. In the third category of operational dynamics the author limits himself to role orientation of the actors, political behaviour and functional dimension having a distinctive job connotation.

Though the analytical framework propounded by Iqbal Narain for the study of state politics in India draws heavily upon systematic approach, it is added by quite a few relevant dimensions. The analytic framework informing Iqbal Narain's collection of papers view the political system of a state in India as a point of confluence of national, state and local politics, as a system of inter-connection and interactions between the governing-elite structure on the one hand and political institutions, process and policies on the other. State politics emergences in Iqbal Narian's book, basically as a case of linkage politics and its future are also the prospects of democratic polity in the country, as a whole, would depend on a movement away from politics of self- preservation of the elites to a politics of welfare of the masses; from a politics of drift to a politics of purposiveness; from politics of status quo to politics of socio-economic change; and above all, from politics of promise to politics of performance.

For Narain, the conceptual framework can be conjured up in terms of the nature of state politics which, in turn, leads to a discussion of its determinants. The most important

determinants of state politics in India are: institutional, physiological levels of politics, socio-economic, political and the elite structure. He then proceeds to construct a three dimensional framework consisting of the contextual, structural and operational dimensions.

In contextual dimensions, he includes the components such as History of state, historical identity of the state, its political status before independence, its role in the freedom struggle, the impact of the integration of princely states or of linguistic reorganization, the geographical locale, infrastructure manifesting itself in social pluralism, the level and patterns of economic development, human resources and the level of education.

The structural dimension, according to him consists of the formal and constitutional structure like office of the Governor, Office of the Chief Ministers the ministry and the legislature, political institutions, parties and pressure groups and elections and administrative framework.

In the operational dimensions, Narain limits himself to the role orientation of the actors in the drama of state politics. He also discusses the behavioural aspect and functional aspect in the context of state politics.

1.1.6.3 RAJNI KOTHARI: CONGRESS AS A SYSTEM

The most influential account of the Indian politics from 'system' perspective was produced by Rajni Kothari in his *Politics in India* (1970). His theoretical tools were largely structural-functional. He identified the 'dynamic core' of the system of political institutions in India in the Congress Party.

The whole system worked through the dominance of the Congress. It was a differentiated system, functioning along the organizational structure of the party but connecting at each level with the parallel structure of government, allowing for the dominance of a political centre as well as dissent from the peripheries, With opposition parties functioning as continuations of dissident Congress groups, the emphasis being on coalition-building and consensus-making at each level and on securing the legitimacy of the system as a whole. Through an accommodative system such as this, the political centre consisting of a modernizing elite was shown to be using the powers of the state to transform society and promote economic development. Kothari gave it the simple name 'Congress system'.

Kothari's framework was criticized at the time from different perspectives - for overvaluing the consensual character of the system, for overestimating the autonomy of the elite, for taking far too gradualist a view of social and political change, and so on: But its usefulness was overtaken by the events of the 1970s. The rise of militant oppositional movements and the increasing use of the repressive apparatus of the state, culminating in the Emergency, were clearly phenomena that went beyond the consensual model of the Congress system. From the 1980s, Kothari himself developed entirely different frameworks for presenting empirical as well as normative accounts of Indian politics.

However, Rajni Kothari in his later writings has attempted to develop a normative framework that serves less as an explanation and more as a critique of the present political system. He notes that unlike in the early decades after Independence, the national political elite has lost its autonomy and the state has ceased to be an agent of social change and has instead become more and more repressive. His argument is that there is a need now to assert, through grassroots movements and non-party political formations, the autonomous force of civil society over a repressive and increasingly unrepresentative state.

1.1.6.4 RUDOLFS: DEPENDENT CAPITAL AND FRAGMENTED LABOUR

In 1987, in their book, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, the Rudolphs examined more closely the internal functioning of organised groups or, put another way, groups in the organised sectors of the economy, particularly organised labour and organised capital and minimised their potential threat to the processes of modernisation, public order, and economic development. They argued to the contrary that the trade unions were so divided, 'fragmented' and competitive with each other that they lacked the ability to have a major impact on 'national policy'. On the other side, 'organised capital', operating in a restricted, but protected economic environment, was largely dependent upon government and could not and, in fact, did not oppose the thrust of the economic development strategy of import substitution.

Thus, both organised labour and organised capital, in the Rudolphs' understanding, emerged as the weaker parties in a triangular relationship with the Indian state, which had the capacity to prevail over these and other organised interests not only because the state was the strongest party, but also because it had "won wide acceptance for its claim that it has a special responsibility for nation building and economic development," in other words, that it had legitimacy that overrode the interests of organised groups such as labour and

capital. In short, the Rudolphs, while coining the term 'weak-strong' for the Indian state, took the view that the state was strong enough to prevail against such interests.

1.1.7 MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

The Marxist approach to understand any society and changes therein, distinguishes itself by emphasizing the need to initiate any investigation of social phenomenon in the context of the basic activity carried on by human beings viz. production through instruments of production, to extract and fabricate products from the nature to essential for the survival and persistence of human species. Marxist approach considers property relations as crucial because they shape the purpose, nature, control, direction, and objectives underlying the production. Further, property relations determine the norms about who shall get how much and on what grounds.

Thus, Marxist approach to understand post-independent Indian society will focus on the specific type of property relations which existed on the eve of independence and which are being elaborating legal-normative notions as well in terms of working out actual policies pursued for development and transformation of Indian society into a prosperous, developed one. The Marxist approach adopting the criteria of taking property relations to define the nature of society will help in understanding the type of society, the class character of the state and the specificness of the path of development with all the implications.

Accordingly, Marxists argue that contrary to the spirit of the Indian Constitution that guarantees social, economic, political equality, India has remained poor with extreme inequalities. The inequalities of wealth and income distribution are increasing day after day. In the context of the caste system inequalities have assumed sharper, more anguished forms. Concentration of assets, resources and income is growing at a very rapid rate even among the capitalist groups. Unemployment has increased at a very rapid rate. In the context of market and money economy, such a dimension of unemployment reveals an alarming growth of inequality and misery. Educational opportunities are so created as to be accessible to those who have resources to buy them. This trends to accentuate social inequality in the country.

Many Marxists, in their studies, contend that the State, with the growing discontent and assertion of the masses is increasingly retrenching its welfare functions, expanding its repressive functions and is resorting to measures which curb the civil liberties and democratic rights at an accelerated tempo. In this way, the Marxist scholars argue, Marxism has a

immense capability in enabling us to understand social, economic and political developments in a given society by exclusively focusing on property relation, place of capital and labour in these relations and the role of the State in shaping these relations. Similarly, the Marxist approach will help to understand the dynamics of rural, urban, educational and other developments, better as it will assist the exploration of these phenomena in the larger context of the social framework which is being created by the State shaping the development on capitalist path of development.

1.1.8 SUBALTERN STUDIES

Subaltern studies began as an intervention in the historiography of modern India in the early 1980s. There were then, on the one side, historians, mainly located in Britain and the United States, who wrote the history of nationalism as the attempt by Indian elites to mobilize popular support on the basis of traditional patron–client relations in order to compete for political power in a situation where Britain was preparing to decolonize. Methodologically, it was a mix of Weberian modernization theory with a large dose of English-style Namierite analysis. On the other side, there were nationalist historians in India, many of whom were influenced by Marxism, who saw Indian nationalism as an anti-colonial movement led by the bourgeoisie but with a strong popular base mobilized by the leaders of the Congress. Subaltern studies intervened in this debate to point out that both sides were in fact claiming that nationalist history was entirely an elitist project, since neither side had any place for the autonomous actions of the subaltern classes. The first phase of subaltern studies began with a series of studies of peasant revolts in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India. The idea was that whereas under ordinary circumstances the subaltern classes were dominated by and dependent upon their masters, it was at the moment of rebellion that they were able to display their autonomous consciousness.

The word ‘subaltern’ in Gramsci’s sense has gained worldwide currency in historical scholarship. In India, the word in its various synonyms in the Indian languages has entered the ordinary language of politics and journalism. The distinct approach and the debates it spawned have shaped the course of modern South Asian social science in significant ways in the last three decades. Many inquiries that were begun in subaltern studies, such as the use of ethnographic methods in historical scholarship, or the study of non-canonical vernacular printed material as sources of political and cultural history, or the political aspects of popular religion have now become major areas of research in themselves and acquired

theoretical shapes that extend far beyond the original project of subaltern studies. Some of the questions raised by subaltern studies were fruitfully answered within the thirty-year project. Many others could not be answered within the limits of that project: they are now being addressed by other scholars working with other projects.

1.1.9 STATE POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Pulshekar, in their well-documented essay published in *Seminar* attempted to capture the nuances of state politics in contemporary India. According to them, the rise of state politics as an autonomous domain invites and requires theoretical attention by students of comparative politics. According to them, “the state politics in India has broken free of the logic of national politics and has acquired a rhythm and logic of its own”. This manifests itself in many ways related to one another. Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Pulshekar advanced ten “Theses” to conceptualise present day state politics in India, as stated below.

1. The political legacy of movements and ideologies at the state level has proved more enduring than that of institutions and organizations.
2. The emergence of states as real and imagined political communities has intensified political regionalism without weakening the ties with the larger, national unit or suppressing the emergence of sub-regional communities.
3. The greater political clout of the states and their unwillingness to share power with their sub-units has blunted the democratizing impulse of institutional reforms and accentuated inequalities across states instead of reducing differences in access to power.
4. The spread of a distinctive culture of democracy has given a regional flavour to political practice without ensuring a democratic culture, as emancipatory ideas confront majoritarianism and the populist tendency faces pragmatism.
5. Higher and more intense political participation at the state level has widened the base of democracy and sustained its legitimacy without enriching the quality of democratic outcomes.

6. Political regimes at the state level acquire their anchorage as well as bondage from the rise of dominant castes to power, which represents as well as halts the transfer of power to lower social orders.
7. As state politics gains greater autonomy vis-à-vis national politics and the central government, its capacity to resist corporate and other organized interests appears severely eroded, often producing regimes that act as the agents of dominant classes.
8. A system of competitive convergence has meant that the opening up of the format of party competition has not led to greater and more meaningful political choices for the citizen.
9. Struggles and movements seek to rupture the convergence of the political establishment but their non-political character limits their capacity to affect the political agenda.
10. A rise in the politics of coercion and state response to it leads to a spiral of shrinking space for democratic politics.

By advancing above theses or trends, Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Pulshekar believe that these trends more or less stay for a long time. They also believe that some consequences of the rise of states as an autonomous platform of politics are clearly good with the potential of steering democracy towards further expansion. Not only is the possibility of greater autonomy for the states in itself a welcome feature, it has also led to a differential party system that reflects the social context more clearly than was the case earlier. A new set of elites has been able to enter politics through the rise of regional parties, and gates have been opened up for higher participation in politics by more diverse sections than before.

However, it may be too early to celebrate this development without keeping in mind the contradictions that are emerging in recent political developments. The BJP under Narendra Modi has defied some of the trends mentioned above by emerging as the most powerful party in contemporary Indian politics by almost penetrating into every state in India. Not only that, it has gained massive mandate on its own in the parliament and formed the government without depending on any of the regional parties for majority, though it has accommodated its NDA allies in the Council of Ministers. Yet, the fact that most of its rivals in various states are still the regional parties point to the influence of strong federal and regional tendencies in Indian politics. Though it has gained massive mandate at

national level, but losing most of the state assembly elections also point to the weakness of the overarching strong political force in India. Hence, the trend of autonomy of State Politics will be a reality in Indian politics in the near future.

1.1.10 LET US SUM UP

In recent years, attention has been more sharply focussed upon the states. This is a welcome change, because state governments, more than the central government are in charge of functions relating to public welfare and the political system is so structured that a large part of political activity takes place in the states. This underlines the importance of a theoretical framework for the study of state politics. Such a perspective would provide a direction, a focus and a framework of analysis to the increasing research on State Politics which otherwise seems rather isolated. Recognizing the reality of growing complexity in State Politics in India, many scholars have paid attention to analyse the political developments in various theoretical perspectives, which has generated a rich literature on State Politics. With the emergence of the state as a more salient terrain for the unfolding of democratic processes and competitive politics, the importance of the study of states is even more often recognized.

1.1.11 EXERCISE

- 1 What are the reasons for emergence of State Politics as a distinct field?
- 2 Write note on contribution of Myron Weiner to State Politics in India.
- 3 Can you identify the contrast or difference in Myron Weiner and Iqbal Narain's theoretical frameworks?
- 4 How Marxists analyse State Politics in India?
- 5 Critically analyse the trends and theses advanced by Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Pulshekar with regard to State Politics in contemporary India.

1.1.12 SOURCES

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1.2 INDIAN STATES: AN OVERVIEW (INDIAN FEDERALISM AND CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF THE STATES)

- Zain Bhat

STRUCTURE

1.2.0 Objectives

1.2.1 Introduction

1.2.2 Indian Federalism and Constitutional Position

1.2.3 Legislative Relations

1.2.4 Administrative Relations

1.2.5 Financial Relations

1.2.6 Views of Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State Relations

1.2.7 Let us Sum Up

1.2.8 Exercises

1.2.0 OBJECTIVES

This topic deals with the federal structure of India and elaborates the nature of the Centre-State relations. After going through this Unit, you should be able to

- Know the constitutional framework of centre-state relations with regard to legislative, executive and financial aspects
- Understand Sarkaria Commission views with regard to Centre-State relations.

1.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The constitution of India being federal in structure divides all powers (legislative, executive and financial) between the centre and the states. However, there is no division of judicial powers as the constitution has established an integrated judicial system to enforce both the central as well as state laws. The centre-state relations can be studied under three heads:

1. Legislative Relations;

2. Administrative Relations; and
3. Financial Relations;

1.2.2 INDIAN FEDERALISM AND CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF THE STATES

The Indian political system and its Constitutional framework has been the most debated political text in the post independent period. This is due to its complex nature and character of diversities and pluralities. The Constitution ushers into the country a polity based fundamentally on two ingredients – a British type democratic system of government and federalism. The Constitution makes elaborate provisions covering many aspects of Centre-State and inter-state relationship, and in this respect it differs from the constitutions of the USA and Canada which contain only skeletal provisions to regulate inter-governmental relationship.

The one party domination of Congress in the early phase of independence to a large extent determined the evolution of federalism in India, since it was in power at both Centre as well as in states. This smoothed and facilitated the working of federalism in its formative period. It stabilized the political and administrative structure of the country, minimised tensions between various governments as allowed allegiance to one party, and helped in resolving many questions informally at party forums. But this situation has undergone a change from middle of the 1970s since non-Congress parties also gained popularity among the masses.

The founding fathers built the fabric of Indian Federalism on three pillars, viz., a strong Centre, flexibility, and co-operative federalism. Apart from the experiences of other countries suggesting a strong Centre, there were some very good indigenous reasons in India for the same. The past history of India conclusively establishes that the absence of a strong Centre leads to a disintegration of the country. Memories of one partition on the eve of independence were very fresh, and this warranted the taking of adequate precautions to ensure unity and prevent any separatist tendencies. There was also the problem of defence looming large on the horizon due to the not so friendly attitude of Pakistan. Above all, India is an under-developed country whose socio-economic progress has been retarded for centuries. The framers of the Constitution foresaw that the country would have to force the pace of economic development so as to compress into decades the progress of centuries, and this could be done effectively by mobilising national resources and using them properly under Central leadership. A unitary constitution could not have been adopted because of

the vastness of the country and the variety of its people and, therefore, the next best course was to have a federal structure with a strong Centre. The approach of the fathers was thus pragmatic, keeping in view the unity and welfare of the country as the objectives to be promoted. The accent on the Centre was facilitated by two factors – the historical background of the country and the existence of one unified all India political party.

The strength of the Centre lies in its large legislative and financial powers, in its emergency powers and in its control over State Legislation in certain situations. The flexibility of federalism lies in certain expedients which can be used to mitigate the proverbial rigidity of a federal system and to increase the Centre's powers as a temporary adjustment if a situation so demands. As noted above, in other federations, the Centre has felt handicapped at times to take effective action to meet the socio-economic needs; this is sought to be avoided in India by having built-in mechanism to enable the Centre to get more powers without resorting to a formal amendment of the Constitution. Even the method of amending the Constitution is rather flexible. In its federal features, it can be amended by each house of Parliament passing a bill by a special majority and on the same being ratified by one-half of the State Legislatures and receiving the President's assent.

There is also the judiciary with powers to interpret the Constitution and thus to draw the necessary balance in accordance with the needs of the times. But, it needs to be stated that this should not lead to the impression that States are completely subservient to the Centre. They have their own powers; they do not exist at the mercy of the Centre but claim their status from the Constitution, and many conventions have been evolved making them more autonomous in practice than what they look to be in theory. Then, the political forces, recently released, have also cabined the Central initiative to some extent because it is more expedient for the Centre to carry the States along rather than always threaten to use its reserve powers. It might therefore be misleading if one were to take the ideas about the Indian Federalism merely from the constitutional text. For drawing a balanced picture, one has to search for practices and operating forces underneath the surface of the formal constitutional provision.

1.2.3 LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS

Articles 245 to 255 in Part XI of the Constitution deal with the legislative relations between the centre and the states. Besides these, there are some other articles dealing with the same subject. There are four aspects in the centre- state legislative relations viz.

- a) Territorial extent of central and state legislation.
- b) Distribution in the legislative subjects
- c) Parliamentary legislation in the state field and
- d) Centres control over state legislation

1.2.3.1 TERRITORIAL EXTENT OF CENTRAL AND STATE LEGISLATION

The Constitution defines the territorial limits of the legislative powers vested in the centre and in following ways:

- i) The parliamentary can make laws for the whole or any part of the territory of India. The territory of India, according to Article 1 includes (I) State Territory (II) Union Territory (III) Territory acquired by Government of India.
- ii) A state legislative can make laws for the whole or any part of the state.
- iii) The Parliament alone can make 'extra-territorial legislation' thus, the Laws of the Parliament are also applicable to the Indian citizens and their property in any part of the world.

The laws of Parliament can't be applicable in the following areas:

- i) The President can make regulation for the peace, progress and good governance of the four Union Territories – the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu.
- ii) The Governor is empowered to direct that an Act of Parliament does not apply to a scheduled area in the state or apply with specified modification and exceptions.
- iii) The Governor of Assam may likewise direct that an Act of Parliament does not apply to tribal area in the state or apply with specified modification and exceptions.

1.2.3.2 DISTRIBUTION OF LEGISLATIVE SUBJECTS

The constitution provides for a three distribution of legislative subjects between the centre and the states viz. list (I) (Union List), List II (The State list), list III (the Concurrent list) in the VII schedule.

- i) The Parliament has exclusive powers to make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the Union list. Presently, the number of subjects in Union list are 100 (though the last item is numbered 97).
- ii) The State legislature has in normal circumstances exclusive powers to make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the State list. Presently the number of subjects under state list are 61 (initially there were 66 items).
- iii) Both the Parliament and the State legislature can make laws with respect to matters enumerated in the Concurrent list. The present number of matters are 52 (though the last item is numbered 47).

1.2.3.3 PARLIAMENTARY LEGISLATION IN THE STATE FIELD

The distribution of legislative powers between the centre and the state is to be maintained in normal times but in abnormal times, the scheme of distribution is either modified or suspended. In other words, the Constitution empowers the Parliament to make laws on any matter enumerated in the state list under the following five extra-ordinary circumstances:

- a) When Rajya Sabha passes a resolution, declaring that it is necessary in the national interest.
- b) During a National emergency.
- c) When states make a request by passing a resolution to the Parliament to decide laws on state list.
- d) The Parliament can make laws on any matter in the state list for implementing international treaties, agreements or convention.
- e) During president rule / state emergency.

1.2.3.4 CENTRE'S CONTROL OVER STATE LEGISLATURE

Besides the Parliament power to legislate directly on the state list, the Constitution empowers the centre to exercise control over the state legislative matters in the following ways:

- i) The Governor can keep certain types of bills passed by the state legislature for the consideration of the President, who then enjoys absolute veto over them.
- ii) Bills on certain matters enumerated in the state list can be introduced in the state legislature only with the previous sanction of the President.
- iii) The President can direct the states to reserve money bills and other financial bills passed by the state legislature for his consideration during a financial emergency.

From the above, it is clear that the Constitution has assigned a position of superiority to the centre in the legislative sphere.

1.2.4 ADMINISTRATIVE RELATIONS

Article 256 to 263 in Part XI of the Constitution deal with the administrative relations between the centre and the states. In addition, there are various other Articles pertaining to the same matter.

1.2.4.1 DISTRIBUTION OF EXECUTIVE POWERS:

The executive power has been divided between the centre and the states on the lines of the distribution of legislative powers, except in few cases. Thus, the executive power of the centre extends to the whole of India and to the matter on which the parliament has exclusive powers of legislative [Union List].

Similarly, state extends its executive power to its territory in respect of matters on which the state legislature has exclusive powers of legislature [State list].

In respect of matters on which both the Parliament and the State legislature have power of legislation (concurrent list), the executive power rests with the states except when a constitutional provision or a parliamentary law specifically confers it on the centre.

1.2.4.2 OBLIGATION OF THE STATES AND THE CENTRE

The constitution has placed two restrictions on the executive powers of the state in order to give ample scope to the centre for exercising its executive power in an unrestricted manner. Thus, the executive power of every state is to be exercised in such a way:

- a) As to ensure compliance with the laws made by the parliament and existing law which apply in the state, and
- b) As not to impede or prejudice the exercise of executive power of the centre in the state.

In the both the cases, the executive power of the centre extends to giving of such direction to the state as are necessary for the purpose.

Article 356 says that where any state has failed to comply with any direction by the centre, it will be lawful for the President to hold that a situation has arisen in which the Government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provision of the Constitution. It means that in such a situation the President rule can be imposed in the state under Article 356.

1.2.4.3 CENTRE'S DIRECTIONS TO THE STATE

The centre can give directions to the states with regard to the exercise of their executive power in the following matter :

- i) The construction and maintenance of means of communication by the state ;
- ii) The measures to be taken for the protection of the railways within the state;
- iii) The provision of adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups in the state ; and
- iv) The drawing up and execution of the specified schemes for the welfare of the scheduled tribes in the state.

1.2.4.4 MUTUAL DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS

The distribution of legislative powers between the centre and the state is rigid. Consequently, the centre cannot delegate its legislative powers to the state and a single state cannot request the Parliament to make a law on a state subject. The Constitution provides for inter-governmental delegation of executive function in order to mitigate rigidity and avoid a situation of deadlock. Accordingly, the President may by consent of the State Govt. entrust to that Government any of the executive function of the Centre. Conversely, the Governor of a state may with the consent of Central Government entrust to that Government any of the

executive functions of the state. The Constitution also make a provision for the entrustment of the executive functions of the centre to state, without states consent, but in that case, the delegation is by Parliament not by the President.

1.2.4.5 COOPERATION BETWEEN CENTRE AND STATES:

The Constitution contains the following provisions to secure cooperation and coordination between the centre and the state:

- i) The Parliament can provide for adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution and control of waters of any inter- state river and river valley.
- ii) The President can under Article 263, establish an Inter- state council to investigate and discuss subject of common interest between the centre and the states.
- iii) Full faith and credit is to be given throughout the territory of India to public acts, records and judicial proceedings of the centre and every state.
- iv) The Parliament can appoint an appropriate authority to carry out the purposes of the Constitutional provisions relating to inter-state freedom of trade, commerce and inter-course.

1.2.4.6 ALL INDIA SERVICE

Like any other federation, the Centre and the States also have the separate public services called as Central services and the State services respectively. In addition, there are All India Services – IAS, IPS and IFS. The members of these services occupy top positions under both the centre and the states and serve them by turns, but they are recruited and trained by the Centre.

Though All India Services violate the principle of federalism by restricting the autonomy and patronage of the state, they are supported on the grounds that:

- i) They help in maintaining high standard of administration in the Centre as well as in States;
- ii) They help to ensure uniformity of the administrative system throughout the country; and

- iii) They facilitate cooperation, coordination and joint action on the issues of common interest between the Centre and the States.

1.2.4.7 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC)

In the field of PSC, the centre- state relations are as follows:

- i) The chairman and members of PSC, though appointed by the Governor of the state, can be removed only by the President.
- ii) The Parliament can establish a joint state PSC for two or more states on the request of concerned states legislatures. The chairman and members are appointed by the President.
- iii) The UPSC can serve the needs of a state on the request of the state Governor and with the approval of President.
- iv) The UPSC assists the states in framing and operating schemes of joint recruitment of any services for which candidates possessing special qualifications are required.

1.2.4.8 INTEGRATED JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The Constitution has established an integrated judicial system with the Supreme Court at top and the State High Courts below it with district judges sitting in District courts at the very bottom.

1.2.4.9 RELATIONS DURING EMERGENCIES

During National Emergency (Art. 352). The centre can legislate even in the state list's matters and can give direction to the state on any matter.

During State Emergency (Art. 356). The Centre take control of the state affairs after the imposition of President's Rule and this is done after the Governor is satisfied that the state government can not be run according to the Constitution.

During Financial Emergency (Art. 360). The Centre can give direction to the state to observe canons of financial propriety. Other directions by the President include reduction of salaries of person serving in the state and the High Court Judges.

1.2.5 FINANCIAL RELATIONS

Article 264-293 in Part XII of the Constitution deal with financial relations between the centre and the state.

1.2.5.1 ALLOCATION OF TAXING POWERS

The Constitution divides the taxing powers between the centre and the state in the following ways:

- 1) The Parliament has exclusive power to levy taxes on subjects enumerated in the union list.
- 2) The State legislature has exclusive power to levy taxes on subjects enumerated in the state list.
- 3) Both the Parliament and State legislatures can levy taxes on subjects mentioned in concurrent list.

The residuary power of taxation is vested in the parliament under this provision, the parliament has imposed gift tax, wealth tax and expenditure tax. The Constitution also draws a distinction between the power to appropriate the proceeds of the tax so lived and collected. Further the constitution placed the following restriction on the taxing powers of the state:

- i) A state legislature can impose taxes in professions, trades, callings and employments but the total amount of such taxes payable by any person should not exceed Rs. 2500 Per Annum.
- ii) A state legislature can impose taxes on the sale and purchase of goods (other than Newspapers).
- iii) A state legislature can impose tax on the consumption or sale of electricity, but no tax can be imposed on the consumption or sale of electricity which is (a) consumed by the centre or sale to the centre or (b) consumed in the construction, maintenance or operation of any railway by the centre or by the concerned railway company or sold to the centre or the railway company for the same purpose.
- iv) A state legislature can impose tax in respect of any water or electricity stored, generated, distributed or sold by any authority established by Parliament for

regulating or developing any Inter- state River or River valley project. But prior consent of the centre is required in this case also.

1.2.5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF TAX REVENUES

The 80th amendment of 2000 and the 88th amendment of 2003 have introduced major changes in the schemes of distribution of taxes revenues between the centre and the state. After these two amendments, the present position in this regard are as follows:

- a) Taxes leased by the centre but collected and appropriated by the states (Article 268): This category includes taxes and duties like stamp duties on bills of exchanges, policies of insurances, transfer of shares, exercise duties on medicinal things etc.
- b) Services tax levied by the centre but collected and appropriated by the centre and the states (Article 265 A) : Taxes on services are levied by the centre and its proceeds are collected as well as appropriated by both the centre and the states.
- c) Taxes levied and collected by the centre but (Art. 269) assigned to the states various taxes likes on the sale and purchase of goods and the taxes on the consignment of goods in the course of inter-state trade or commerce.
- d) Taxes levied and collected by the centre, but distributed between the centre and the state (Art.270). This category includes almost all the taxes and duties related to in the union list except few.
- e) Surcharge on certain taxes and duties for the purpose of the centre (271): The parliament can at any time levy the surcharge on taxes referred to in Articles 269 and 270, the proceed of such surcharges go to the centre exclusively.
- f) Taxes levied and collected and retained by the states: These are the taxes belonging to the states exclusively. They are enumerated in the state list and are 20 in number.

1.2.5.3 DISTRIBUTION OF NON- TAX REVENUE

- a) The Centre: - The receipt from the following form the major sources of non-tax revenue of the Centre (1) Posts and telegraph, (II) Railways (III) Banking (IV) Broadcast (V) Coinage and currency etc.

- b) The States: - The receipt from the following form the major source of non-tax revenues of the states (I) Irrigation (II) Forests (III) Fisheries (IV) State's Public Sector Enterprises (V) Escheat & lapses.

1.2.4.4 GRANT-IN-AID FOR THE STATES

Besides sharing the taxes between the Centre and State, the Constitution provides for grant-in-aid to the states from the Centre. There are two types of Grants: STATUTORY GRANT (Art. 275): It provides for the grants given to any state in need as may be deemed essential.

DISCRETIONARY GRANTS (Art. 282): It provides for the union or a state may grant for any public purpose irrespective of that purpose being outside the legislative jurisdiction of the Union or State concerned.

1.2.6 VIEWS OF SARKARIA COMMISSION ON CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS

As long as there was monolithic party-system in the country and Congress party was in power, there was no real problem of centre-state relationship. It was because during this period (1950-67), there was no other political party which could provide an alternative to the Congress and every political leader looked towards this organization for his political career.

But situation practically changed in 1967, when the Fourth General Elections were held in the country. In this election, in as many as seven states, non-Congress ministries were formed. This process continued further. Regional parties like Akali Dal, AIADMK came into power. In 1977, Janata Party came into power in the centre, though for a short period of two and half-years. In the nineties, one finds the system of coalition governments at the centre. In the states too, number of regional parties either with coalition or single-handedly came into power. All these factors were responsible for re-thinking of centre-state relations.

1.2.6.1 GRIEVANCES OF THE STATES

There were many grievances of the states particularly which were ruled by the party other than that of the central ruling party. To be brief, following were the main grievances of the states.

- (a) These states wanted more of autonomy, decentralization of powers in favour of the states.

(b) These states also complained that they were not getting their due share from the national finance. Due to non-availability of funds, the states cannot undertake their developmental projects. It was further alleged that the Planning Commission allocated resources to the states not on the basis of development needs or population of a particular state, but only on political considerations.

(c) There was also a strong grievance against the deployment of Border Security Force and para-military forces in the states.

(d) Then another grievance of the states against the central government related to excessive control in its hands. It even tries to control such subjects which are not within its sphere.

(e) These states complain that present day regional imbalances are because of lack of integrated approach of the central government towards developmental activities. Central sector projects are located taking party and not national interests into consideration, which result in increased regional imbalances.

(f) There is still another grievance that the central government deliberately avoids taxation under article 299 of the Constitution whose proceeds are meant for the states and imposes excise duties on such items, which are source of income to it.

To address all these issues and grievances, demand for setting up a separate commission was gaining currency in the post-1967 period. In 1981, a meeting of the opposition parties demanded that radical changes should be brought about in centre-state relations. On March 24, 1983, the central government announced the appointment of a Commission under Justice R.S. Sarkaria, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, to review the existing arrangements between the centre and the states in the context of socio-economic developments on the one hand and keeping in view unity and integrity of the country on the other. The Commission submitted its report in 1988. The major recommendations of it have been given below.

1.2.6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS OF SARKARIA COMMISSION

- 1) It was not proper to curtail the powers of the centre as a strong centre was necessary for preserving the integrity of the country.
- 2) There was no need for making drastic changes to the Constitution as these have all along withstood stresses and strains of changes in society.

- 3) In the financial scheme, there was no need for major changes in the basic scheme as provided in the Constitution.
- 4) It favoured some amendments to provide for sharing of corporation tax and levy of consignment tax on advertisement and broadcasting.
- 5) It did not favour transfer of any subject from the central to the state or concurrent list.
- 6) It favoured deployment of central forces in consultation with the state government concerned.
- 7) No change in Articles 246 and 254 of the Constitution was recommended.
- 8) It did not favour the idea of the abolition of the office of Governor. It, however, favoured the idea that Governor should be appointed in consultation with the Chief Minister of the concerned state.
- 9) The Governor should appoint only such a person as Chief Minister who was either the leader of the majority party in the Assembly or could command a majority in the Assembly which he should be asked to prove within 30 days.
- 10) It did not favour deletion of Art. 356 of the Constitution but suggested number of steps to ensure that the power was only rarely used.
- 11) No state Assembly should be dissolved unless Parliament has approved proclamation of Emergency and that before imposition of President's rule, the possibilities of forming an alternative government should be explored.
- 12) It recommended that no Commission of Enquiry should be set up against any minister of a state government unless a demand to that effect is made by both the Houses of Parliament.
- 13) In the view of the Commission, the centre should hold consultations with the states before legislating on a subject mentioned in the concurrent list.
- 14) It favoured setting up of Inter-State Councils.
- 15) It also favoured activating Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities.
- 16) It recommended implementation of three language formula and also suggested creation of several new All India Services.

The Commission paid great importance to the principles of national unity and integration. It had given top priority to the codes of conduct and conventions for the purpose of

avoiding the dangers of communalism and narrow parochialism and developing an integrated secular democratic federal polity based on understanding and maximum cooperation between the centre and the states.

1.2.7 LET US SUM UP

Indian Constitution has all the features of a federation but it essentially differs from the classical model of federation, i.e., USA. Indian federal system has some peculiar features and these features give it a strong Unitarian bias. The balance decidedly tilts in favour of the strong centre. Whether it is distribution of powers or financial or administrative or legislative relations between centre and the states, the central government distinctly emerges to be powerful. This had brought practical difficulties in centre-state relations particularly after 1967. The states started demanding more and more of autonomy and powers. When the problem began to assume abnormal dimensions, the centre government set up a Sarkaria Commission to look into the matter and give its recommendations. The Sarkaria Commission was in favour of strong centre in order to protect national unity and integrity. However, it suggested maximum cooperation between centre and the states, without disturbing the major distribution of powers.

1.2.8 EXERCISES

1. Outline important characteristics of Centre-State relations in India.
2. How the constitution divided legislative relations between Union and the States?
3. Write a brief note on Administrative relations in India.
4. Critically discuss Sirkaria Commission views on Centre-State relations.

1.3 INTER-STATE DISPUTES: NATURE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR RESOLUTION

- Zain Bhat

STRUCTURE

1.3.0 Objectives

1.3.1 Introduction

1.3.2 Inter-State Disputes

1.3.3 Water Disputes

1.3.4 The Boundary Disputes

1.3.5 Institutional Mechanism for Adjudication

1.3.6 Let us Sum Up

1.3.7 Exercises

1.3.0 OBJECTIVES

This topic provides basic knowledge about the nature of various inter-state disputes that have taken place before and after the independence. After going this topic you will be able to

- familiar with the issues related to inter-state disputes;
- know about the inter-state water disputes;
- understand the inter-state boundary disputes;
- comprehend about the institutional mechanism meant for dealing the inter-state issues.

1.3.1 INTRODUCTION

The inter-state relations in India run along the lines of both conflict and cooperation. The specifics of each case depend on the nature of constitutional provisions regarding these relations, attitudes of the institutions involved, concerned leadership and political circumstances. There are disputes among Indian states over sharing of a natural resource like water and over boundaries. The disputes have resulted in violent clashes between

states on several occasions. Their failure or success in dealing with the disputes is indicative of the functioning of the Indian federalism. In this unit, you are going to study two types of disputes involving two or more states.

1.3.2 INTER-STATE DISPUTES

In a constitutional set-up based on the federal principle, sovereignty is divided between the federation and the units. Division of sovereignty implies the creation of boundaries, and this is bound to raise disputes, as to on which side of the boundary the matter falls. The reason is, that neither geographical phenomena, nor social currents, nor political forces, are defined by the boundaries so drawn. Boundaries are drawn by the minds of men. But they are mere intellectual creations, whose actual application to external realities cannot always be the subject matter of unanimity. Differences become insertable in this sphere. And, where such differences do arise, it is desirable that there be a well thought out systemic mechanism, for inter-state dispute resolution.

The Constitution of India contemplates a variety of mechanisms for the settlement of inter-State disputes—taking the word “dispute” in a wide and comprehensive sense, so as to cover not only disputes that come up before the judiciary, but also disputes for whose resolution an extra-judicial machinery is contemplated by the Constitution.

1.3.2.1 THE JUDICIAL MECHANISM

The principal provision creating the judicial mechanism for dealing with inter-State disputes involving a legal right is article 131 of the Constitution. It confers, on the Supreme Court of India, exclusive jurisdiction to deal with disputes involving legal rights. This article covers any dispute [1]—(a) between the Government of India and one or more States; or (b) between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other; or (c) between two or more States, if, and in so far as, the dispute involves any question (whether of law or of fact), on which the existence or extent of a legal right depends.

1.3.2.2 INTER-STATE COUNCIL

The Constitution has, through Article 263, made a comprehensive provision relating to the discharge of certain functions on matters having an inter-State dimension. One of the functions to be discharged by the Council contemplated by the Article is that of inquiring

into and advising upon disputes which may have arisen between States, [under Article 263 (a)]. The article (which appears under the sub-head: States “Co-ordination between States) reads as under –

“263. Provisions with respect to an inter-State Council.

If at any time it appears to the President that the public interest would be served by the establishment of a Council charged with the duty of –

- (a) inquiring into and advising upon disputes which may have arisen between States;
- (b) investigating and discussing subjects in which some or all of the States, or the Union and one or more of the States, have a common interest or
- (c) making recommendations upon any such subject and, in particular, recommendations for the better co-ordination or policy and action with respect to that subject, it shall be lawful for the President by order to establish such a Council and to define the nature of the duties to be performed by it and its organisation and procedure”.

The Inter-State Council is a constitutional body that has representatives of the Union government as well as chief ministers of states. The council is chaired by the prime minister, and it also has a few Union ministers as permanent invitees.

It may also be proper to mention that under the States Re-organisation Act, 1956, five Zonal Councils have been set up. Besides this, a North Eastern Council has been set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1971.

1.3.3 WATER DISPUTES

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

1.3.3.1 UNEVEN AVAILABILITY OF WATER

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

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

1.3.3.2 RIVER BASINS

The country's rivers have been classified as Himalayan, peninsular, coastal and inland-drainage basin rivers. Himalayan rivers are snow fed and maintain a high to medium rate of flow throughout the year. The heavy annual average rainfall levels in the Himalayan catchment areas further add to their rates of flow. During the monsoon months of June to September, the catchment areas are prone to flooding. The volume of the rain-fed peninsular rivers also increases. Coastal streams, especially in the west, are short and episodic. Rivers of the inland system, centred in western Rajasthan state, are few and frequently disappear in years of scant rainfall. The majority of the rivers flow through broad, shallow valleys and drain into the Bay of Bengal. River basin as a unit of understanding the river flow through different states provides a scientific approach. The basin area is the extent of the area from where water may be expected in the river. It includes tributaries and even drains. Indian rivers have been divided into three categories depending on basin area. Major rivers are those rivers whose basin area is 20,000 square km or more. The river basin areas in between 2,000 and 20,000 square kilometres are grouped as medium rivers and the rest are minor rivers. Major river basins are 13 in number and as a group they cover 80 per cent of the population and 85 per cent of total river discharge. Three major rivers i.e. the Ganga, the Brahmaputra and the Indus are snow-fed rivers, originating in the Himalayas. The other ten rivers originate either in Central India or in the peninsular regions. These rivers are Godavari, Krishna, Pennar, Mahanadi, Cauvery, Narmada, Tapi, Brahmani, Mahi and Sabarmati. The medium river basins are forty-five in number while the minor river basins are fifty five. Thus, the 113 river basins ranging from major to medium to minor

based on their basin areas transcend different political boundaries. The increasing needs of water in different parts of India to meet varied demands especially in the arid and the semi-arid regions have given boost to large inter basin transfers in the last few decades. Accordingly, many schemes of large-scale water transfer projects (interlink proposals) have been planned and some of them implemented. There have been cases of hydro-animosity amongst different states and communities as the users are many while the supply is limited.

Harnessing the waters of the major rivers that flow through different states is therefore, an issue of great concern. Issues of flood control, drought prevention, hydroelectric power generation, job creation and environmental quality provide a common plank for debate as the states grapple with the political realities, of altering the flow of various rivers. The rapid increase in the country's population accompanied by the growth of agriculture, rapid urbanisation, economic growth and improved access to basic services has resulted in an increase in the demand for water. The 3 spatial and temporal variations give rise to shortages in some regions. The Western Plains, the Kachchh region and some pockets in the Northern plains face an acute water shortage. The widening gap between demand and supply has led to a substantial increase in the share of groundwater consumption by the urban, agricultural and domestic sectors. The quality of water sources is threatened because of inadequate provisions for the treatment of wastewater. Therefore, the gap between availability and supply has led to provocation and ensuing discords due to the diversion of waters from riparian states to the non-riparian states. Several water tribunals have been formed and judgments pronounced in many river basin disputes but solutions have been few. In the case of Cauvery, the problem has persisted for more than a century. There are also many court cases pending at local levels as regards the uses of water, and this affects the livelihoods of many.

1.3.3.3 POLITICS OF WATER DISPUTES

Resolution of water disputes depends largely on political considerations. Out of the several water disputes in India, we will focus on the Cauvery Water, Ravi-Beas and Satlaj-Yamuna Canal Link disputes. In resolving these disputes, the political leaderships of the concerned states, the centre, and the courts are involved. Yet they remain unsolved. The failure of negotiations has led to the appointment of authorities and tribunals innumerable. But even the awards of the tribunals have not been respected by one or the other parties involved in the disputes. According to Scholars like Alan Richards and Nirvikar Singh the most important

reason for this is the merely advisory nature of various water authorities. Water remains virtually a state subject vide entry 17 in the State List. The centre has not utilised its authority to legislate on this matter vide entry 56 in the Union List according to Article 262 of the Constitution. While the Ravi-Beas and Satlej–Yamuna Canal Link remain unresolved, there are cases which have been resolved. Alan Richards and Nirvikar Singh attribute the main reason for their resolution to negotiations. The tribunals in this case proved ineffective. But regarding the Cauvery Water dispute and the Ravi-Beas water dispute both the negotiations and the tribunals proved ineffective

Besides the ineffective awards of the tribunals, the centre's unwillingness to utilise entry 17 in the Union List according to Article 262 of the Constitution to legislate on water disputes, political considerations are the major hindrances in resolving them. The possibility of resolution of the issue is viewed in a contradictory manner. While one state considers it advantageous to it the other sees its interests, as against its interests. The political parties even within the same state view matters in the light of repercussions on their political support base. These parties may disagree on all other major issues, yet share a common stance on the concerned water dispute. They apprehend that taking a contrary stance might push their political support to their political rival. As pointed out by some scholars, the state political leaders can even defy their national leaders and the advice of the court in this matter. For them their political support is more important. For example, the political leadership in Punjab passed an Act in 2004 against the completion of the Satlej-Yamuna Canal Link. It was to be completed within one year. Haryana challenged the decision in the Supreme Court. The latter decreed for a Presidential reference. The matter is still unresolved. Any inter-state water dispute has its repercussions on the politics and people in neighbouring states. It has ethnic implications. As some linguistic and ethnic groups live within states which have disputes over the sharing of water, these ethnic groups also get drawn into violent riots. In 1992 the Cauvery water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka led to anti-Tamil riots in Tamil Nadu. This had further repercussion in the state politics of the two states. While the Tamil groups demanded protection of their ethnic and linguistic identities, the Karnataka political leadership in general opposed giving water to Tamil Nadu. They said that there was no surplus water that could be given to Tamil Nadu.

1.3.4 THE BOUNDARY DISPUTES

In this unit, so far you have read how and why water, a vital natural resource, has been a cause of major disputes between some states of the Indian Union. Now, you will read about territorial boundaries as a source of conflict among certain states of our country. You might have, during the course of your studies, come across references about the longstanding tension between the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka over the rightful ownership of the district of Belgaun, between Punjab and Haryana over the Abohar-Fazilka Tehsil or about several such cases involving two or more states. In fact, the creation of certain new states in the last few years—Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh for instance—was partly a recognition of the longstanding problem of contesting territorial boundaries. The issue is complex and vexed and its roots can be traced to India's colonial past.

1.3.4.1 COLONIAL LEGACY

India, as we know it today, has traversed a chequered path from ancient times. The boundaries of its constituent geographical units have been continually changing. However, till the advent of the British it was not really a nation-state, as the term is understood and the frequent changes in territorial limits did not amount to much. The British, in pursuance of their own colonial agenda, set about defining and redefining geographical limits and this created problems, the lingering effects of which can be felt till today. These effects can be felt even internationally. For example, India's boundary disputes with Pakistan, China and Bangladesh. This was essentially because our colonial masters were guided primarily by the consideration of facile governance and towards this end, they focused on administrative aspects rather than linguistic/cultural etc. unification. The result was a mismatch between people's personal identities and the territories they inhabited. It was left to the central government of free India to rectify the damage caused by the British colonialists' sectarianism and short sightedness.

1.3.4.2 TERRITORIAL ISSUE IN THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

The central legislature – the Parliament – was empowered by the constitution 'to create new states or merge old states or parts of such states or alter their boundaries in future'. It may interest you to know that even during the tenure of the Constituent Assembly the specially created and convened body to draft free India's constitution—demands had been

raised for a linguistic reorganisation of states, the assumption being that linguistic commonality is an index of a common culture and thus, states created on the basis of a common/unifying language would be more homogenous and thus, conducive to effective governance. However, at that time, the founding fathers of the Constitution had postponed the demand for a linguistic reconfiguration on the ground that the newly formed country might plunge into chaos and turmoil. But soon after independence, the government of Jawaharlal Nehru – India’s first Prime-Minister- changed tacks. Possibly, it felt that there was no other way out.

Thus, it had to cope with the agitation for an Andhra state. According to the Linguistic Provinces Commission, the demand first raised in the coastal regions of Andhra had become “a passion” and “ceased to be a matter of reason”. Immediately after the First General Election (1951-52), the Andhra Pradesh Provincial Congress Committee (APCC) had passed a resolution for the creation of a separate Telugu speaking state. The then Madras state also came in the picture and the State Congress Committee there endorsed the creation of the proposed new state. Initially, the Central Government under Nehru tried to checkmate this demand, but the death of Potti Sriramulu, a venerable Andhra Congress leader who went on a fast into death precipitated matters. Finally, in 1953 a new and separate Andhra state was formed by carving out the Telugu speaking areas of the erstwhile bi-lingual Madras state. The creation of Andhra gave a fillip to the demand for a further linguistic reorganisation of states and the government ended up setting a three member States Reorganisation Commission in 1953 to look into the whole question of altering old/creating new state boundaries. The Commission submitted its report in 1955 and its major recommendation was the creation of new states in the South of the country. In 1956, the States Reorganisation Act was passed. However, consequent to the passing of this act, no really new state was created as such. What actually happened was the integration of several formerly princely states on the basis of language.

For instance, the new state of Andhra Pradesh was a coming together of the erstwhile Part B State of Hyderabad and the old Andhra state. Similarly, the new state of Karnataka was an amalgamation of the old Part B Mysore state and territories transferred from the former Madras and Bombay states. But from the 1960s onwards, the process of creation of new states got going. Thus, in 1960 itself the state of Bombay was partitioned to create the new states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Similarly, in 1966 the new state of Punjab was created. We have already mentioned about the creation of the new states of Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand in recent times. It is important to mention here

that during the period, the northeastern part of the country also underwent a major reorganisation. Thus, in 1963 the state of Nagaland and in 1972, the state of Meghalaya were created. The demand for the creation of new states has not ceased in post-independence India. Demand for a separate Vidarbha state has been a longstanding demand of an influential section of populace in Maharashtra, but has not been conceded so far. Similarly, though the demand for a separate hill state of Uttaranchal gained fruition, a similar demand for a separate state of Western U.P. (Harit Pradesh) has not been legitimised so far. As we mentioned before in this unit, territorial reconfiguration has been a complicated issue. And even when given a concrete shape, it has not been an answer to every citizen's aspirations. To cite a very prominent example, though the newly created state of Andhra Pradesh brought together the Telugu speaking people dispersed in different parts of South India, the new state since its inception has faced the problem of prolonged agitation for another new state of Telangana. Similarly the creation of new states in the North-East has not resolved territorial disputes. The demand of Nagas to bring Nagas of three different states into a single "Nagalim" is among such examples. A look at a well known case relating to the dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka over Belgaun, may throw some light on the vexed question of altering/creating territorial boundaries.

1.3.4.3 AN EXAMPLE BELGAUN DISPUTE: AN EXAMPLE

The district of Belgaun is currently located in the state of Karnataka (North-West) and borders Maharashtra as well as Goa. Approximately, 20% of the local populace is of Maharashtrian origin. Atul Kohli observes "the issue of whether or not the areas with Marathi pluralities, especially the town of Belgaun, should be transferred from Karnataka to Maharashtra continues to be one of the central political issues in this district". The roots of the Marathi-Kannadiga conflict over the district of Belgaun-as with many such conflicts - are directly attributable to the linguistic reorganisation of states in India after independence. Belgaun district consists of a mixed population of Marathi and Kannada speakers. After the formation of Maharashtra state, some parts where Kannada was spoken got transferred to Karnataka, but some Marathi speaking pockets were also transferred to Karnataka. Belgaun is one such district which has a population of Marathi and Kannada speakers. The cause of these displaced Maharashtrians has been spearheaded for more than four decades by the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES). It has stood for transferring selected Marathi dominated areas of Belgaun (especially the town of Belgaun) to Maharashtra.

The case of the MES is based on two premises: i) Language and ethnicity – the criteria for the reorganisation of states; ii) Alleged or real discrimination against Marathis in education and employment (particularly government service).

The Kannadigas, especially that resident of Belgaun Town, lay claims to the area on historical grounds. Mainly, that the town of Belgaun had always been an intrinsic part of a district that was chiefly Kannada speaking. A third and no less significant factor in the longstanding conflict has been the political compromise effected by the then central government. That is, some Kannada speaking districts of the old Hyderabad state were given to the new state of Andhra Pradesh in exchange for Belgaun being given to Karnataka. Thus, as Atul Kohli has remarked “the MES’s argument on linguistic grounds, the argument of Kannadigas on historical precedent, and the national decision based on political considerations all combined to set up the basic matrix within which the conflict has evolved.

1.3.5 INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR ADJUDICATION

We have discussed above some of the significant tension areas in Centre-state relations. In fact the very dynamism of the federal system anywhere with all its declared balances brings in its wake problems and conflicts in working of Union-state relations. Therefore, need for a common mechanism which would ensure co-operation among the common units of federation seems to be natural. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution anticipating problems in Union-State relations provided for such a mechanism through Article 263 of the Indian Constitution making provision for an inter-state council.

1.3.5.1 INTER-STATE COUNCIL

As already pointed out the Administrative Reforms commission (ARC), reviewing the post-1967 situation in its report in 1989 recommended the setting up of an Inter-state council. The commission felt that an unnecessary onus came to be placed in the case of many inter-state disputes, such as those over respective borders, on the Central government and any action or inaction on its part could be misunderstood by a contending party. But the Central Government did not bother about this warning and an Inter-state council was not established till 1990. One of the major complaints of various states before the Sarkaria Commission was relating to the non-appointment of such a council.

The Sarkaria Commission in its report recommended that an Inter-state council charged with duties set out in clauses (b) and (c) of Article 263 should be formed. The Constitution felt that it was essential to avoid reported references to the President for piecemeal orders under Article 263 authorizing the Council to deal with specific issues as and when they crop up.

The Congress (I) Government headed by Rajiv Gandhi remained lukewarm to the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations in general. Therefore, no efforts were made to establish such a council. The National Front in its 1989 Election manifesto promised to undertake a comprehensive review of Union-State relations in consultation with all Chief Ministers. In pursuance of this promise the National Front Government got established the Inter-state council through a Presidential notification on May 25, 1990.

1.3.5.2 INTER-STATE COUNCIL (ARTICLE 263)

The Council to consist of the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers of all states, Chief Ministers or Administrators of Union territories and six Cabinet ministers of the Union Government.

The Council is headed by the Prime Minister and in the absence by the Union Minister of Cabinet rank nominated by him. The council prepares issues to be brought before the council every year. Its meetings are held in-camera. It arrives on decisions on consensus-basis which are final and binding. It shall have its own secretariat comprising of officers as the Chairman may decide.

The Congress (I) Government which came to power again in June, 1991 also accepted the constitution of the Inter-State council. The Inter-state council for its effective functioning has constituted a sub-committee consisting of some union ministers and chief ministers. In the sub-committee meeting, it was announced that the Government of India's acceptance of the Sarkaria commission's recommendations that there should be prior consultation with the state governments "individually as well as collectively" before the Centre sponsor's legislation on a subject in the concurrent list.

Needless to say this is only one step towards normalization of union-state relations. But the fact remains that till now ours is a highly centralized state system. From the appointment of Governor and the imposition of President's rule, to the very large number of subjects included in the Union List, or in the Concurrent list, it is basically a centralized

structure, and in political parlance the strength of the Indian state is often equated with the existence of a strong centre.

The question is not whether there should or should not be a strong centre. No reasonable person will dispute the need for a strong centre. Question is can centre be strong if states remain weak. The centre is bound to remain strong because of its authority in decisive fields. The State autonomy in other fields would help the strong centre to pay undivided attention to its work in decisive fields. It is important to understand that federalism is essentially a political culture, an outlook on national life. It is not merely a question of centre- state relations. At the core lies the question whether in a land of our continental dimensions of rich diversities regional linguistic and other profound cultural traditions, our nationalism, requires suppression of the diversities or whether the national well-being will be fostered by encouraging and allowing the diversities to have full play within the national frame work.

1.3.5.3 ZONAL COUNCILS

The idea of Zonal councils was mooted by the first Prime Minister Mr. Nehru in 1956 during the course of debate on the report of the State Reorganisation Commission. The objective of these councils were to minimize the hostilities that threatened the social fabric of the Indian society and to create healthy inter-state and centre-state environment with a view to solving the inter-states disputes and problems and fostering balanced development of the respective zones. Accordingly five Zonal councils were set up vide Part –III of the State Reorganisation Act 1956. They are as follow:

- 1) The Northern Zonal Council comprising the states of Haryana , Punjab ,Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir ,Rajasthan , National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh ;
- 2) The Central Zonal Council comprising the states of Chattisgarh, Uttarakhand,Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh ;
- 3) The Eastern Zonal Council comprising the states of Bihar,Jharkhand , Odisha,Sikkim and West Bengal.
- 4) The Western Zonal Council comprising the states of Goa ,Gujarat ,Maharashtra and the Union Territory of Daman and Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli ; and

5) The Southern Zonal Council comprising the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

As far as North Eastern States are concerned, they are looked after by the North Eastern Council set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.

1.3.6 LETS SUM UP

What is required in the name of integration is the unity, diversity and pluralistic elements in Indian culture and not homogenization. Recent formation of NITI Aayog (Policy Commission) or National Institution for Transforming India on 1 January 2015, is a policy think-tank of Government of India that replaces Planning Commission and aims to involve the states in economic policy-making in India. It will be providing strategic and technical advice to the central and state governments i.e., by adopting bottom-up approach rather than traditional top-down approach. Therefore, institutions like NITI Aayog are steps leading to the recognition of unity, diversity and pluralistic elements in Indian culture and not homogenization.

1.3.7 EXERCISES

1. How do you understand inter-state disputes in India?
2. Critically analyse water disputes among various states in India.
3. Outline Institutional mechanisms for resolving inter-state dispute.

1.4 CONSTITUTIONAL ASYMMETRIES: NATURE AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS (ARTICLES 370, 371, 5TH AND 6TH SCHEDULES)

- Zain Bhat

STRUCTURE

1.4.0 Objectives

1.4.1 Introduction

1.4.2 Asymmetric Federalism

1.4.3 Asymmetry in Indian Federalism

1.4.4 Article 370

1.4.5 Article 371

1.4.6 5th Schedule

1.4.7 6th Schedule

1.4.8 Exercises

1.4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going this topic you will be able to know:

- asymmetries in India's Constitution;
- article 370 and 371 and their implications to Indian political system
- importance of 5th and 6th Schedules in India's constitution.

1.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Constitutional Asymmetries is found in a federation or confederation in which different constituent states have constitutional status. The division of powers between sub-states is not symmetric. This is in contrast to symmetric federalism, where no possess similar powers: one or more of the states has considerably more autonomy than the other sub states, although they have the same distinction is made between constituent states. This kind of arrangement is frequently proposed as a solution to the dissatisfactions that arise when one or two

constituent units feel significantly different needs from the others, as the result of an ethnic, linguistic or cultural difference.

The governance of India is based on a tiered system, wherein the Constitution of India appropriates the subjects on which each tier of government has executive powers. The Constitution uses the Seventh Schedule to delimit the subjects under three categories, namely the Union list, the State list and the Concurrent list. A distinguishing aspect of Indian federalism is that it is asymmetric. Article 370 makes special provisions for the state of Jammu and Kashmir as per its Instrument of Accession. Article 371 makes special provisions for the states of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Sikkim as per their accession or statehood deals. Although the Constitution did not envisage it, India is now a multilingual federation. India has a multi-party system with political allegiances frequently based on linguistic, regional and caste identities, necessitating coalition politics, especially at the Union level.

1.4.2 ASYMMETRIC FEDERALISM

“Asymmetric federalism” is understood to mean federalism based on unequal powers and relationships in political, administrative and fiscal arrangements spheres between the units constituting a federation. Asymmetry in the arrangements in a federation can be viewed in both vertical (between Center and states) and horizontal (among the states) senses. If federations are seen as ‘indestructible union of indestructible states’, and Centre and states are seen to exist on the basis of equality; neither has the power to make inroads into the defined authority and functions of the other unilaterally. However, such ‘purists’ view of federalism is rarely, if at all, seen in practice. Even when the constitution guarantees near equal powers to the states, in the working on federal systems Centre dominates in political, administrative as well as fiscal spheres.

There is considerable volume of literature on Central domination in Indian federalism in the assignment system in the Constitution and central intrusion into the States’ domains in the working of the federation. Unlike the classical federations like the USA, Indian federation is not an ‘indestructible union of indestructible states’. Only the Union is indestructible and the States are not. Article 3 of the Constitution vests the Parliament with powers to constitute new states by separating territories from the existing ones, alter their boundaries, and change their names. The only requirement for this is that the Bill for the purpose will have to be

placed in the Parliament on the recommendation of the President and after it has been referred to the relevant State legislature for ascertaining their views (their approval is not necessary). The federation is not founded on the principle of equality between the Union and States either. The central government in India has the powers, and it actually does invade the legislative and executive domains of the states.

1.4.3 ASYMMETRY IN INDIAN FEDERALISM

Asymmetric arrangement in Indian federalism has a long history and goes back to the way in which the British unified the country under their rule and later the way in which the territories under the direct control of the British and various principalities were integrated in the Indian Union. While the territories ruled directly by the British were easily integrated into the Union, the treaties of accession signed by the individual rulers covered the integration of different principalities. The provinces ruled directly by the British had a modicum of autonomy and rudimentary form of parliamentary government as the British loosened the grip gradually from 1919. The Constitution that was adopted in 1951 itself classified the states into four categories. The provinces directly ruled by the British were classified as Part A states. Those princely States which had a relationship with the Government of India based on individual treaties signed were classified as Part B States. These included the States of Hyderabad, Mysore, Jammu and Kashmir and 5 newly joined unions of princely states. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, the powers special powers were given in the terms of accession. The remaining princely states acceding to the union were grouped under Part C states. Finally, the territories ruled by other foreign powers gaining independence (French and Portuguese) and areas not covered in the above three categories were brought under the direct control of the union to form Part D states or Union Territories.

While many of the former princely states, particularly the Part B states continued as administrative units after their integration into India, this continuation was not an essential part of the bargain. Furthermore, reorganization of state boundaries from 1953, freely permitted to the Centre by Article 3 of the constitution, gradually eroded this status. Thus, in general, the princely states ceased to matter as geographic entities. The asymmetries present in 1947 with respect to almost all the princely states disappeared from Indian federalism. The sole exception, of course, was the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

1.4.4 ARTICLE 370: THE CASE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Article 370 of the Indian constitution is a law that grants special autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir. The article is drafted in Part XXI of the Constitution, which relates to Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions.

1.4.4.1 NATURE:

Article 370:- Temporary provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Constitution,—

- (a) the provisions of article 238 shall not apply now in relation to the state of Jammu and Kashmir;
- (b) the power of Parliament to make laws for the said state shall be limited to—
 - (i) those matters in the Union List and the Concurrent List which, in consultation with the Government of the State, are declared by the President to correspond to matters specified in the Instrument of Accession governing the accession of the State to the Dominion of India as the matters with respect to which the Dominion Legislature may make laws for that State; and
 - (ii) such other matters in the said Lists as, with the concurrence of the Government of the State, the President may by order specify.

Explanation: For the purpose of this article, the Government of the State means the person for the time being recognized by the President on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly of the State as the Sadr-i-Riyasat (now Governor) of Jammu and Kashmir, acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers of the State for the time being in office.

- (c) the provisions of article 1 and of this article shall apply in relation to that State;
- (d) such of the other provisions of this Constitution shall apply in relation to that State subject to such exceptions and modifications as the President may by order specify:

Provided that no such order which relates to the matters specified in the Instrument of Accession of the State referred to in paragraph (i) of sub-clause (b) shall be issued except in consultation with the Government of the State:

Provided further that no such order which relates to matters other than those referred to in the last preceding proviso shall be issued except with the concurrence of that Government.

(2) If the concurrence of the Government of the State referred to in paragraph (ii) of sub-clause (b) of clause (1) or in the second proviso to sub-clause (d) of that clause be given before the Constituent Assembly for the purpose of framing the Constitution of the State is convened, it shall be placed before such Assembly for such decision as it may take thereon.

(3) Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this article, the President may, by public notification, declare that this article shall cease to be operative or shall be operative only with such exceptions and modifications and from such date as he may specify: Provided that the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State referred to in clause (2) shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification.

1.4.4.2 POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

This article specifies that the states must concur in the application of laws, except those that pertain to Communications, Defence, Finance, and Foreign Affairs.

Similar protections for unique status exist in tribal areas of India including those in Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Nagaland. However, it is only for the state of Jammu and Kashmir that the accession of the state to India is still a matter of dispute between India and Pakistan still on the agenda of the UN Security Council and where the Government of India vide 1974 Indira-Sheikh accord committed itself to keeping the relationship between the Union and Jammu and Kashmir State within the ambit of this article. The 1974 Indira-Sheikh accord between Kashmiri politician Sheikh Abdullah and then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stated, "The State of Jammu and Kashmir which is a constituent unit of the Union of India, shall, in its relation with the Union, continue to be governed by Article 370 of the Constitution of India".

In notifications issued as far back as 1927 and 1932, the state created various categories of residents – with some being called permanent residents (PRs) with special rights. Though the law did not discriminate between female and male PRs, an administrative rule made it clear that women could remain PRs only till marriage. After that they had to seek a fresh right to remain PRs. And if a woman married someone who wasn't a Kashmiri PR, she automatically lost her own PR status. But a 2002 high court ruling made it clear that a

woman will remain a PR even after marriage to a non-PR, and enjoy all the rights of a PR. A People's Democratic Party government, led by Mehbooba Mufti, passed a law to overturn the court judgment by introducing a Bill styled 'Permanent Residents (Disqualification) Bill, 2004'. This was not Mufti's solo effort. Omar Abdullah's party, the National Conference, backed this Bill and got it passed in the lower house of the assembly. But it did not ultimately see the light of day for various reasons.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the state's 'Prime Minister' and leader of the Muslims in the Valley, found the inclusion of Article 370 in the 'Temporary and Transitional Provisions' of the Constitution's Part XXI unsettling. He wanted 'iron clad guarantees of autonomy'. Suspecting that the state's special status might be lost, Abdullah advocated independence from India, causing New Delhi to dismiss his government in 1953, and place him under preventive detention.

Some argue that the President may, by public notification under article 370(3), declare that Article 370 shall cease to be operative and no recommendation of the Constituent Assembly is needed as it does not exist any longer. Others say it can be amended by an amendment Act under Article 368 of the Constitution and the amendment extended under Article 370(1). Art. 147 of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir states no Bill or amendment seeking to make any change in the provisions of the constitution of India as applicable in relation to the State; shall be introduced or moved in either house of the Legislature. As per Article 5 of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir the executive and legislative power of the State extends to all matters except those with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws for the State under the provisions of the Constitution of India as applicable in relation to this state.

Applicability of the Constitution of India to J&K

In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of article 370 of the Constitution, the President, with the concurrence of the Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir made The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1950 which came into force on 26 Jan 1950 and was later superseded by the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954 which came into force on 14 May 1954.

Applicability of Central Acts to J&K

Acts passed by Indian Parliament have been extended to Jammu & Kashmir over a period of time. These acts are:

- All India Services Act
- Border Security Force Act
- Central Vigilance Commission Act
- Essential Commodities Act
- Haj Committee Act
- Income Tax Act
- The Central Laws (Extension To Jammu And Kashmir) Act, 1956
- The Central Laws (Extension To Jammu And Kashmir) Act, 1968
- Claims of Non Applicability of Central Acts
- Non applicability of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Act by claiming recourse to Article 370 was set aside in 2010

Demands for abrogation

There has been demand by BJP and RSS for abrogation of Article 370. Congress leader Karan Singh, son of Maharaja Hari Singh, has also opined that an integral review of Article 370 is overdue and needs cooperation not confrontation.

1.4.5 ARTICLE 371 (SPECIAL PROVISION WITH RESPECT TO THE STATES OF MAHARASHTRA AND GUJARAT)

1.4.5.1 NATURE:

There is a special provision incorporated with regard to Maharashtra and Gujarat and later on extended to few of other states. As per this article the constitution states that “Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the President may by order made with respect to the State of Maharashtra or Gujarat, provided for any special responsibility of the Governor for -

(a) the establishment of separate development boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada, and the rest of Maharashtra or, as the case may be, Saurashtra, Kutch and the rest of Gujarat with the provision that a report on the working of each of these boards will be placed each year before the State Legislative Assembly;

(b) the equitable allocation of funds for developmental expenditure over the said areas, subject to the requirements of the State as a whole; and

(c) an equitable arrangement providing adequate facilities for technical education and vocational training, and adequate opportunities for employment in services under the control of the State Government, in respect of all the said areas, subject to the requirements of the State as a whole.

1.4.5.2 POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

When in 1960 a proposal for the bifurcation of Bombay was under consideration the demand for the creation of a separate state of Vidarbha was revived. Some Congress MLAs from the Nagpur area strongly demanded the formation of Vidarbha. In order to forcefully and effectively press their demand, the people of the region organised Nag Vidarbha Andolan Samiti, which also organised violent demonstrations near Nagpur city. That the Vidarbha area would be given special representation and finance for its development, did not satisfy them. With the lapse of time the agitation for Vidarbha subsided although as a demand continued to be made. Marathwada Statutory Development Board Marathwada Statutory Development Board (MSDB) is a constitutional body created by Presidential Order in 1994 to develop Marathwada region of Maharashtra and to decrease regional imbalance in development within the state. MSDB releases annual report assessing problems within various districts of Marathwada, also monitors development work and expenditure.

Constitutional Provision

Article 371(2) of Constitution of India is a special provision in respect of States of Maharashtra and Gujarat. According to this article, President of India can give special responsibility to Governors of Maharashtra and Gujarat to create separate development boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada, Rest of Maharashtra regions of Maharashtra and Kutch, Saurashtra regions of Gujarat.

Article 371A

This article is incorporated in The Constitution of India in 1949 to provide special provision with respect to the State of Nagaland. This article provides guarantees to religious and social practices of Nagas, their Customary law and procedures, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law. The ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides. The Governor of Nagaland shall have special

responsibility with respect to law and order in the State of Nagaland. The Governor also has the power to establish a regional council for the Tuensang district.

Article 371B

Special provision with respect to the State of Assam Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the President may, by order made with respect to the State of Assam, provide for the constitution and functions of a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the State consisting of members of that Assembly elected from the tribal areas specified in Part I of the table appended to paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule and such number of other members of that Assembly as may be specified in the order and for the modifications to be made in the rules of procedure of that Assembly for the constitution and proper functioning of such committee.

Article 371D

Article 371D was added to the Indian Constitution to provide special provisions to the Telangana region of undivided Andhra Pradesh. When the State of Andhra Pradesh was formed in 1956, certain safeguards were envisaged for the Telangana area in the matter of development and also in the matter of employment opportunities and educational facilities for the residents of that area. The provisions of clause (1) of article 371 of the Constitution were intended to give effect to certain features of these safeguards. The Public Employment (Requirement as to Residence) Act, 1957, was enacted to provide for employment opportunities for residents of Telangana area. But in 1969, the Supreme Court held the relevant provision of the Act to be unconstitutional in so far as it related to the safeguards envisaged for the Telangana area. Owing to a variety of causes, the working of the safeguards gave rise to a certain amount of dissatisfaction sometimes in the Telangana area and sometimes in the other areas of the State. Measures were devised from time to time to resolve the problems. Recently several leaders of Andhra Pradesh made a concerted effort to analyse the factors which have been giving rise to the dissatisfaction and find enduring answers to the problems with a view to achieving fuller emotional integration of the people of Andhra Pradesh. On the 21st September, 1973, they suggested certain measures (generally known as the Six-Point Formula) indicating a uniform approach for promoting accelerated development of the backward areas of the State so as to secure the balanced development of the State as a whole and for providing equitable opportunities to different areas of the State in this matter of education, employment and career prospects in

public services. This formula has received wide support in Andhra Pradesh and has been endorsed by the State Government.

This Bill has been brought forward to provide the necessary constitutional authority for giving effect to the Six-Point Formula in so far as it relates to the provision of equitable opportunities for people of different areas of the State in the matter of admission to educational institutions and public employment and constitution of an Administrative Tribunal with jurisdiction to deal with certain disputes and grievances relating to public services. The Bill also seeks to empower Parliament to legislate for establishing a Central University in the State and contains provisions of an incidental and consequential nature including the provision for the validation of certain appointments made in the past. As the Six-Point Formula provides for the discontinuance of the Regional Committee constituted under clause (1) of article 371 of the Constitution, the Bill also provides for the repeal of that clause.

Article 370E

Article 370E grant special status to six backward districts of Hyderabad-Karnataka region to establish a separate Development Board This board will see that sufficient funds are allocated for Development of the region. It provides reservation in education and Government-jobs to locals.

Article 371F

Article 371F was incorporated in Indian Constitution to provide special provisions with respect to the State of Sikkim Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution. According to this Article, the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim shall be constituted under the Constitution of India. Parliament may, for the purpose of protecting the rights and interests of the different sections of the population of Sikkim make provision for the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim which may be filled by candidates belonging to such sections and for the delimitation of the assembly constituencies from which candidates belonging to such sections alone may stand for election to the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim. The Governor of Sikkim shall have special responsibility for peace and for an equitable arrangement for ensuring the social and economic advancement of different sections of the population of Sikkim and in the discharge of his special responsibility under this clause, the Governor of Sikkim shall, subject to such directions as the President may, from time to time, deem fit to issue, act in his discretion.

1.4.6 5th SCHEDULE

1.4.6.1 NATURE:

The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India deals with administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes in these areas.

Scheduled Areas: The Fifth Schedule covers Tribal areas in 9 states of India namely Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Orissa and Rajasthan. The North Eastern states such as Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram are covered by the Sixth Schedule and not included in the Fifth schedule.

1.4.6.2 FIFTH SCHEDULE PROVISIONS

The provisions related to Fifth Schedule Areas are incorporated in Article 244(1), to administer and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes

PART A: GENERAL

1. Interpretation.—In this Schedule, unless the context otherwise requires, the expression “State” does not include the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
2. Executive power of a State in Scheduled Areas.—Subject to the provisions of this Schedule, the executive power of a State extends to the Scheduled Areas therein.
3. Report by the Governor to the President regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas.—The Governor of each State having Scheduled Areas therein shall annually, or whenever so required by the President, make a report to the President regarding the administration of the Scheduled Areas in that State and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of directions to the State as to the administration of the said areas.

PART B: ADMINISTRATION AND CONTROL OF SCHEDULED AREAS AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

4. Tribes Advisory Council.—(1) There shall be established in each State having Scheduled Areas therein and, if the President so directs, also in any State having Scheduled Tribes but not Scheduled Areas therein, a Tribes Advisory Council consisting of not more than twenty

members of whom, as nearly as may be, three-fourths shall be the representatives of the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of the State:

Provided that if the number of representatives of the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of the State is less than the number of seats in the Tribes Advisory Council to be filled by such representatives, the remaining seats shall be filled by other members of those tribes.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Tribes Advisory Council to advise on such matters pertaining to the welfare and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes in the State as may be referred to them by the Governor.

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(3) The Governor may make rules prescribing or regulating, as the case may be,—

(a) the number of members of the Council, the mode of their appointment and the appointment of the Chairman of the Council and of the officers and servants thereof;

(b) the conduct of its meetings and its procedure in general; and

(c) all other incidental matters.

5. Law applicable to Scheduled Areas.—(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the Governor may by public notification direct that any particular Act of Parliament or of the Legislature of the State shall not apply to a Scheduled Area or any part thereof in the State or shall apply to a Scheduled Area or any part thereof in the State subject to such exceptions and modifications as he may specify in the notification and any direction given under this sub-paragraph may be given so as to have retrospective effect.

(2) The Governor may make regulations for the peace and good government of any area in a State which is for the time being a Scheduled Area.

In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such regulations may—

(a) prohibit or restrict the transfer of land by or among members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area;

(b) regulate the allotment of land to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area;

(c) regulate the carrying on of business as money-lender by persons who lend money to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area.

(3) In making any such regulation as is referred to in sub-paragraph (2) of this paragraph, the Governor may repeal or amend any Act of Parliament or of the Legislature of the State or any existing law which is for the time being applicable to the area in question.

(4) All regulations made under this paragraph shall be submitted forthwith to the President and, until assented to by him, shall have no effect.

1.4.7 SIXTH SCHEDULE

The Sixth Schedule is an interesting document. It was created to ensure that the rights of tribals who are minorities within a state or geographical area populated by a dominant non-tribal population are not subsumed within the rights framework of the latter. The person who mooted this idea was JJM Nichols Roy, a Khasi from undivided Assam, who at that time had a vision for his people and for other tribes.

The British policy of excluding various “primitive” tribes in the North-east, particularly those from the Naga Hills and the Abors of the North East Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh) whom they found particularly belligerent, had kept the tribes out of the purview of any kind of administration. They remained out of the formal systems of governance and were guided by their own tribal laws. Had they been mainstreamed after Independence and treated as equal citizens within the state of Assam, their plight might have been indescribable.

The Sixth Schedule was aimed at granting some kind of autonomy to the tribes so that they could be guided by their customary laws and practices and not be pushed to conform to a modern system of governance where they might not be able to negotiate their own liberal political space and to grow according to their own genius. Despite the Sixth Schedule, many tribes who came under the larger rubric of Assam felt stifled by the authoritative nature of the dominant Assamese caste Hindu rulers who did not display the magnanimity expected of them.

One of the fundamental provisions of the Sixth Schedule is that state governors play a very special protective role within these areas. They are empowered to make regulations prohibiting or restricting the transfer of land from tribals to non-tribals and prevent exploitation of the tribal communities. Since these Scheduled Areas are supposed to enjoy autonomy protected by the Constitution, the laws passed by Parliament and the state legislatures do not automatically apply to them. But after Meghalaya was created in 1972

vide the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, the Sixth Schedule was amended with the addition of Article 12 (A). Basically this Article gives supremacy to the laws passed by Parliament or by the state legislature over those passed by the district councils which were created by the Sixth Schedule to govern tribal or scheduled areas. The insertion of Article 12 (A) has in a sense diluted the powers of the district councils but the argument put forth at the time of the amendment is that the newly created state of Meghalaya is already ruled by tribal legislators, with non-tribals contesting from only a very few seats.

1.4.8 EXERCISES

1. Critically analyse importance of Article 370 to the Indian Constitution.
2. Outline Articles 371 and state reasons for incorporation of various sections.
3. Explain how 5th and 6th Schedule empowers weaker sections of the society?

2.1 POLITICS OF REGIONALISM AND EMERGING TRENDS

- Zain Bhat

STRUCTURE

2.1.0 Objectives

2.1.1 Introduction

2.1.2 Demand for Reorganization of States

2.1.3 Appointment and Report of State Reorganization Committee

2.1.4 State Reorganization Act 1956

2.1.5 Exercises

2.1.0 OBJECTIVES

This topic provides basic knowledge about the organisation and reorganisation of states since independence. After going through this topic you will be able to know

- the nature of the states before independence
- about the beginning of demands for the reorganization of states
- about the State Reorganization Committee
- comprehend the present structure of Indian states

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

India is today a union of Twenty-Nine states and seven union territories. The geography of the Indian federal polity, however, has been the product of a long period of development and even after it came into existence, it has been continuously changing.

In the British period, the 'states' were independent and there was not any form of Central Government. The first Central Government could make its appearance only in the year 1773. Before this, there were three provinces, known as 'presidencies' namely the presidency of Fort William in Bengal, the presidency of Fort Saint George in Madras, and the presidency of Bombay. The Presidency of Fort William was the largest. The Charter Act of 1883

provided for its division into: i) Presidency of Fort William in the lower province of Bengal; and ii) Presidency of Agra.

Punjab became a separate province in 1849 followed by Oudh in 1856, the Central provinces in 1881, Assam in 1874, the North Western Frontier province in 1901, the United province of Agra and Oudh in 1901, Bihar in 1911, Sindh and Orissa, both in 1936.

In addition to these, 12 governors provinces, there were six chief commissioner's provinces viz. British's Balochistan, Delhi, Ajmer- Marwar, Coorg, Andaman and Nicobar Island and Panth Piploda. After India's partition in 1947, both the North-Western Frontier province and Sind became part of Pakistan, while Punjab and Bengal were divided between the two countries, Baluchistan was also given to Pakistan.

The post-independent India, thus comprised of Nine governor's provinces: Chennai, Mumbai, West Bengal, the United Provinces, Bihar, East Punjab, the Central provinces, Assam and Orissa (Now Odisha) and 5 Chief Commissioner's provinces: Delhi, Ajmer-Marwar, Panth Piploda, Coorg, Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

In the wake up of partition, India faced the problem of consolidation, the investigation of the princely states and the framing of a constitution. Approximately 2/5th of the area under British Raj had been made up of these 562 principalities, varying in size from a few square miles to an area as large as Hyderabad, with 17 million people. Once the princely states had acceded to India, the process of integration began similar states were merged with neighbouring provinces. Others were consolidated as centrally administered areas.

In 1950, when the new constitution came into existence, the constituent units of the Indian union thus found themselves classified into: Part A, Part B, Part C and Part D. The Part A states included the erstwhile Governor's provinces; Part B states are the erstwhile princely states; Part C states are the erstwhile chief commissioner's provinces as well as the erstwhile princely states; and in Part D areas comprises of Andaman & Nicobar Islands were kept.

2.1.2 REGION AND REGIONALISM

To understand regionalism, we need to know various dimensions of the region. Region as a geographical unit, is delimited from each other. Region as a social system, reflects the relation between different human beings and groups. Regions are an organised cooperation in

cultural, economic, political or military fields. Region acts as a subject with distinct identity, language, culture and tradition.

Regionalism is an ideology and political movement that seeks to advance the causes of regions. As a process it plays role within the nation as well as outside the nation i.e. at international level. Both types of regionalism have different meaning and have positive as well as negative impact on society, polity, diplomacy, economy, security, culture, development, negotiations, etc.

At the international level, regionalism refers to transnational cooperation to meet a common goal or to resolve a shared problem or it refers to a group of countries such as- Western Europe, or Southeast Asia, linked by geography, history or economic features. Used in this sense, regionalism refers to attempts to reinforce the links between these countries economic features.

The second meaning of the term is regionalism at national level refers to a process in which sub-state actors become increasingly powerful, power devolves from central level to regional governments. These are the regions within country, distinguished in culture, language and other socio-cultural factors. If the interest of one region or a state is asserted against the country as a whole or against another region/state in a hostile way, and if a conflict is promoted by such alleged interests, then it can be called as regionalism.

If someone is aspiring to or make special efforts to develop one's state or region or to remove poverty & make social justice there, then that cannot be called as regionalism. Regionalism doesn't means defending the federal features of the constitution. Any demand for separate state, autonomous region or for devolution of power below the state level is also, sometimes confused as regionalism.

2.1.3 POLITICS OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA

Roots of regionalism in India is due to its manifold diversity of languages, cultures, ethnic groups, communities, religions and so on, and encouraged by the regional concentration of those identity markers, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. For many centuries, India remained the land of many lands, regions, cultures and traditions. For instance, southern India (the home of Dravidian cultures), which is itself a region of many regions, is evidently different from the north, the west, the central and the north-east. Even the east of India is

different from the North-East of India comprising today seven constituent units of India federation with the largest concentration of tribal people.

Regionalism has remained perhaps the most potent force in Indian politics ever since independence (1947), if not before. It has remained the main basis of many regional political parties which have governed many states since the late 1960s. Three clear patterns can be identified in the post-independence phases of accommodation of regional identity through statehood.

2.1.4 DEMAND FOR REORGANIZATION OF STATES

The demand for redrawing of the state boundaries in India is long standing, dating back to the year 1903, when Sir Herbert Risley, Home Secretary in the Central Government, wrote to Bengal proposing the historic partition of that province effected in 1905.

Mahatma Gandhi at the very outset wanted that the provincial units of the Congress party should be organized on linguistic basis. Accordingly, in 1921 the Congress party gave effect to the linguistic principle in its own constitution by dividing the existing provinces into linguistic ones for its organization purpose. The Nehru Report 1928 approached the question of formation of provinces on the basis of linguistic affiliation. The Congress party adopted a resolution in 1927 affirming that the “time has come for the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis”. In 1937-38 it renewed its pledge to re-carve the provinces on the same basis.

When the Constituent Assembly was formed, the demand of formation of linguistic states became intensely line on its flour. Therefore, in June 1948, the Assembly announced the setting up of the linguistic provinces commission under the chairmanship of S.K. Dhar, to examine the case of formation of certain new provinces. The Dhar Commission warned the Linguistically homogenous provinces would have a substantial bias threatening national unity and that in any case, each state would have minorities. The report was received with general disappointment. The Congress Party also didn't like the Dhar prescription and announced its own committee to consider the question of linguistic provinces.

In December, 1948 in the Jaipur session, the linguistic provinces committee was appointed; it consisted of three members, namely, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya. This committee was to examine the question in the context of the decision taken by the Congress in the past and the requirements of the existing situation. The main concern of this committee was the formation of Andhra from Telugu-speaking region of

Madras. This was the opening wedge for the bitter struggle over states reorganization which was to dominate Indian politics from 1953-56.

2.1.4.1 CREATION OF ANDHRA PRADESH

The demand for a separate state of Andhra Pradesh had deep roots among the Telugu people. The C. Rajagopalacharya's ministry in Madras after the first general election was not with T. Prakasam, popularly known as 'Andhra Kesari', accentuated the clash between the Tamils and Telugu speaking Andhras. The Andhras now revived their demand that the Madras state, as formed by the British be carved into two separate Tamil and Telugu-speaking areas, got a big fillip when a respected Leader, Potti Sriramulu, undertook a fast into death. Nehru told his cabinet colleagues that he would not be intimidated by these tactics. But when the fasting leader died and the tragedy was followed by wide-spread riots and destruction, Nehru yielded and in 1953 the state of Andhra Pradesh was created. Although Nehru argued against the 'foolish and tribal attitudes of provincialism' the states, he said, were only for administrative purposes – but the demand has been recognized and other linguistic groups would now have nothing else.

2.1.5 APPOINTMENT AND REPORT OF STATE REORGANIZATION COMMISSION (SRC)

The creation of Andhra state was a signal for a demand for Kannada-speaking state comprising old Mysore state and including areas then a part of erstwhile Bombay (Mumbai) and Hyderabad states. Nehru and his cabinet and the Congress high command decided to resist it. However, when Nehru was greeted with black flags at Belgaum, he sensed the danger to his position as the idol of the people and announced the formation of a commission (December 29, 1953) to study the question of reorganization of state on a linguistic basis, under the chairmanship of Fazal Ali, a judge of the Supreme Court.

The other two members of the commission were H.N. Kunzru and K.H. Panikkar. The SRC sought a balanced approach between regional sentiment and national interest. It recommended that the constituent units of the Indian union be the following 16 states and 3 centrally administered areas. These 16 states are: 1) Chennai (2) Kerala (3) Mysore (4) Hyderabad (5) Andhra Pradesh (6) Mumbai (7) Vidarbha (8) Madhya Pradesh (9)

Rajasthan (10) Punjab (11) Uttar Pradesh (12) Bihar (13) West Bengal (14) Assam (15) Orissa(now Odisha) (16) Jammu and Kashmir. The Centrally administered areas are: 1) Delhi (2) Manipur (3) Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

2.1.5.1 STATE REORGANIZATION ACT (SRC), 1956

The SRC's proposals for redistribution of states in some cases were drastically revised by the Government on January 16, 1956. The Government announced its decisions on the report, which may be summarized as follows:

- 1) The Government accepted the commission's recommendations regarding the formation of new states of Kerala, Karnataka (which was to be named Mysore) and Madhya Pradesh and regarding the continuance of the states of Chennai, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar, West Bengal, Assam and Orissa, Broadly on the basis proposed by the commission. In other words :
 - a) Uttar Pradesh was to continue in its existing form,
 - b) Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa were to be proposed by the Commission.
 - c) Chennai, Kerala, Karnataka (formerly Mysore), Bihar and West Bengal were to continue as wished by the commission subject of course, to minor boundary adjustments ;
 - d) Assam was to be as desired by the Commission except that Tripura was not to be included in its territory.
 - e) Maharashtra was to consist of Marathi speaking areas of Mumbai, Madhya Pradesh, Hyderabad and Gujarat of Saurashtra, Kutch and the Gujarati-speaking areas of Mumbai.
 - f) The existing constitutional disparity between the different categories, of states was to disappear. This meant that Part-B states were to be equated with Part-A states by deleting Article 371 of the constitution and abolition of the institution of Raj Pramukh and Part-C states were to disappear altogether as a separate cluster of states and such of the existing Part-C states as could not be merged with the adjoining states, were to be directly administered by the central government.
 - g) Tripura was to remain as a centrally administered area.

In total, the Act provided for the list of 14 states and 6 Union Territories states. The state are: (1) Andhra Pradesh (2) Assam (3) Bihar (4) Mumbai (5) J&K (6) Kerala (7) Madhya Pradesh (M.P) (8) Madras (Now Chennai) (9) Mysore (Karnataka) (10) Uttar Pradesh (11) Rajasthan (12) Orissa (Now Odisha) (13) West Bengal (Paschim Banga). The Union Territories are: (1) Andaman & Nicobar Islands, (2) Delhi (3) Himachal Pradesh (4) Laccadive Minicoy & Amindivi Islands (Now Lakshadweep) (5) Manipur (6) Tripura.

2.1.5.2 DIVISION OF BOMBAY INTO STATE OF MAHARASHTRA AND GUJARAT (1960)

The SRC opposed the division of Mumbai into Marathi and Gujarat states largely because of the critical question of Mumbai city. Marathi speakers constituted its largest language group, but the city was dominated by Gujarat wealthy community. Nehru gave an opportunity to every linguistic group to get what it wanted provided it put the necessary political pressure. Encouraged by Nehru's attitude, the people of Maharashtra gave a keen edge to the controversy over Mumbai state. They demanded that the composite state to split into separate states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

In the Marathi speaking districts of Mumbai state, widespread rioting broke out and 80 people were killed in police firing. Under pressure, the Central Government offered, but then withdraw a proposal that the state be divided but that the city of Mumbai be administered as a separate state. During this period of indecision and vacillation on the part of Nehru and the Congress high command, the rioting spread to Gujarat. Mumbai politics polarized linguistically, two broadly based language front organizations, the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, and the Mahagujarat Janata Parishad were formed. In the 1957 the Assembly Elections, the Congress majority in Bombay was seriously threatened. Agitation continued and in 1960 the Congress gave way to the demand for reorganization and Gujarat and Maharashtra were constituted as separate linguistic states with the city of Bombay included as a part of state of Maharashtra.

2.1.5.2 CREATION OF STATE OF NAGALAND (1961)

In 1961, yet another new state was created when Nagaland Transitional Provisions Regulation, 1961 were promulgated by the President which provided for 45 members's members Interim body representing the various tribes. The areas comprised of Naga hills and area assumed the name of Nagaland and was given the status of the 16th state of the Indian

Union. The Nagas were released from Assamese administration and on 1 December 1963, the state of Nagaland came into existence with Kohima as its capital .

2.1.5.3 BIFURCATION OF PUNJAB

The Punjabi speaking people of the state of Punjab mainly Sikhs, under the leadership of the Akali Dal demanded a separate statehood of Punjabi speaking people. The Hindus on the other hand, under the leadership of Jan Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj urged the Union of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Patiala and East Punjab States Union into a 'Greater Punjab' containing a hindu majority.

Both sides resorted to agitation, violence, strikes, demonstration and fasts – sometimes 'fasts unto death'. The centre did not concede their demands. Sant Fateh Singh leader of one of the two-factions of Akali Dal, held out a threat that if by September 25, 1966 the demand of Punjabi speaking Suba was not conceded, he would burn himself to death.

The centre on 1st November, 1966 decided to divide Punjab on linguistic basis.

2.1.5.4 FORMATION OF THE STATE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH :

After independence the chief commissioner province of Himachal Pradesh (H.P) came into being on 15th of April 1948. The H.P became a part C state in 26th of January ,1950 and union territory on November 1 1956. In 25th of January 1971, Himachal Pradesh a Union Territory was elevated to the status of a state.

2.1.5.5 REORGANIZATION OF ASSAM :

In April 1970, a separate autonomous state of Meghalaya was created within Assam. This was provided with its own legislature and council of Ministers. But this did not satisfy the aspirations of the people and on 30th September, 1970, the Meghalaya Assembly unanimously request the Union Government to convert it into a full-fledged state. This demand was finally conceded on January 1972 and number of states raised to 19 in the form of Meghalaya.

2.1.5.6 FORMATION OF SIKKIM AND MIZORAM AS THE 22ND AND 23RD STATE:

On 7th Sept. 1974, the Parliament passed an act extending to Sikkim the status of an 'associate state' the associate status lasted for less than a year, and on 26th April 1975, Sikkim formally became the 22nd state of Indian union.

At the time of independence, Mizoram became a district of Assam, because of neglecting by the authorities, the Mizos felt that it was a bad bargain for them to continue as part of India and started agitations in 1966. It was declared a disturbed area . The Armed Force Special Power Act (AFSPA) also was invoked on June 30, 1986, the historic Mizoram Peace Accord was signed between the Government of India and the Mizo-National Front ending the two decades old insurgency. Consequently the Constitution (53rd Amendment) Act, 1986, inserted a new Article 371-G conferring full statehood to Mizoram.

2.1.5.7 ARUNACHAL PRADESH AS THE 24TH STATE

Arunachal Pradesh originally known as the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) was placed under the administration of the Union Government under the name of the Arunachal Pradesh on January 20, 1972. It became a full- fledged state of the Union in December 1986.

2.1.5.8 GOA AS 25TH STATE:

Till August 12, 1987, Goa was part of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu. Goa became the 25th state in the Indian Union by the Act of Parliament on Aug. 12, 1987 while Daman and Diu formed a Union Territory administered by the Governor of Goa ,who simultaneously holds office as the Governor of Daman and Diu.

2.1.5.9 CHHATTISGARH AS THE 26TH STATE

On 1st Nov., 2000, a new state to be known as the state of Chattisgarh comprising the following territories of the existing state of Madhya Pradesh came into existences, Bastar, Bilaspur, Dantewara, Dhamtari, Durg, Janjgir-Champa, Jashpur, Kanker, Korba, Kariya, Raigarh, Raipur and Sangiya Districts etc.

Chattisgarh became a reality without anyone really wanting it. It did not even experience a mass movement. The Bhartiya Janata Party adopted the demand because it thought that after the 1998 the General Assembly Election, it would be in a majority in the

Chattisgarh region, the Congress played along because it was afraid of losing its hold over the region.

2.1.5.10 UTTARAKHAND AS THE TWENTY-SEVENTH STATE

On November 9, 2000 a new state to be known as Uttaranchal comprising the following territories of the existing state of Uttar Pradesh came into existence. The areas include Pauri Garhwal, Tehral, Garhwal, Uttarkhashi, Chamoli, Dehradun, Nainital, Almora, Pithorgarh, Haldwani .

2.1.5.11 JHARKHAND AS THE 28TH STATE :

On 15th November 2000 , a new state to be known as Jharkhand, comprising the territories like Bokaro, Chatra, Dhanabad, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Kodarma, Deoghar, East Singhbhum and West Singhbhum . It came into being after being carved out of Bihar.

2.1.5.12 TELANGANA AS 29TH STATE OF INDIA

The long struggle of Telangana people was materialized on 2 June 2014, when Telangana was separated from Andhra Pradesh as a new 29th state of India with the city of Hyderabad as its capital. It comprises of ten districts.

2.1.6 REGIONALISM AND INTER-STATE DISPUTES

Another form of regionalism in India has found expression in the form of interstate disputes. There are boundary disputes for example between Karnataka and Maharashtra on Belgaum where Marathi speaking population is surrounded by Kannada speaking people, between Kerala and Karnataka on Kasargod, between Assam and Nagaland on Rengma reserved forests. There is a dispute over Chandigarh in Punjab and Haryana. The first important dispute regarding the use of water source was over the use of three rivers mainly Narmada, Krishna and Cauvery in which states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra were involved. Disputes also arose between use of Cauvery waters among the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. Another dispute arose among the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh over the use and distribution of waters of the Krishna River. Disputes between Punjab, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh over the use of waters of Ravi River are sometimes becoming tension point between these states. The

Electricity sharing issue between Punjab and Delhi is another example of this inter-state disputes.

2.1.7 CAUSES OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA

There are many causes of the growth of regionalism in India related to economic, political, development attitude of the central government and so on.

- ***Low rate of economic growth:*** The economic growth of India has been fluctuating since independence. But with respect to high population growth, the economic growth has been not enough to catch the development with full speed. In the last decade, the economic growth was progressive, but now they are reeling under the influence of world economic crisis and other bottlenecks at domestic level.
- ***Socio-economic and political organisation of states:*** The states have been unable to do the adequate land reforms and the feudal mentality still persists. Bhoodan and Gramdaan movements, after independence, were not enthusiastically carried and even land under land Banks was not efficiently distributed. The political activities in the backward states were limited to vote bank politics and scams. The administrative policies and decisions as well as the developmental plans taken at the national level may not satisfy all people of the country and these people, who remain dissatisfied, may feel that their interest are not properly safeguarded. In such a context they form the regional parties to solve their own problems. That was how the regional parties like D.M.K, A.D.M.K., the National Conference of Jammu and Kashmir etc. were formed.
- ***Lower level of infrastructural facilities in backward states:*** The level of infrastructural development, such as power distribution, irrigation facilities, roads, modern markets for agricultural produce has been at back stage. All these are state list subjects.
- ***Low level of social expenditure by states on education, health and sanitation:*** These subjects are core for human resource development. The states which have invested heavily on these subjects fall under the developed and advanced states, for example Tamil Nadu where health care services in Primary health centre is bench mark for other states.
- ***Political and administration failure:*** India is still not free from ethnic, racial and religious orthodoxy. Sometimes the Regionalism in Indian Politics emerges on these ethnic, racial or religious grounds. That was how the Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya

Parishad, Siromani Akali Dal, the Muslim League or even the Telugu Desam Party was formed. This is source of tension and gives birth to sub-regional movements for separate states. Jarkhand, Chattisgarh, Uttrakhand and recently Telangana are result of this failure only. Many such demands, such as Vidarbha, Saurashtra, Darjeeling and Bodoland, etc, are raised due to a sort of discrimination perceived by elites and people of these regions. These failures also weakens the confidence of private players and do not attract investors in the states.

- ***The doctrine of the ‘Son of the soil’***: the doctrine explains a form of regionalism, which is in discussion since 1950. According to it, a state specifically belongs to the main linguistic group inhabiting it or that the state constitutes the exclusive homeland of its main language speakers, who are the sons of the soil or local residents.

2.1.8 SALIENT FEATURES OF REGIONALISM IN THE POLITICS OF INDIA

The regionalism in India shows certain uniform patterns in terms of demands, mobilization and active protest movements. Some of them are outlined below.

1. India is a big country having maximum social diversity in the world. Regionalism in India is an essential product of its social diversity. The people speak different languages have different ways of life, observe different social customs and above all are in varying stages of social and economic development. The people of one part of the state have also a sense of separateness from those living in another part of the same state. Movements for the cause of a regional interest usually take place with the perception of the unique identity. The examples are a Vidharbha or a Marathwada in Maharashtra, a Saurashtra in Gujarat, a Vindhya Pradesh in Madhya Pradesh, Darjeeling in West Bengal, Ladakh in J&K, Bodoland in Assam, demand for alternative arrangement by Nagas and Kukiland in Manipur, etc.
2. Linguistic factor is another important feature of regionalism in India. The state of Andhra Pradesh was created in 1953 on linguistic basis. It had led the way for the political re-organisation of the country on linguistic ground as a whole.
3. Another feature of regionalism in India is economic injustice. When the people of one part of a state thrive and others still remain backward and under-developed, a sense of dissatisfaction naturally develops. The people of Telangana earlier had resented the misuse

of their surplus funds in erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh. Shiv Sena was established as a regional political party in order to protect the economic interest of the Maharashtrians. Assam Gana Parishad was established as a political party out of the anti-foreigners issue launched by All Assam Students Union with the objective of protecting the interests of the 'sons of the soil'.

4. Social injustice is another factor promoting regionalism in India. Social backwardness coupled with that of economic degradation inculcates in the minds of the suffering people a sense of struggle for the cause of their own area or region. The tribals of Bihar, Odisha and MP sometimes cry for their concerned regions asserting their political aspirations for an autonomous administrative unit or state. The same tendency is also found in Nagaland, Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya.
5. Political factor also creates a sense of regionalism in the minds of the people. Local and regional leaders usually fight for a sectional interest with a long range view of their own interest. Some of them believe that they might have a better and superior position in the political hierarchy if they have a state of their own choice. A minority in a particular state may become a majority in a state of its own choice. The agitations for a Punjabi Suba in the state of Punjab or for a Bodoland in Assam are the examples.

2.1.9 POLITICS OF REGIONALISM: A CRITICAL REVIEW

In India, sectoral and regional imbalances have always been a source of great social and psychological tensions, which is often leading to regionalised demands. Fruits of economic boom have never been equally shared by all the regions and their people throughout India. It has given rise to new tensions – social, economic and political. It poses a danger to the integrity and stability of the whole society as well as unity of the nation.

There is a wide gap between region to region/province to province. There are pockets of poverty amidst plenty within each province/state. Dry and hilly areas as well as those with tribal populations are still far below the national average. It has widened the gap between the prosperous and backward states and created a wide gap between the rich and poor within a region.

Uneven regional development results in numerous complications such as wastage of resources increase in public costs, social justice, deceleration of economic growth, threat to national integration and possibility. There is an urgent need to tackle these problems;

otherwise, they will aggravate the imbalances in the economy. Political, economic, social and ethical considerations also call for measures to attain greater parity in the levels of development. Many experts in the field of regional economics and development economics have graphically narrated the adverse consequences of persisting disparities in various studies.

Harvey Armstrong and Jim Taylor contend that severe regional differences in levels of employment and dangerous for social cohesion. Co-existence of backward regions along with developed ones with lower purchasing power in former makes inflation worse than it otherwise would be. According to them, national employment and output could be substantially enhanced if regional unemployment disparities are reduced. When such disparities reduced with more geographic distribution of demand for labour, inflationary pressures would be less severe. There will be optimum utilization of social overhead capital.

As pointed out by Friedman and Alonso, reduction in regional disparities would pave way for greater national integration, increase in economic growth and political stability. On the contrary, if the disparities are widening, a sense of unfairness and injustice may kindle regional and parochial movements, as seen in many countries. Reduction in income disparities is also in line with noble goal of social justice. There is a general agreement that there should be greater equality in the living standards of people residing in different parts of the country.

The prevailing regional disparities are increasing friction and conflict between various states, especially between rich and poor states. When the Central government allocates more resources to the poor states, the relatively developed states are complaining that they are penalising for their development efforts. Their efforts to reduce population growth and improve the relative standard of living of people is becoming a negative factor to allocation of finances, since the Finance Commission is factoring the population and poverty as a criterion for allocating the resources. This is creating a sort of friction between various states in India.

The regional imbalances are quite often leading to the demands for separate statehood, especially in a state where inter-state disparities are creating a sense of discrimination among the segments of population. The Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh states were created due to demands from the people of backward regions in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Similarly, there is a long-standing feeling that

Telangana has not received its due share in investment allocations, and that the ‘surpluses’ from Telangana have been diverted to the other regions. Ultimately this sense of deprivation led to the long struggle which culminated with the creation of Telangana in 2014. Similarly, other movements such as Gorkhaland, Vidharbha, etc. are related to the same regional imbalances. The backwardness and lack of investment in Darjeeling Hills is the region for separate state demand by Gorkha people. Similarly, in Vidarbha, the biggest grouse of the people relates to water resources. Thirty-six per cent of the country’s dams are in Maharashtra, but Vidarbha faces drought almost every year, leading to farmers committing suicide. Similarly, the demand for Purvanchal and Harit Pradesh in Uttar Pradesh are primarily base on demand for development. Purvanchal, the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, falls in the Gangetic plains and is rich with fertile soil, but it is not as developed as the western part of state proposed as Harit Pradesh. While successive state governments in Uttar Pradesh have demarcated funds for development of Purvanchal, the region's power and infrastructure is one of the worst in the country. People in Purvanchal think the benefit of the green revolution was reaped by western Uttar Pradesh and they have gained very little.

Many demands of separatism, particularly in Northeastern region are becoming serious and violent due to prevailing poverty and regional disparities in the region in general and within each of the Northeastern states in particular. The demand for Bodoland was largely a fight for getting more access to resources, both human (employment) and material. The claims and counter claims of each of the groups increasing unrest among the people and it is leading extremism and separatism.

2.1.10 LET US SUM UP

We have seen how regionalism could be good or bad for a nation as well for group of nations. The Constitution of India under Article 19 gives every citizen a fundamental right to move around and settle down peacefully any part of the country. And, as a citizen of India everyone should respect this fundamental right of every person, avoiding clashes like Shiv Sena does in Maharashtra. The need of the hour is to develop each region of India through devolution of power to local governments and empowering people for their participation in decision-making. The governments at state level need to find out the alternative resources of energy, source of employment for local people, use of technology in governance, planning and for agriculture development. The 12th five-year plan targets for ‘faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth’, which will be instrumental for balanced regional growth.

The political system has become more complex with the growth of regional politics. This has in turn made the political system unstable. External forces too have capitalized the regional sentiments in India to spread terrorism on its soil. Over the years occurrences of ethnic or communal clashes have increased. The inter-state clashes are taking place more frequently these days and the role of regionalism in such clashes cannot be ruled out. The unfair treatment upon the outsiders in Maharashtra can be viewed as a classic example. For a nation which is surrounded by as many as seven countries, unity and integrity are the most important factors for national security. But at the same time homogeneity of development must be ensured so that the genuine grievances of the people do not go unaddressed.

2.1.11 EXERCISES

1. Define Regionalism.
2. Write an historical background for regionalism in India.
3. Write a critical note on reorganisation of states in India.
4. Explain the role of Reorganisation Committee in the creating new states?
5. What are the main causes for the regionalism in India?
6. The growing disparities among the regions are main source of regionalism in contemporary Indian politics. Do you agree with this?

2.2 AUTONOMY AND SEPARATISM: TAMIL NADU AND PUNJAB

- Zain Bhat

STRUCTURE

- 2.2.0 Objectives
- 2.2.1 Introduction
- 2.2.2 Autonomy and Separatist Movements in India
- 2.2.3 Demand for Dravid Nadu (Tamil Nadu)
- 2.2.4 Demand for Khalistan (Punjab)
- 2.2.5 Let us Sum Up
- 2.2.6 Exercises

2.2.0 OBJECTIVES

This lesson provides basic knowledge about the various autonomy and separatist movements in India. After going through this topic, you should be able to know:

- the nature of autonomy and separatist movements in India
- the difference between an “integrationist model of autonomy” and a “disintegrationist model of autonomy”;
- about the autonomy movement in Tamil Nadu
- about the separatist movement in Punjab.

2.2. 1 INTRODUCTION

The demand for restructuring Centre-State relations is as old as the adoption of the Constitution of India in 1950. The creation of a new structure of constitutional government for independent India deserves to be seen in historical context, particularly by taking into account the objective political situation that existed then. In fact, political imperatives emerging out of the independence movement historically as well as the immediate imperatives of the Partition of India influenced the design of government incorporated in the Constitution. On the one hand, the framers, drawing the spirit of the independence

movement, found the federal scheme appropriate for India; on the other hand, Partition created a fear of centrifugal elements in the nascent nation. Indeed, the major part of the history of the struggle for self-rule and independence reflects efforts to find a solution to India's gigantic diversity. Even the mobilization for the national movement was based on federal principles. The acceptance of language as the basis for redrawing the provincial boundary, for example, was a result of such a mobilization. The history of federalism and Centre-State relations in India is marked by political mobilization and intermittent struggle to fashion a more federal set-up. Even though such efforts have not yet resulted in any major constitutional changes towards a more federal orientation, the struggle has not been entirely fruitless.

2.2.2 AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The issue of autonomy changes its connotation in the context of Indian polity and in this sociopolitical milieu has to be studied in a federal context. Autonomy in the classical sense would mean a community's legitimate, sovereign right to self-determination or self-legislation, unimpeded by any external intervention. However, any attempt to study "autonomy" in the classical sense in the Indian case is bound to lead to conceptual delusions and contradictory conclusions. Autonomy in the Indian case has been primarily used to denote the demands of plural regional-ethno-national identities for a greater degree of self-administration within the larger federal framework of the Indian constitution. The other form of autonomy, which seeks to promote the idea of self-determination outside the purview of the Indian federation, is usually termed secessionist, antistatist, and antinational. For a clearer understanding, one could term the former an "integrationist model of autonomy" and the later a "disintegrationist model of autonomy."

Integrationist autonomy within the Indian union, without altering the central preponderance in the federal domain which means dependence on (and not autonomous independence from) the central administration has been accommodated, even after initial hesitation. In many cases, after the initial sanctioning of autonomous councils, the Indian state has granted statehood (status of a full-fledged federating unit with representative governance within the Indian union) to such autonomous units. Demands for "autonomy" within the Indian union but which seek to redefine the centre-state (federation-unit) relations in favour of the states (units), have been viewed with suspicion and as a prelude to secession, which could lead to the breakup of the Indian state in the long term. This has often provoked

the coercive might of the Indian state. In cases of demands for secession, the secessionist forces have often agreed to demands of greater autonomy, which would mean redefining the centre-state relations. But the Indian state has not yet grown out of the postcolonial inertia of Unitarian federalism to the degree that it can accommodate such demands. The obsession with a Unitarian federal system has paralyzed the state's capacity to tackle such problems without violence.

2.2.3 DEMAND FOR DRAVIDA NADU (TAMIL NADU)

Dravida Nadu, also known as Dravidistan or Dravidadesa, was the name of a proposed sovereign state for the speakers of the Dravidian languages in South Asia. The major political parties backing the demand were the Justice Party led by E. V. Ramasamy and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) led by C. N. Annadurai.

The concept of Dravida Nadu had its root in the anti-Brahminism movement in Tamil Nadu, whose aim was to end the alleged Brahmin dominance in the Tamil society and government. The early demands of this movement were social equality, and greater power and control. However, over the time, it came to include a separatist movement, demanding a sovereign state for the Tamil people. The major political party backing this movement was the Justice Party, which came to power in the Madras Presidency in 1921.

Since the late 19th century, the anti-Brahmin Tamil leaders had stated that the non-Brahmin Tamils were the original inhabitants of the Tamil-speaking region. The Brahmins, on the other hand, were described not only as oppressors, but even as a foreign power, on par with the British colonial rulers. The prominent Tamil leader, E. V. Ramasami (popularly known as "Periyar") stated that the Tamil society was free of any societal divisions before the arrival of Brahmins, whom he described as Aryan invaders. Periyar was an atheist, and considered the Indian nationalism as "an atavistic desire to endow the Hindu past on a more durable and contemporary basis".

The proponents of Dravida Nadu constructed elaborate historical anthropologies to support their theory that the Dravidian-speaking areas once had a great non-Brahmin polity and civilisation, which had been destroyed by the Aryan conquest and Brahmin hegemony. This led to an idealisation of the ancient Tamil society before its contact with the "Aryan race", and led to a surge in the Tamil nationalism. Periyar expounded the Hindu epic Ramayana as a disguised historical account of how the Aryans subjugated the Tamils ruled

by Ravana. Some of the separatists also posed Saivism as an indigenous, even non-Hindu religion.

The Indian National Congress, a majority of whose leaders were Brahmins, came to be identified as a Brahmin party. Periyar, who had joined Congress in 1919, became disillusioned with what he considered as the Brahminic leadership of the party. The link between Brahmins and Congress became a target of the growing Tamil nationalism.

In 1925, Periyar launched the Self-respect movement, and by 1930, he was formulating the most radical "anti-Aryanism". The rapport between the Justice Party and the Self-Respect movement of Periyar (who joined the party in 1935) strengthened the anti-Brahmin and anti-North sentiment. In 1937–38, Hindi and Hindustani were introduced as new subjects in the schools, when C. Rajagopalachari of Congress became the Chief Minister of Madras Presidency. This led to widespread protests in the Tamil-speaking region, which had a strong independent linguistic identity. Periyar saw the Congress imposition of Hindi in government schools as further proof of an Aryan conspiracy. In August 1941, Periyar declared that the agitation for Dravida Nadu was being temporarily stopped. The reason cited was that it was necessary to help the government in its war efforts. The agitation would be renewed after the conclusion of the war. In August 1944, Periyar created a new party called Dravidar Kazhagam out of the Justice Party, at the Salem Provincial Conference. The creation of a separate non-Brahmin Dravidian nation was a central aim of the Party. In 1944, when Periyar met the Dalit leader B. R. Ambedkar to discuss joint initiatives, Ambedkar stated that the idea of Dravidistan was applicable to entire India, since "Brahminism" was "a problem for the entire subcontinent".

2.2.3.1 DRAVIDA MUNNETRA KAZHAGAM

In 1949, Annadurai and other leaders split up from Periyar and established Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Annadurai was initially more radical than Periyar in his demand for a separate Dravida Nadu. In highlighting the demand for Dravida Nadu, the economics of exploitation by the Hindi-speaking, Aryan, Brahminical North was elaborated upon. It was contended that Dravida Nadu had been transformed into a virtual marketplace for north Indian products. And, thus, Annadurai explained that to change this situation, a separate Dravida Nadu must be demanded. Throughout the 1940s, Periyar spoke along the lines of a trifurcation of India, that is dividing the existing geographical region into Dravida Nadu, Muslim India (Pakistan), and Aryan Land (Hindustan). In public meetings that he addressed between March and June

1940, he projected the three-nation doctrine as the only solution which could end the political impasse in the country.

In 1950, Periyar stated that Dravida Nadu, if it comes into being, will be a friendly and helpful state to India. When the political power in Tamil Nadu shifted to the non-Brahmin K. Kamaraj in the 1950s, EVR's DK supported the Congress ministry. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Dravida Nadu proponents changed their demand for an independent Dravida Nadu to an independent Tamil Nadu, as they did not receive any support from the non-Tamil Dravidian-speaking states. Periyar changed the banner in his magazine Viduthalai from "Dravida Nadu for Dravidians" to "Tamil Nadu for Tamils".

The reorganisation of the Indian states along linguistic lines through the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 weakened the separatist movement. In June–July 1956, the founder of Kazhagam, E. V. Ramaswamy, declared that he had given up the goal of Dravidistan.

However, by this time, DMK had taken over from DK as the main bearer of the separatist theme. Unlike Khalistan and other separatist movements in Republic of India, DMK never considered violence as a serious option to achieve a separate Dravida Nadu. DMK's slogan of Dravida Nadu found no support in any state of India other than Tamil Nadu. The non-Tamil Dravidian speakers perceived the ambitions of the Tamil politicians as hegemonic, ultimately leading to the failure of the Dravida Nadu concept. C. Rajagopalachari, the former Chief Minister of Madras State and a Tamil Brahmin, stated that the DMK plea for Dravida Nadu should not be taken seriously.

2.2.4 DEMAND FOR KHALISTAN (PUNJAB)

In Punjab, there was a demand for Sikhistan. As early as 1949 the Sikhs under Master Tara Singh declared that the Hindus of Punjab had become highly communal and that the Sikhs could not hope to get any justice from them. Tara Singh demanded a 'Sikh State' consisting of the Gurgaon district of Punjab and Patiala and the East Punjab State Union (PEPSU). This demand grew stronger after the reorganisation of the States on linguistic-basis in 1956, when the demands of Punjab for its reorganization on unilingual basis was not conceded. The Sikhs under the Akali Dal put a demand for a separate Punjabi-speaking state. When the Sikhs were demanding bifurcation of Punjab, some political and religious bodies like the Jana Sangh and Arya Samaj were demanding that composite Punjab should be created, which should include

not only the present Punjab, but also Himachal Pradesh and PEPSU. The demand for a separate Punjabi speaking State assumed serious dimensions after the Akali Dal leader Sant Fateh Singh announced his plan to burn himself alive if the demand of Punjabi Suba was not conceded by 25 September, 1966. In view of the serious repercussions of this threat being implemented, the Government of India conceded the demand for a Punjabi - speaking State.

The creation of separate Punjabi Suba did not satisfy all Punjabi leaders. Certain Sikh leaders continued the agitation for the establishment of a 'Socialist Democratic Sikh State'; Dr. Jagjit Singh, former General Secretary of the Akali Dal, undertook tour of a number of foreign countries to mobilise world opinion in favour of this demand. During this tour he tried to enlist the support of the members of the Sikh community living abroad for this purpose. He also prepared a plan for the setting up of a 'Rebel Sikh Government', at Nankana Sahib, the birth place of Guru Nanak, in West Pakistan.

The Akali Dal leadership is well aware that it is not possible to have Sikhistan, as a separate independent state outside the Indian Union. They, therefore, started demanding, like the DMK in Tamil Nadu, that the state should be given more powers and autonomy. Today, the Akali Dal stands for more powers for the state and there is no demand of Sikhistan.

2.2.4.1 THE DEMAND FOR KHALISTAN

Since April 1981, the Akali extremists have been taking a hard-line approach for establishing a new all -Sikh nation called Khalistan, a demand originally voiced by a former member of the Akali Dal, Jagjit Singh in June. This was taken up in various milder forms by officially reorganized and influential bodies such as the Sikh Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). Even a purely educational organization known as the Chief Khalsa Diwan, at its 54th Sikh Education Conference in Chandigarh in March 1981 passed a resolution demanding Khalistan and seeking associate membership of the United Nations. Later, moderate members of the community withdrew its demand for UN membership but stood by the Sikh Nation Theory. The chief political organs, the Akali Dal, clearly split over the issue, with the extremist group headed by Jagdev Singh Talwandi demanding a separate nation and middle of the road Akali leadership led by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, President of the Akali Dal, bemoaning the "pariah status of the Sikhs." Sikh demands of a similar nature have their precedent since Indian independence when a resolution passed by Hindi-Sikh members

of the Punjab Assembly stated that “in the divided Indian Punjab special constitutional measures are imperative to meet the just aspirations and rights of the Sikhs.”

The Dal Khalsa, an extremist and militant Sikh youth organisation whose members hijacked the plane to Lahore, was started on 6th August, 1978 with the avowed objective of attaining an ‘Independent Sovereign Sikh Nation’. As a part of their strategy to expand their bases in Punjab, the Dal started actively participating in the political activities of all the Akali factions. For example, Dal Khalsa activists were vocal and conspicuous during the month-long agitation launched by the Akali Dal in May 1981, demanding holy city status for Amritsar. Subsequently on 26th July, 1981 Gajinder Singh and his followers “distributed pro-Khalistan literature during the World Sikh Convention held in Amritsar. Less than a month later while the rest of the nation was celebrating independence on 15th August, 1981, over a dozen Khalsa volunteers gathered in a Gurdwara and saluted their flag which had the map of the proposed Khalistan State inscribed in the centre. On 27th August, Dal Khalsa members raised pro-Khalistan slogans from the gallery of the Punjab Assembly.

M.S. Dhammi remarks: “Extremist Sikh movements such as the demand for Khalistan are a purely urban-middle class phenomenon. The urban Sikh has been unable to translate his economic power into political power-the way the rural Sikh has and this insecurity is further aggravated by the fact that 75 per cent Hindu population in Punjab is concentrated in towns- This causes the urban Sikh to resist being overwhelmed by Hindu values.” -According to Lt. Gen. Sartaj Singh (Retired), “too much has been made of the Khalistan movement. It started as a joke but is now dangerous.” Brigadier Jaswant Singh Sandhu (Retired) observes : “There is a very big segment of Sikhs demanding Khalistan and you cannot ignore them. If smaller countries ‘can exist and do well for themselves, then why not an independent Punjab. Nothing can stop Khalistan from coming into being, sooner or later.”

Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the self-appointed President of Khalistan, has also been getting clandestine support from Pakistan and has often been used by that country for anti-India propaganda. He had planned to file an application at the United Nations to seek recognition for Khalistan as a non-governmental organization as also a complaint with the human rights division of the UN about alleged violation of human rights in Punjab.

2.2.5 LET US SUM UP

The greatest strength of Indian polity is its gravest weakness. India is hailed by many as a shining example of a multicultural, multiethnic, and multinational democratic state, which has successfully weathered many internal threats of disintegration. But still, the assertive face of multiple ethno cultural identities has worried many observers. The Indian federation has temperamentally behaved as a “union” and not a “federation.” However, the leadership in the country has to take care to adopt federal principles to judge such cases of autonomy and gradually devolve powers (especially financial powers) to the units if it is to contain such ethno-cultural assertions.

2.2.6 EXERCISES

1. What are the reasons for autonomy movements in India?
2. Critically analyse Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu.
3. How do you understand Khalistan movement in Punjab?

UNIT – II : Region and Regionalism

2.3 ETHNO-NATIONALISM: NORTH EAST INDIA

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

2.3.0 Objectives

2.3.1 Introduction

2.3.2 Ethnicity in North-eastern States

2.3.3 Factors Contributing to Rise of Ethnic Consciousness

2.3.3.1 Linguistic and Religious Revivalist Movements

2.3.3.2 Role of Democratic Federal Structure

2.3.3.3 Presence of Migrants and Outsiders

2.3.3.4 Perceptions of Dominance

2.3.3.5 Elite Formation and Emergence of Middle Class

2.3.4 From Ethnicity to Ethnic Politics

2.3.5 Ethnicity in Assam

2.3.5.1 Bodo Movement

2.3.5.2 Resistance of Non-Bodos

2.3.6 Ethnicity in Nagaland

2.3.6.1 Role of Separatist Organisations

2.3.6.2 Backlash with other Ethnic Groups

2.3.6.3 Army Strike against Naga Rebels in Myanmar

2.3.7 Let us Sum Up

2.3.8 Exercises

2.3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this topic, you should be able to know:

- The patterns of ethnicity in northeast region;
- The factors contributing to the rise of ethnicity in northeast region;
- Ethnicity in Assam with special reference to Bodo movement;
- The ethnic insurgency in Nagaland and its impact.

2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Northeast region of India comprising of eight states – Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim – a region poorly connected to the Indian mainland by a small corridor, and surrounded by many countries such as Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and China, is the setting for a multitude of conflict that undermines the idea of India as a prosperous and functioning democracy.

The Naga insurgency, which started in the 1950s, known as the mother of the Northeast insurgencies, is one of the oldest unresolved armed conflicts in the world. In total, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Tripura have witnessed scales of conflict that could, at least between 1990 and 2000, be characterised as low intensity conflicts. Currently, most of the states in the region are affected by some form of conflict, except for Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Sikkim in which the situation is at the moment relatively stable. The reasons for the respective conflicts are wide ranging from separatist movements, to inter-community, communal and inter-ethnic conflicts.

The conflict in the Northeast region has been an all pervasive phenomena, and in its violent form, it has not only affected the territorial and political sovereignty of the Indian state, but also the life of the various people living in the region in incomprehensible and inexplicable terms. However, amidst the widespread sense of helplessness, there is also an overwhelming desire and force to be free from such a situation of conflict which cripples the people from all sides.

To gain a holistic understanding of the problem that has historical and contemporary dimensions, it is important to assess and understand the various facets of the problem that interact with each other.

2.3.2 ETHNICITY IN NORTHEASTERN STATES

In order to understand the nature of contemporary social formations, it is helpful to do so on the basis of three definable phases or periods: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial or post-Independence periods. As will be evident, in each of these periods conditions proved to be rather different for functioning of ethnicity in the Northeastern region.

The hills and plains of the region have been occupied by different streams of Mongoloid people who came from the north and the east at different periods well before the

onset of colonial rule. The diverse Mongoloid groups which eventually settled in different habitats and ecological settings crystallized into distinct tribal societies.

It is important to note that in the long centuries before the advent of British rule in the region, there was a high degree of fluidity in the socio-cultural arena so that intermingling of various streams of people, including biological admixture, produced diverse social alignments and group identities. The boundaries of the groups were never very rigid. It is this flexibility which provided scope for shifting alliance and identities. Pre-colonial social setting in the region was more fluid and flexible than in the subsequent colonial and post-colonial periods.

The conditions radically altered during a rather brief period (1826-1947) of British colonial rule. The annexation of Assam by the British brought the people of this region into greater and deeper contact with sociopolitical currents then prevailing in the rest of the country. The channels of contact and the levels of communication were further accentuated in the early part of the 20th century. The British set in motion a series of moves in order to establish a degree of political and administrative dominance over the plains as well as the hill people. The British policies and the activities of Christian missionaries who came into the region contributed significantly in creating a freeze effect on the communities. Colonial rule and missionary activities also contributed significantly in detailing the character and tenor of identity movements among the tribals and non-tribals in the post-Independence period.

Following Independence, the governmental approach to tribals was radically altered. The old policy of maintaining status quo and isolation was replaced by a policy of development and integration. The post-Independence period has been one of acceleration in the pace of social change and modernization of various tribal groups and their effective induction within the framework of the nation-state. However, it is also during the last five and a half decades since independence that the freeze effect in the various social formations became more vivid, functional and effective in turning tribes, castes, communities and language groups into ethnic blocks. Many groups have shown varying degrees of strain in accepting and adjusting to the demands of integration, which often has an assimilation overtone, made on them.

Thus, while the pre-colonial setting was fluid and flexible, the colonial and post-colonial settings have been less so and the societal boundaries became more rigid, doing in the process distinct cultural orientation--the phenomenon we call 'ethnicity'. Societies

became ethno-political blocks. In addition, this period is characterised by revivalist trend so that the various social formations looked to their primordial cultural assets to define and consolidate their boundaries.

Ethnic self-consciousness and its consolidation and asserting along the lines of tribe, community or language groups have become increasingly manifest in the recent years in the entire region. In every one of the seven states that make up the north-eastern region, there is a perception of who constitute the 'insiders' and who are 'outsiders' vying for the limited number of jobs and other assets and resources of the respective territories. Regionalism along social and ethnic lines has been a dominant development in the years since Independence.

In the post-colonial north-east, we can recognise five different parameters of identity consolidation. These are tribe, caste, language, territory and religion. These often work in combination with one another. Emergence of tribal social formations, often with demand for specified territories as politico-administrative units are features common enough in north-east India these days. The context of smooth integration of tribals and non-tribals, of various language groups, of locals and immigrants and of various religious communities appear to be fraught with many hurdles.

2.3.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RISE OF ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS / CONFLICT

There are many factors contributed to the rise of ethnic consciousness among the tribes of Northeastern region. The primordial loyalties, socio-economic context, dominance of majority group, crossborder relations, etc. contributed to the growth and ethnic mobilisation of various groups and communities. Some of them have discussed below.

2.3.3.1 LINGUISTIC AND RELIGIOUS REVIVALIST MOVEMENTS

Language has always been in the centre-stage of ethnic turmoil in the northeast. Making Assamese as the compulsory language from class VIII onwards led to massive agitation in the Barak valley, reminiscent of the agitation launched earlier over the issue of the medium of instruction. In 1972 the Bodo led Plains Tribes Council of Assam (PTCA) complained that the tribes of plains have been 'uprooted in a systematic and planned way from their own soil' and that the 'step motherly' treatment of the administration, dominated by the Assamese-

speaking people has reduced them as ‘second class citizens’ of the state. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (established in 1952) and PTCA however, ultimately succeeded in making the Bodo language the medium of instruction (up to the secondary level). The Ahom, Meitei, Zeliangrong, Seng Khasi, and Zomi communities had all felt threatened by the near extinction of their original language and religion.

2.3.3.2 ROLE OF DEMOCRATIC FEDERAL STRUCTURE

The liberal democratic federal political arrangement bears the seeds of ethnic conflict in the north-east. Freedom of movement and free competition, which constitutes the fundamental principles of the political arrangement, evokes uneven competition and promotes economic and social inequality and therefore a sense of deprivation in the weaker partner in the competition. This results in a backlash by the local communities against the migrant settlers. The tribal attack on the Bengali settlers in Tripura is a case in point. The uneven economic prosperity of different groups of people is bound to happen following the laws of market society. It is also obvious that the groups that have greater initial control of human and other resources will reap the benefits of market competition. Moreover, in our democratic arrangement the numerically dominant communities will, in most cases, control power. The principles of ‘protective discrimination’, total or partial seclusion and granting of autonomy have not proved to be enough in arresting the negative fallout of market competition, because of a wide gap among the competing groups on the control of resources.

2.3.3.3 PRESENCE OF MIGRANTS OR OUTSIDERS

It is a matter of folk-perception in the north-east that the local population, speaking the local regional language, should have a prior claim to employment, housing, and educational facilities in their land. The root of the ethnic backlash was the apprehension that ‘outsiders’ would grab the employment opportunities locally available. The expression of such feelings and the resultant action is termed ‘nativism’ by Weiner. He defines nativism as that form of ethnic identity that seeks to exclude those who are not members of the local or indigenous ethnic group from residing and/or working in a territory because they are not native to the country or region. This kind of anti-migrant or nativist movements is different from other forms of ethnic movements. The nativist movement is essentially anti-migrant in character, but the ethnic movement need not be so. What is common, in both ethnic and nativist movements, is the competition between linguistic, regional or social groups. The nativist

reaction in India is not necessarily against the migrants from another country, but often against so-called ‘foreigners’ from other cultures within the country.

The rise of nativist sentiments among the local people is understood to be the fallout of the pursuance of the ethnic line of mobilisation by political parties, both at the central and state levels. The leaders of both the ruling and opposition groups in a state regard protection of the interests of their own people against the outsiders as one of their primary responsibilities. The state governments too give priority to local claims against migrants. The central government, though it is supposed to represent the interests of all citizens of the country, also does not like to risk its electoral fortunes in the state by not accommodating the local ethnic sentiments in its policies and programmes.

2.3.3.4 PERCEPTIONS OF DOMINANCE

The ‘national’ identities shaped around the struggle for greater political space in the shape of ethnic movements, in course, turn out to be hegemonic over the minority communities. Thus, when the minority communities mature as a political self and challenge the hegemonic regional nation, fields of ethnic conflict proliferate in the region. For instance, many smaller communities of Manipur contested the tacit support by the Indian state for the demand of carving Naga dominated areas from Manipur to create greater Nagaland on the grounds of the perceived threat of vivisection of Manipur and subsequent dominance by the Nagas. The Bodo nationalism in Assam emerges through a multifaceted contestation: against the Indian State, against the dominance of Assamese nation and a clash with other peripheral and dominant identities such as adivasi, Bengali, and Koch. While the Bodo upsurge resists the appropriation by the dominant, it attacks other non-dominant identities.

2.3.3.5 ELITE FORMATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF MIDDLE CLASS

The problem of ethnicity is further aggregated by the regional consciousness aroused by elites, especially the middle class. Both in the western context and India in general, the middle class is viewed as the champion of liberal democracy promoting democratic values such as toleration, liberty, equality and justice. However, in the northeast, the middle class can be seen as the promoter of ethnic extremist movements. For instance, the Assam movement emerged as Assamese middle class movements whose interest was mostly affected by the migration of outsiders.

Another dimension of the elite formation in the tribal communities is that the dominant communities allied with state power exclude certain groups from accessing resources, institutions and opportunities, generating a feeling of exclusion of other groups. In such situation, smaller ethnic communities assert for resources and opportunities. The assertion of marginalized identities and its extremist posture are giving a new direction to state politics. In this context, democratic politics is overshadowed by ethnic politics. The elite within the ethnic communities mobilize people in ethnic lines to realize its goals. As Brass argues, “the cultural norms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage”.

These above mentioned factors, along with other ones created a situation in which every group politicised and invoked their group identity in ethnic terms and started making demands on the state to recognize their identity, sometimes even by deploying violent means.

2.3.4 FROM ETHNICITY TO ETHNIC POLITICS

The ethnic demand for homeland created a number of smaller states in the northeast. For instance, the greater Assam was divided into Nagaland (1963), Meghalaya (1972), Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (1987) to meet the demands of these ethnic groups. However, mere making of territorial boundary did not solve the problem; on the contrary, it further aggregated it. It is argued that the creation of separate state further fanned the fire when various smaller and bigger communities started to demand establishment of more states. As Ambrose Pinto pointed out “the competition for power among different social and ethnic groups was legitimized on the premise that all social and ethnic groups will have equal space and opportunities. However, with the majoritarian groups or the dominant social group gradually aspiring for power, the minority groups have felt marginalized and rejected”. Further, the creation of smaller territorial units acceding to the demands of the dominant ethnic community in a region often threaten the existence and survival of numerically less ethnic communities as the positions and jobs and resources were monopolized the dominant ethnic group. The Hmar problem in Mizoram and the Garos disadvantageous positions in accessing resources and positions in Meghalaya are such examples forcing them to arouse ethnic feeling and violent mobilization. While the making of territorial boundary satisfied the dominant ethnic community, it created despair for the minority ethnic economic communities. As a result, the level of extremist activities percolated from one level to another.

How this politicisation of ethnicity led to ethnic mobilization and ethnic mobilization to ethnic conflict in the northeastern region will be analysed with regard to Assam and Nagaland in the following sections.

2.3.5 ETHNICITY IN ASSAM

Ethnicity and identity have been the key issues of mobilisation in Assam as in rest of north-east India. Most of these challenges have emerged from tribal communities from the hill areas or the plains. Whenever Assamese leaders equated the territorial identity of multi ethnic Assam with the ethno-linguistic identity of Assamese speakers of the Brahmaputra valley, they pushed the other ethnic groups to seek security through their own autonomous structure. The central government responded favourably to these demands carved out new states for these groups. Thus Nagaland became a separate state in 1963, Meghalaya was created in 1986. Those were the hill areas for which the plains elite in Assam probably had little affection. But gradually, the plains tribals were also demanded for separate statehood as they perceived the policies pursued by Assamese government are discriminatory to them. The largest party of this revolt is broadly known as Bodo separatism or simply the Bodo movement. The Bodo movement is positively interested in the Indian national cohesion. The ethnic rage in this case is directed mainly towards Assam. The term “Bodo” refers to a group of closely related tribes including the pure Boro language speakers who are called the Boro Kochari people.

2.3.5.1 BODO MOVEMENT

Bodos are the most numerous single indigenous ethnic communities in Assam. The Bodos claim to be the earliest known inhabitants of Assam and also the earliest as well as the longest chain of rulers. The Bodos assert that the Assamese people are, in fact, outsiders who have unleashed an anti-tribal policy to arbitrarily cleanse Assam of its genuinely original and authentic inhabitants. They accuse the Assamese government of conducting a deliberate policy of Assamization through an imposition of Assamese language and culture upon the tribals undemocratically violating the constitution of India. Like the hill tribal people of the state, the Bodos and other plains tribal people deeply resent the imposition of Assamese language in part because it is not the aboriginal language of Assam and because it violates the pluralism of multi ethnic society.

Bodo leaders formed the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) in 1967 to fight for full autonomy in the predominantly plains tribal areas in Assam. The formation of Meghalaya as a state and Mizoram as a Union Territory in 1971, reflecting institutionalised autonomy for the hills tribals of the respective areas of Assam, gave new impetus to Bodo racialism. The All Bodo Student Union (ABSU) formed in 1967 was eager to build a wide front of Bodo forces.

A large-scale mass movement led by ABSU and the Bodo People's Action Committee (BPAC), beginning in 1987, continued to exert pressure on political authorities for about six years. The Bodo leader's complaint was that they had lost land to non-tribal people. Moreover, they were educationally backward and their language was not taught to their own children in schools. Therefore, they demanded recognition of their language and creation of a separate state, "Udayachal", so that they could preserve their language and culture. All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) on January 1, 1987 presented a Memorandum containing many demands. They demanded increased jobs reservation for Bodos and inclusion of their language in 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution. After failing to get their demand conceded, Bodo movement became violent in 1988. Violence ranged from massacres to stray incidents of killing and injuring, loot, plunder and destruction of private and public property. Men, women and children lost their lives and the government had to incur heavy expenditure in large induction of security and administrative personnel. This led to peace talks and in 1993 the first Bodo Accord was signed by the ABSU leadership, Assam government and the central government.

The accord agreed to the formation of a Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC), but the territorial limit was left ambiguous. The demand for territory by the Bodo leaders was to be determined on the basis of majority demography; areas with 50% or more Bodo population would be a part of BAC. But some areas with less than 50% population were included to give the BAC a contiguous area. The indeterminate attempt to collapse territory with demography led to confusion and conflicts. There were non-scheduled tribal populations in the area and non-Bodo people. ABSU rejected the Assam government's demarcation of territory and the conflict escalated. By 1996, the Bodos had renewed their demand for statehood. Two armed groups, the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) demanded a separate statehood, and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), was formed to struggle to create a sovereign state for the Bodos. In 1999, the BLT faction of the movement declared ceasefire and the peace talk process started.

Due to intensity of conflict and to stop violence and bloodshed, the Central government conceded some of their demands. In 2003, a new accord established the Bodo Territorial Council (BTC) guided by the principles of the Sixth Schedule. The BTC was supposedly comprised of Bodo majority villages, though the status of another 93 villages demanded by the BTC remained unresolved around that time. The question of sustaining peace in BTC is dependent on the prospects of development and also its negotiations with the non-Bodos.

2.3.5.2 RESISTANCE OF THE NON-BODOS

There is substantial population of non-Bodos in areas which are claimed by Bodos for their separate state. A section of the ABSU during an early phase of the movement issued “quit notices” to non-Bodos in these areas. During the early negotiation for the BAC, it was made clear that the areas where Bodos were less than 50% cannot be included in the council area. From this began the Bodo endeavour of ethnic cleansing of non-Bodos so that the panic-stricken non-Bodos leave the area to make the Bodos a majority in that region. It was done under the aegis of the armed wings of the Bodo militants. The Bodo-Santhal and the Bodo-non-Bodo conflicts of the late 1990s were a part of this majority-building politics. But after the 1996 Bodo-Santhal clashes, the non-Bodo communities have been regrouping into political and armed militant groups and planning to resist such attempts. Armed groups like the Adivasi Cobra Militants and the Bengal Liberation Tigers began retaliating and attacked several Bodo villages. Even after the accord of 2003, the fears of ethnic violence remained strongly entrenched in the minds of the non-Bodo population as there were many pockets in the intended BTC areas, where the Bodos were not a majority. Sanmilita Janagosthiya Sangram Samiti (SJSS) was formed by 18 non-Bodo organisations to oppose the proposed map of BTC. Before and after the signing of the accord, the SJSS had led protests opposing the territorial demarcation and reorganisation of the areas of lower Assam and the north bank of Brahmaputra. SJSS expressed the fear that the BTC, once formed, would concentrate power in the hands of the Bodos and jeopardise the lives of the non-Bodos.

It is this context of simmering discontent amongst a whole section of population of various communities, varying from citizenship or its loss, the empowerment of marginalised tribal communities and the failure of the Sixth Schedule to deliver, the contest over land and resources, the lack of development and the fear of disempowered smaller groups are all tangled in the web of electoral politics of the ruling classes. The ruling and aspiring elites are

playing narrow communitarian and communal politics. The present violence between Bodos and non-Bodos is a result of this politics.

2.3.6 ETHNICITY IN NAGALAND

The Nagas struggle for recognition of group identity has a long history. On August 14, 1947, on the eve of Indian independence, the Naga National Council declared independence for their people. The fact remains that the Nagas, who did not have a written history or a script until the 19th century, when the British colonial power arrived, followed by its missionaries and those from the United States and elsewhere, have always seen themselves as a separate people. It is a conviction which is still deeply held by many people, who also want to live under one administrative roof as Nagas in a Naga homeland that would include parts of the hills of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. This is the oldest independence struggle that the subcontinent has seen, one of the oldest in Asia and as old as free India, although the armed revolt began in the 1950s. The underground fighters have been called many things in the past — hostiles, insurgents, rebels, militants, armed Naga gangs.

The early decades of the conflict were characterised by a certain dignity and honour. Civilian men and women from the rest of India were not targeted; security personnel, camps and convoys were attacked.

The Nagas received training and arms from the Chinese and Pakistanis, who saw the situation as a good chance to bleed and weaken India. Other insurgent groups were also supported by the Chinese and Pakistanis at the time: the Mizo National Front (MNF) of Laldenga in the Mizo Hills and the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) of Biseswar in Manipur. The latter was trained in urban warfare in Tibet. The support from China officially ended in 1976, when Delhi and Beijing resumed full diplomatic relations. In 1986, the MNF signed a peace accord with New Delhi and has never renege on its word.

2.3.6.1 ROLE OF SEPARATIST ORGANISATIONS

The Naga National Council (NNC) was the founder and leader of the Naga movement. But things changed after the Shillong Accord of 1975 between a section of the Naga underground and the Government of India. Under terrific pressure from the Indian army and exhausted by attrition of the civil population, this group accepted the Indian Constitution, agreed to lay

down their arms and work for a final settlement. That agreement confused the Naga public and fractured both the mandate and the movement.

Within a few years, the NNC split with the formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN, now called Nagalim) led by Isak Swu, Th. Muivah and S.S. Khaplang. In 1988, Khaplang's followers attacked Muivah's camp in Myanmar, killing hundreds of his supporters. It is an event that Muivah has neither forgotten nor forgiven and his NSCN (I-M)'s relentless campaign against the 'Khaplang' group needs to be seen in this light.

At present, there are negotiations with the Government of India between the I-M, led by Muivah and Swu, and a ceasefire between them that has lasted more than five years. There is peace in the Naga Hills – a fragile peace, but it exists. People are speaking out, civil society has found articulate voices through a platform for Naga tribes, the Naga Hoho, as well as church leaders. The tenuous lines of ceasefire ground rules have been framed under a Ceasefire Monitoring Group but not given much teeth yet. Many cadres continue to live outside the designated camps for both groups. There is a ceasefire between the Government of India and the other main faction, the Khaplang faction. But the two factions target each other constantly; there is no ceasefire between them, and there lies the heart of the Naga tragedy.

2.3.6.2 BACKLASH WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS

One of the most contentious demands of the Nagas is related integration of all Naga inhabited areas under one administrative unit. However, the demand for Greater Nagaland or Nagalim has created friction with other states and groups as this demand claims territories of other states and areas inhabited by other ethnic groups. However, this demand for Greater Nagaland/Nagalim has provoked violent protests by the Meiteis in Manipur. Apart from the Meiteis, the Assamese and the Arunachalese have also expressed their opposition to any move aimed at altering the borders of their states to accommodate the demands of the NSCN (IM). Succumbing to the popular pressures, the state governments in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have declared openly that they would not accept any agreement by the government of India that altered their state boundaries.

2.3.6.3 ARMY STRIKE AGAINST NAGA REBELS IN MYNAMAR

The Indian army carried a surgical strike inside Myanmar on June 9, 2015 in which 38 Naga insurgents killed and seven injured. The decision of “hot pursuit” was taken hours after the Naga militants killed 18 soldiers in an ambush in Chandel area of Manipur on June 4 and clearance was obtained from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the night of June 7, soon after his return from Bangladesh. Once on the ground, the contingent of the special forces split into two groups and headed for two camps being run by NSCN (K) and KYKL, who are believed to be responsible for the deadly ambush on June 4.

This is one of the rare occasions that India entered into the territory of other country to target the insurgents who are carrying violent acts and creating law and problem. This particular operation was carried out to target the Khaplang’s group who is continuously opposing the agreement concluded between Government of India and with main Naga groups NSCN (I-M) led by Muivah.

These incidents are indicating that despite the considerable progress achieved by the Central government to resolve the problem of Nagaland, still it has not achieved real progress to establish peace and security in the Nagaland and adjoining regions. The factional rivalry among the Naga groups is the main reason for continuation of insurgency. Some of the groups are having a feeling that by accommodating Muivah group, the Centre has ignored rest of organisations. The way forward is to accommodate as many groups as possible in the discussions and accommodate genuine demands of the groups within the limits of Indian Constitution.

2.3.7 LET US SUM UP

The Northeast region has had a long history of being marginalised, whose inclusion in the Indian nation has been seriously challenged by communities and where identity politics has shaped the politics of resistance. The struggle for power, both political and economic, has become bloodied. Many struggles, in the process of establishing their own identity and political right, have carried historical retribution to an extreme extent. Democratic politics in India is dependent on the logic of vote banks, the politics of numbers crunched together with caste and tribe. Religious configuration has made identities very crucial in the postcolonial period. Hence, territoriality and political power, and control over resources for the ruling classes of such communities give rise to politics of exclusion and politicisation of ethnicity.

Northeast India has earned a dubious distinction of being home to Asia's longest running insurgency. Geo-strategic locations of the region surrounded by Bhutan and China (Tibet) in north, Myanmar in east and south and Bangladesh in south and west and approximately 4000 square kilometres of porous international borders further accentuating the security threat. For the last two months, the intensification of insurgency incidents has put a question mark on the various security efforts in Northeast region.

Three things are essential to meet the challenges posed by Northeastern conflicts: the restoration of governance at its most fundamental and basic level, the creation of confidence that indigenous groups will not be reduced to a minority, and bringing antagonistic groups together in the process of peace-building through strong civil society movements.

2.3.8 EXERCISES

1. Briefly explain the ethnic make-up of North-eastern people in India.
2. Explain the factors leading to the rise of ethnic consciousness among the people of North-east.
3. Write a note on ethnicity in Assam with a special reference to Bodo Movement.
4. Critically analyse ethnic conflict in Nagaland and its impact on neighbouring states.

2.4 SUB-STATE REGIONALISM: GORKHALAND, BODOLAND

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

2.4.0 Objective

2.4.1 Introduction

2.4.2 Statehood Demand

2.4.3 Statehood Demands for Gorkhaland

2.4.3.1 Agitation under GNLFF and formation of DGHC

2.4.3.2 Agitation under GJM:

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2.4.4 Statehood Demand for Bodoland

2.4.3.1 The Impact of Assamese Nationalism

2.4.3.2 Rise of Bodo Movement

2.4.3.3 Constitution of Bodoland Territorial Council

2.4.5 Other Demands for Statehood

2.4.6 Let us Sum Up

2.4.7 Sources and Suggested Readings

2.4.8 Exercises

2.4.0 OBJECTIVES

This topic provides basic knowledge about the different states which demands separate statehood in India. After going through this topic, you should be able to:

- understand the background of statehood demands in India
- know the demands made by Gorkha people in West Bengal
- understand the issues of the Bodo people in Assam
- comprehend the demands of various groups for separate statehood.

2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

India is comprised of 28 states. Since India gained independence from Britain in 1947 the country's democracy has endured many external and internal challenges. Besides poverty, religious, cultural, and language clashes, one of the biggest issues that India faced is the issue of the creation of states. India, being a multicultural state, has to face many conflicts based on region, religion, caste, tribe and other identities. If an identity group which is in conflict with dominant and majoritarian tendencies also located in a specific territory, then statehood demands based on this territorial identity arising. As a result, India witnessed many conflicts, sometimes very violent, in all its parts, based demands for separation, autonomy or separate statehood.

2.4.2 STATEHOOD DEMANDS

Recently, India has witnessed a sort of assertion of identity politics in all the parts, east, west, north and south. There have been struggles around the assertiveness and conflicting claims of the identity groups, and of struggles amongst them, often fought out on lines of region, religion, language, caste and community. These struggles have found expressions in the changed mode of electoral representation that has brought local/regional into focus with the hitherto politically dormant groups and regions finding voices. Emergence of a more genuinely representative democracy has led to the sharpening of the line of distinction between or among the identity groups and the regions.

The process has received an impetus with the introduction of the new economic policies at the marginal groups as well as the peripheral regions increasingly feel left out with the centre gradually withdrawing from the social and economic sector and market economy privileging the privileged, be it the social groups or the regions. Regional inequalities within the states in terms of income and consumptions have been widening. Inter-state as well as intra-state disputes have grown faster in the post-reform period.

The above processes have significantly contributed to the regionalization of polity with the regional states emerging as the prime arenas where politics and economy actually unfold. Cultural heterogeneity of the regions within the states over the years has been sharpened as a result of the unevenness of development and unequal access to political power in a centralized federal political economy.

As a consequence, India's federal ideology has registered a marked shift as regional identity, culture and geographical difference now appear to be better recognized as a valid basis for administrative division and political representation. As a result, the recent decades have witnessed to the assertion of well defined geographically, culturally and historically constituted distinct regions that have emerged within the states, showing sharpened ethnic/communal as well as other socio-political cleavages like the regional and rural-urban ones.

The newly found assertion of the regions received an impetus in the wake of the creation of the three new states of Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand in November 2000. Significantly, this new wave of reorganization was supported by all parties, in particular, by the two parties with nearly all-India presence, that is the Congress and the BJP. What also helped the cause was the fact that 'ethnic communities in three new states were unconnected with foreign enemies in the three new states were unconnected with foreign enemies or cross border nationalities'.

The qualitative shift in the thinking about the territoriality of a region is visible in the way demand for a 'homeland of one's own' has become a 'permissible' issue for party agendas creating a new 'field of opportunities' for regions demanding statehood. Debates over territorial reorganizations have re-entered 'mainstream' political discussion after remaining a taboo for a long period, especially during the centralizing and personalizing leadership that took over after Nehru when assertions of regional identity were essentially viewed with suspicion and were stigmatized as parochial, chauvinist and even anti-national. Arguably, such apprehension is not evident in the Constitution which provides for a great degree of flexibility given to the Parliament under Article 3 to decide the bases on which new states are to be created, i.e., geography, demography, administrative convenience, language, tribalism or culture. Such constitutional flexibility has not only allowed for the accommodation of regional aspirations in the past but has also provided an incentive for ongoing political demands aimed at separate statehood.

With the Centre agreeing in principle to consider the demand for the creation of a separate Telangana state in December 2009, old and new demands for redrawing the boundaries of the states have been coming up thick and fast with increased intensity.

There are two major statehood movements that will be discussed in the subsequent sections. One is the Gorkhaland demanded by the people of Darjeeling hills and the people of

Gorkha (Nepali) ethnic origin in Dooars in northern West Bengal on the basis of ethno-linguistic rights and the other one is Bodoland demanded by the Bodo people located in the extreme north on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in the state of Assam.

2.4.3 STATEHOOD DEMAND FOR GORKHALAND

The ethnic Nepalis in Darjeeling hills of West Bengal are demanding for separate statehood, Gorkhaland for a long time. The movement for Gorkhaland has gained momentum in the line of ethno-linguistic-cultural sentiment of the people who desire to identify themselves as Indian Gorkhas. Two mass movements for Gorkhaland have taken place under the Gorkh National Liberation Front (1986–1988) and Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (2007–till date). Crucial to the separate statehood demand is relative backwardness of North West Bengal region where the Darjeeling hills are located. Ethno-linguistic identity added to this backwardness to take turn of statehood movement.

Backwardness in North Bengal had affected different ethnic groups adversely in the region in varying degrees, which is the cause of resentment among them. The resentment against backwardness gets exacerbated and takes the form of ethnic politics principally because of three reasons. First, it is because of the presence of ethnic groups that are linguistically and culturally different from the dominant one who are largely placed in the category of SCs and STs and who have clearly lagged behind in terms of development indicators. The second is related to the practices of the ruling party for a long time, CPI (M) and the Left Front, which certain extent stems from its domination in the state and in the region. The CPI (M) has been using aggressive tactics for capturing and controlling institutions within the state, which had led to an erosion of democracy. It has failed to accommodate and address their grievances and has also failed to accommodate and address their grievances and has also failed to accommodate the elites of these ethnic groups. Third, in the absence of a sensible and organised opposition at the state level, the demand of the principal ethnic groups finds expression in one form of identity politics which demands the formation of separate state.

The demand for autonomy in Darjeeling did not have its origins in 1980 when the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) was formed. It predates it. The demand for a separate administrative unit in Darjeeling has existed since 1907, when the Hillmen's Association of Darjeeling submitted a memorandum to Minto-Morley Reforms demanding a

separate administrative setup. In 1947, the undivided Communist Party of India (CPI) submitted a memorandum to the Constituent Assembly with copies to Jawaharlal Nehru, the Vice President of the Interim Government, and Liaquat Ali Khan, Finance Minister of the Interim Government, demanding the formation of Gorkhasthan comprising Darjeeling District, Sikkim and Nepal.

In Independent India, the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL) was the first political party from the region to demand greater identity for the Gorkha (Nepali) ethnic group and economic freedom for the community, when in 1952, under the presidency of N.B. Gurung, the party met Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India in Kalimpong and submitted a memorandum demanding the separation from Bengal.

In 1980, under the presidency of Indra Bahadur Rai, the Pranta Parishad of Darjeeling wrote to the then Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi with the need to form a new state in Darjeeling.

The movement for a separate state of Gorkhaland gained serious momentum during the 1980s, when a violent agitation was carried out by Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) led by Subhash Ghisingh. The agitation ultimately led to the establishment of a semiautonomous body in 1988 called the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) to govern certain areas of Darjeeling district. However, in 2007, a new party called the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) raised the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland once again. In 2011, GJM signed an agreement with the state and central governments for the formation of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, a semiautonomous body that replaced the DGHC in the Darjeeling hills.

2.4.3.1 AGITATION UNDER GNLF AND FORMATION OF DGHC

In the 1980s, Subhash Ghisingh raised the demand for the creation of a state called Gorkhaland within India to be carved out of the hills of Darjeeling and areas of Dooars and Siliguri terai contiguous to Darjeeling. During the peak of the movement, which continued from 1986 till the signing of the Accord in late 1988, the hills witnessed large-scale violence, hate campaigns mainly against the Benagalis and the functionaries of the parties, particularly the CPI (M), that denounced the movement. The GNLF also lambasted the Left Front government that was in power and its policies. During the course of agitation over 1200 people died. This movement culminated with the formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council

(DGHC) in 1988. The DGHC administered the Darjeeling hills for 23 years with some degree of autonomy.

In the post-Accord period that established the DGHC, there grew resentment against the functioning of the DGHC and the GNLF in the hills. The central allegations were mismanagement and misappropriation of funds by the leaders and absence of democracy in the functioning of the DGHC and also within the GNLF.

Several developments took place in hill politics in the post-Accord period out of which four were crucial. First, several splinter groups of the Gorkhaland movement were not only formed but also flourished in the hills that challenged the GNLF and the functioning of the DGHC. This indicated the steady erosion of the popularity of the HNLF in the post-Accord phase. The growth of these groups is revealed from the fact that in the Panchayat elections to the Gram Panchayat, several smaller organizations were able to carve out support for themselves and won seats in some of the constituencies. The second development of consequence was that in the second and third elections to the DGHC several candidates who were denied tickets by the GNLF contested the elections mostly as independent candidates. The third development was that the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL) was able to regroup itself and started asserting and playing an important part in hill politics since the mid-1990s.

In the wake of mounting criticism the GNLF, in order to regain its lost support and for its legitimacy, declared that the Council was dead and reiterated its demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland but from 2005 onwards raised the demand of Sixth Scheduled status for the region. All this ultimately resulted in the Accord that granted the Sixth Scheduled status to Darjeeling in December 2005. The second agitation by the GNLF subsided since it conserved the granting of Sixth Schedule status as a milestone towards the achievement of the state of Gorkhaland.

It was this agreement of December 2005 which produced the phenomenon of Bimal Gurang and the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) and was responsible for the renewed agitation for Gorkhaland. Gurang, a popular Councillor and a close aide of Subhash Ghisingh for long, was expelled from the party in 2000 for 'anti-party activities'. Shortly after his expulsion, he announced that the hills should accept nothing short of Gorkhaland and formed the GJMM. After forming it he appealed to people across political loyalties to joining the

GJMM so that the hills could speak with one voice to attain Gorkhaland. Gurang declared that attainment of a separate state was their right and the GJMM would attain it peacefully.

In a short period the following of the GJMM swelled and it soon turned into a massive organisation in the hills, sidelining the GNLFF that led to the fall of Subhash Ghisingh. The Morcha provided a powerful critique of the DGHC, the GNLFF and also of the Sixth Schedule agreement. It criticised the DGHC as a ‘small defanged institution of self-governance’. It alleged that ‘the Government of West Benagal installed a satrap in the form of Subhash Ghisingh, charged with the task of quelling any dissent in the Darjeeling hills and for ensuring that the demand for a separate state would never be raised again’.

The Morcha held and convinced te people that if the Sixth Schedule bill was passed it would disintegrate the Gorkha Community in lines of caste, colour, creed and religion. It felt that the Sixth Schedule was nothing but a ‘deep rooted conspiracy to divide the hills and fragment the society into pieces’.

2.4.3.2 AGITATION UNDER GJM

Ahead of the 2009 general elections in India, the Bharatiya Janata Party again announced its policy of having smaller states and to create two more states, Telangana and Gorkhaland, if they won the general election. GJM supported the candidature of Jaswant Singh of BJP, who won the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat with 51.5% votes in his favour. In the July 2009 budget session of Parliament, three Parliamentarians—Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Sushma Swaraj and Jaswant Singh—strongly pleaded for creating a state of Gorkhaland.

The demand for Gorkhaland took a new turn with the assassination of Madan Tamang, leader of Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League. He was stabbed to death allegedly by Gorkha Janmukti Morcha supporters on 21 May 2010 in Darjeeling, which led to a spontaneous shutdown in the three Darjeeling hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. After the murder of Madan Tamang, the West Bengal government threatened action against Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, whose senior leaders are named in the FIR, meanwhile hinting discontinuation of ongoing talks over interim arrangement with the Gorkha party, saying it had “lost popular support following the assassination”.

On 8 February 2011, three GJM activists were shot dead by the police as they tried to enter Jalpaiguri district on a padyatra led by Bimal Gurung from Gorubathan to Jaigaon. This

led to violence in the Darjeeling hills and an indefinite strike was called by GJM that lasted 9 days.

In 2011 state Assembly elections, GJM candidates won three Darjeeling hill assembly seats, proving that the demand for Gorkhaland was still strong in Darjeeling. Wilson Champramari, an independent candidate supported by GJM, also won from Kalchini constituency in the Dooars.

2.4.2.3 IMPACT OF FORMATION OF TELANGANA STATE ON GORKHALAND MOVEMENT

On 30 July 2013, the Congress Working Committee unanimously passed a resolution to recommend the formation of a separate Telangana state from Andhra Pradesh. This resulted in flaring up of demands throughout India, prominent among them were the demands for statehood for Gorkhaland in West Bengal and Bodoland in Assam. Following a 3 days bandh, GJM announced an indefinite bandh from 3 August. Largely peaceful, political development took place in the background. With the West Bengal government armed with Calcutta high court order declaring the bandh as illegal, the government toughened its stand by sending a total of 10 companies of paramilitary force to quell any violent protest and arresting prominent GJM leaders and workers. In response GJM announced a unique form of protest 'Janta Bandh', in which with no picketing or the use of force the people in the hills were asked to voluntarily stay inside on 13 and 14 August 2013. This proved to be a major success and an embarrassment for the government.

After a marathon 'all party meeting' convened by the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) on 16 August at Darjeeling, the pro Gorkhaland parties informally formed 'Gorkhaland Joint Action Committee' and jointly decided to continue the movement and exercise bandhs albeit through different names. For the first time in 106 years, all the major political parties of the hills agreed to come together and jointly take the agitation forward. With demands for Union government intervention, the GJAC announced that agitation was to continue even after 18 August, with programs like 'Ghar Bhitre Janta' (People confined to home), processions with torches and huge human chains with black bands on the national highways”.

To sum up, the agitation by the Gorkha people in the future is likely to continue and also the schism between the Gorkhas and the Bengalis and the Gorkhas and the *adivasis*. We also hold that behind all the upheavals surrounding the demand for Gorkhaland by the GJMM

and others in the hills lay the economy of Darjeeling, which still remains underdeveloped even after the DGHC was formed in 1988.

2.4.4 STATEHOOD DEMANDS FOR BODOLAND

The demand for separate statehood, Bodoland, was raised by the Bodos of Assam in the North Eastern region of India. Due to substantial ethnic diversity and heterogeneity of north-eastern region of India, no region in the north-east can be so neatly carved as to completely exclude others. The presence of minorities is only inevitable. Ethnic articulation by one group of people in a region perpetually produces minorities and sets off further demands for the creation of more regions within the region. The contest is aptly illustrated in the case of the Bodo movement insofar as it made critique of what is commonly known as ‘the dominant Assamese nationalism’. Insofar as the Bodos had been successful in carving out a region for themselves in the form of the Bodo Autonomous Council in 1993, the Santhals, the Bengali-speaking Muslims as well as the other plains tribes questioned their hegemony.

2.4.3.1 THE IMPACT OF ASSAMESE NATIONALISM ON BODOLAND MOVEMENT

The Bodos, according to the dominant Assamese nationalist discourse, are regarded as an indispensable part of Assamese nationality. In their self-perception of an expanded Assamese collective self, the Bodos, by virtue of their assimilation into the Assamese language and culture, form only one of its integral parts. Indeed, dominant Assamese nationalism since its emergence in the early 20th century harps on the twin demand of assimilation and expulsion. The demand for assimilation is inspired by the urge on the part of its ideologues to create ‘a world after its own image’ by asking others to adopt Assamese language and culture. We must note that the plea for assimilation also implies a demand for abandonment of language and culture of other groups. Hence, when Assamese was made the official language of the state in 1960, large-scale riots broke out in Assam, particularly in the mixed areas of the Brahmaputra valley, targeting mainly the Bengalis. Dominant Assamese nationalism was also predicated on the demand for the expulsion of the non-Assamese outsiders. Assimilation and expulsion in other words serve as the means of realising the Assamese Varna-Hindu dream of turning Assam into a homogenous society.

2.4.3.2 RISE OF BODO MOVEMENT

It is in the background of the dominant Assamese nationalism that the Bodo critique gained its momentum. The Bodo resentments against their absorption in the Hindu caste hierarchy slowly culminated a process of return to their 'imagined tribal roots'. As one of Bodo scholar pointed out, the tendency to homogenise and to pass of the state's culture as one "Assamese" culture fails to recognize its multiplicity and its essential Bodo or Mongoloid character'.

The resentment may be traced back to the establishment of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952 and the first thing it did after its establishment was to demand the recognition of the Bodo language as a medium of instruction in primary and higher secondary schools. The use of Bodo language was officially recognised for the primary level in 1963 and for the higher secondary level in Bodo-concentrated areas much later, in 1968. Similarly, in 1974, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) launched an agitation with the demand for using Roman script in place of the Assamese script. The PTCA launched a movement for a separate 'Udayachal' state for the plains tribals in 1967 and continued the movement for 23 years. The United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF) led by Binay Khungur Basumtary came into being in 1984 and raised the demand for a separate Union Territory for the plains tribals to be carved out of Assam. Whether it is the PTCA or UTNLF, the proposed homeland was meant not only for the Bodos but also for all plains tribes including the Miris, Rabhas, Tiwas and others. But as the ABSU-Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC) combine tightened their grip over the movement, the idea of a composite tribal territory gradually gave way to an exclusive Bodo homeland or what they called a separate Bodoland.

The resentment of Bodos culminated when Gohpur riots took place in 1989. Not a single Bodo rendered homeless a result took shelter in any of the relief camps of Assam on the ground that they were run by the Assamese-dominated administration. The Bodos preferred to stay along the highways under the open sky than to take refuge in the camps. Some of them even fled to nearby Arunachal Pradesh. Besides, Rabi Ram Brahma, then General Secretary of the All-Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), issued a warning that all the non-Bodos living in proposed Bodoland would be expelled if they did not vacate it on their own by 15 August 1989. Besides, the ABSU resolution entitled 'Divide Assam fifty-fifty' adopted, in its Bansbari Conference (1987), otherwise regarded as the testament of subsequent Bodo militancy, underscores the social and cultural break in these terms:

...the attitude of Assamese people is anti-tribal; Assamese people are importing Assamese colonialism in tribal areas and dominating the tribals; Assamese people rare following the policy of Assamese expansionism and chauvinism; Assamese people feel that Assam is only

for Assamese and not for tribals; Assam Government is nothing but only an Assamese Government and not the Government of the people of Assam; Assamese people want to assimilate others.

Hence, the Bodo discourse is permeated by a strong sense of betrayal, indeed breach of trust that the Bodos had reposed on the 'Assamese people' with all their pristine innocence. The arrival of the critique marks the end of the era of innocence.

As the Bodo movement started to gather momentum, the government entered into an agreement with the leadership of ABSU-BPAC combine. The Accord signed in February 1993 sought to provide the Bodos with some measure of 'autonomy' in areas which are 'contiguous' and in which they constitute a numerical majority consisting of 50 per cent or more of the population. Even for the sake of preserving contiguity, areas where Bodos constitute even less than 50 per cent will be the constituent parts of the Council. Defining its jurisdiction, the Memorandum of Settlement, popularly known as the Bodo Accord signed on 23 February 1993 points out: "There shall be, by an Act of Assam Legislative Assembly, a Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) within the State of Assam comprising the contiguous geographical areas between river Sankosh and Mazbat/river Pansoi. The land records authority of the State will scrutinize the list of villages furnished by the ABSU-BPAC having 50 percent and more of tribal population which shall be included in the BAC".

This Accord has thrown a challenge to Bodo leadership. Never before in their history has the Bodo leadership been caught in such a quandary. Unless they could decisively prove their majority in a space that they prefer to define as their homeland, they could not get themselves entitled to whatever political autonomy is granted to them. It's very difficult prove that they are in 50 per cent in all those areas shown in the list submitted by the leadership.

Hence, in 1996 the ABSU disowned the Bodo Accord and revived its demand for a separate Bodoland. A section of the Bodo leadership sought to resolve the circularity by way of taking to arms and resorted to the path of secessionist militancy. While the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) under the leadership of Ranjan Daimanry demands complete secession from the Indian Union, such moderate organisations as the ABSU and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) have insisted on the formation of a separate Bodo state within it. Teh BLT has ultimately settled for Territorial Council.

Since demarcation of space is crucial to the establishment of the Bodos as a majority in their 'homeland'. This found further impetus during the Bodoland movement, particularly after the formation of the Bodo Autonomous Council in 1993. When Bodo leaders reiterated their demand for including about 1000 contiguous villages, they were curtly told by Hiteswar Saikia, then Chief Minister of Assam, that they did not constitute a majority in these villages. The Bodo leadership got the clue, went deep inside the villages and cleansed them of non-Bodos in a bid to create a Bodo majority. Ethnic cleansing resorted to by a section of the militant Bodo leadership therefore was initially characterised by their pntent desire of creating a majority of their own in order to lay hold of the villages under the jurisdiction of the Bodoland Autonomous Council.

Although the Bodo movement developed predominatntly as a critique of the dominant Assamese nationalism, Santhals and the Benagli-speaking Muslims rather than the Assamese settled in the proposed Bodoland area had to bear the brunt of violence organised intermittently by the Bodo militants. These acts lead the minorities to organise themselves and resist the dominatin of the majority Bodos. The formation of such tribal organisations as the Adivasi Cobra Force and Sanmilit Janagoshthi Sangram Samiti is illustrative of this point.

2.4.3.3 CONSTITUTION OF BODOLAND TERRITORIAL COUNCIL (BTC)

The problem was sought to be addressed by way of signing the Bodo Accord with the BLT leaders on 10 February 2003 that subsequently led to the creation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The BTC was formed with the objective of 'providing Constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule to fulfil economic, educational and linguistic aspirations and the preservation of land rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the Bodos and speeding up the infrastructure of development in BTC area'. Article 4 that consists of eight clauses aims to 'safeguard' the interests and concerns of hte 'non-tribals in the BTC area' by way of ensuring their special representation in the BTC and promising suitable modification in the Sixth Schedule while securing their settlement rights and transfer and inheritance property. The actual functioning of council was started on 7 December 2003 by constituting the 12 members of the Council provisionally. After the Council Election on 13 May 2005 and subsequent bye-election in November 2005, the 40-member Legislative Council has been formed to look after the development works in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. The remaining six members are nominated by the Governor of Assam from the unrepresented

Communities. Thus there are altogether 46 members of the Council, representing all communities of BTC Area.

As per Memorandum of Settlement in the tripartite talks in the year 2003, 40 subjects have been entrusted to the BTC Authority for all round development of the people in this area. Subjects include the Tribal Research Institute, Lotteries and Theatres, Intoxicating Liquors, and Registration of Births and Deaths. The entire area covered under the BTC has been recognized with Kokrajhar as an original district and forming other new districts thus totaling four districts in the BTC Area.

Despite the Bodo Accord, Bodo people still claim they are neglected by the Indian Government, with no economic improvement evident in Bodo dominated areas. Lately, there have been signs of efforts to improve these situations by the Assam Government. However, there are thousands of people still languishing in refugee camps in very poor conditions, which include both Bodos and non-Bodos. Although dozen of roads have been repaired in last few years, hundreds of bridges and other infrastructures remain in somewhat neglected condition. Whether the creation of BTC (BTAD) will address the issues of Bodo self-determination remains an open question.

2.4.5 OTHER DEMANDS FOR STATEHOOD

India may have at least 50 states in future if demands for new states are to be conceded as the Home Ministry has received representations for creation of more than 20 states. The demands for separate states have come from across the country -- for Kukiland in Manipur to Kongu Nadu in Tamil Nadu, for Kamatapur in North Bengal to Tulu Nadu in Karnataka. However, except Uttar Pradesh, which during the Mayawati-led BSP government proposed to create four states dividing the country's most populous state, no state government had given any recommendation for carving out a new state. But the demands continue to pour in.

The demands for separate states are: In Uttar Pradesh, there have been demands for Awadh Pradesh, Poorvanchal, Bundelkhand and Pachimanchal or Harit Pradesh. There is also demand for creation of a Braj Pradesh, consisting of Agra division and Aligarh division of Uttar Pradesh and districts of Bharatpur and Gwalior from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. A demand for creation of Bhojpur comprising areas of eastern UP, Bihar and Chhattisgarh has also been received by the Home Ministry. There has been an old demand for creation of a

separate Vidarbha by curving out the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. There is a demand for Mithilanchal comprising Maithili speaking regions of Bihar and Jharkhand.

The Government of India has received demand for creation of Saurashtra by curving that region out of Gujarat. The Dimasa people of Northeast have been demanding a separate state called Dimaraji or Dimaland comprising the Dimasa inhabited areas of Assam and Nagaland. There is a demand for creation of Kongu Nadu comprising parts of southwest of Tamil Nadu, southeast of Karnataka and east of Kerala. Demand for creating a Coorg state, comprising the Coorg region of Karnataka has also come to the Centre. Representation has also received for creation of separate Kosal state comprising some districts of Odisha, parts of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. There is a demand for Tulu Nadu comprising a region on the border between Karnataka and Kerala.

The demand for separate Kukiland, comprising Kuki tribal inhabited areas in Manipur has also been raised. A demand for creation of Konkan, comprising Konkani speaking part of Western India along the Arabian Sea coastline has also been raised. There has been a demand for creation of Kamtapur comprising some districts West Bengal, including Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri. Some people from Garo regions of Meghalaya are demanding for a new state of Garoland. Besides, there is a demand for a separate Eastern Nagaland by curving out some parts of the Northeastern state. The demand for creation of an Union Territory for Ladakh has also been pending with the Home Ministry. So far, India has 28 states and seven Union Territories. Telangana will be the 29th state of the country.

2.4.6 LET US SUM UP

The functioning of democracy presupposes the existence of a divided society. A society which does not recognise the social divisions within does not seem to care for democracy and justice. The supposed homogeneity implies effective concealment of the existing social divisions and develops blindness to others. It creates a society where the 'other' does not exist. Denying divisions is the source of homogenisation and wherever there is homogenisation, the other does not seem to exist. These homogeneous tendencies lead to assertion of other identities which are feeling as victims of homogenous tendencies. These identities sometimes crystallise into organised movements if democratic space was not created to address the problems. If identities are coincided with a particular region, then

these movements might move towards making demands for separate statehood. This is what happening in many states of contemporary India. Hence, 'regions within the region' are becoming vocal for statehood demands as we have seen in the two case studies of Gorkhaland and Bodoland.

2.4.7 SOURCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

Ashutosh Kumar, *Rethinking State Politics in India: Regions within Regions* (London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge, 2011).

2.4.8 EXERCISES

1. Critically analyse reasons for various statehood demands in India.
2. Do you agree with the proposition that Gorkhaland Movement in West Bengal due to the backwardness prevailed in Darjeeling Hills?
3. How far Assamese linguistic assertiveness is responsible for Bodoland movement?

3.1 REGIONALIZATION OF PARTY SYSTEM: ONE PARTY DOMINANT SYSTEM TO COALITIONAL PARTY SYSTEM

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

3.1.0 Objectives

3.1.1 Introduction

3.1.2 India's Electoral System

3.1.3 One Party Dominant System (1952-1967)

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3.1.7 Let us Sum Up

3.1.8 Sources and Suggested Readings

3.1.9 Exercises

3.1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this topic, you should be able to understand:

- what are the main characteristics of India's electoral politics;
- what is the nature and functioning of one-party dominant system in India;
- the reasons for the decline of one-party dominant system in India
- reasons for emergence of coalition politics in India
- the major characteristics of coalition politics in India.

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian political system is unique in many respects in comparison to other political systems of the world. Adult franchise, elections, independent judiciary, multi-party system, autonomous and impartial Election Commission and free press are the corner stones of Indian democratic set up. Except for a short reign of Janata Party government from 1977 to 1979, the Indian Party system remained to be a one party dominant multi-party system from 1946 till 1989. At the same time, Indian political scenario did provide for the existence of multi-party system as there is no restriction on the number of political parties. Moreover, the presence of many sub-nationalities, castes, sub-castes, tribes, sub-tribes and diverse ethnic groups also facilitated the emergence of many local political parties. Due to these facts, beginning with late 1980s, Indian political system moved from single party dominant system to multiparty coalition system. Today, approximately, there are 6 national parties, 63 regional parties and 655 local registered parties in India. In fact, the number of National Parties decreased from 14 in the first general election of 1952 to 6 in the fourteenth (14th) general election of 2004. Therefore, the multi-party system is one of the most pertinent features of the present-day Indian political system, though the rise of BJP in 2014 parliamentary elections, yet again changed this reality of multiparty system to single party dominant system.

This lesson is intended primarily to make you understand how Indian party system evolved since Indian independence till the present times, from one party dominance system to coalition politics again to one party dominant system.

3.1.2 INDIA'S ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

The Indian party system is a witness to a number of significant changes over the past decade. By the time the first General Election was held in 1952, India was vibrant with several parties like the Indian National Congress (INC), Communist Party of India (CPI), Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS), Praja Socialist Party (PSP), Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP), National Conference (NC), Forward Bloc (FB) and Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), articulating different standpoints and positions. The INC remained as a dominant party till the late 60s. Ever since the decline of INC became apparent, two features of Indian politics attracted the attention of the students of party politics, media as well as the scholarly writings. One is the emergence of multi-party competition. The other is the rise of many smaller and regional parties to prominence in national level politics.

There is a broad consensus that India's electoral history—from the first general election in 1952 until the sixteenth Lok Sabha elections in 2014—can be roughly divided into four electoral orders.

1. One Party Dominant System (1950-1967)
2. Weakening of One Party Dominant System (1967-1989)
3. Emergence of Coalition Politics (1989-2014)
4. Re-emergence of One Party Dominant System? (2014-present times)

The following sections explain in details the nature and character of these party or electoral systems in India.

3.1.3 ONE PARTY DOMINANT SYSTEM (1952-1967)

The notion of One Party Dominant System was first used by Rajni Kothari, whose contribution to the conceptualization of State Politics in India is well-known. He analysed the uniqueness of immediate post-independent electoral politics in India. According to Rajni Kothari, India's electoral system doesn't fall under any known Western democratic model, that is single party, two party or multi-party system. However, it is One Party Dominant System, which is very different from what is generally known as a one party system. Here the word dominant is important. For almost two decades after independence, the Congress, which had led the freedom struggle in the country, controlled the central as well as state governments. He suggested that the Congress was an umbrella party – a coalition of many competing interest groups. These groups on many issues oppose each other within the party. Hence, many decisions taken in the party were consensual among these competing groups. Hence, the opposition is in-built within the party, not as an independent entity as another political party competing with Congress. It doesn't mean that there exist no other political parties. There are many other political parties such as Communist Party of India or Jana Sangh. However, the ability of these parties to challenge the Congress is rather limited. Their influence is restricted to some pockets in India only.

According to Kothari, it is a competitive party system but one in which the competing parts play different roles. It consists of a 'party of consensus' and 'parties of pressure'. The latter function on the margin and, indeed, the concept of a margin of pressure is of great importance in this system. Inside the margin are various factions within the party of consensus. Outside the margin are several opposition groups and parties, dissident groups

from the ruling party, and other interest groups and important individuals. These groups outside the margin do not constitute alternatives to the ruling party. Their role is to constantly pressurize, criticize, censure and influence it by influencing opinion and interests inside the margin and, above all, exert a hidden threat that if the ruling group go away too far from the balance of effective public opinion, and if the factional system within it is not mobilized to restore the balance, it will be displaced from power by the opposition groups. Both the ideas of an in-built corrective through factionalism within the ruling party, and the idea of a hidden or latent threat from outside the margin of pressure are necessary parts of the one party dominance system. It is an assumption of the system that the party of consensus, which is presumably the only legitimate instrument of power, is sensitive enough to public pressures and demands. The sensitivity of the entire system depends on the sensitivity of the margin of pressure, its flexibility and general responsiveness being a function of the elbow room it provides to factions, dissident groups and opposition parties in the making of critical choices and decisions.

3.1.3.1 THE CENTRE OF THE ONE PARTY DOMINANT SYSTEM: THE CONGRESS

According to Kothari, the features of one-party dominant system are (a) an open and competitive party system, (b) a divided opposition that cannot provide an alternative to the government, but pressurises the government to do certain things, and (c) a democratic and consensual dominant party. Due to these factors the political competition was internalized and carried on within the Congress. There developed an elaborate system of factions at every level of political and governmental activity. Originating on the basis of individual competition between leaders, these factions were then built around a functional network consisting of various social groups and leader-client relationships. In the process, a system of patronage was worked out in the countryside, traditional institutions of kin and caste were gradually drawn and involved, and a structure of pressures and compromises was developed. These were mediated through two new tiers of political organization, a managerial class of politicians occupying critical organizational positions in the State and the District Congresses, and a class of “link men” in the field through whom they operated. It was in the course of the working of this system that political competition was intensified, changes took place, new cadres of leadership drawn from a more diffused social basis came to power, and an intricate structure of conflict, mediation, bargaining and consensus was developed within the framework of the Congress.

On the other hand, the role of the Opposition in the early period of independence was chiefly to ensure the mobility and life of the internal power structure of the Congress. The opposition's own strength is continuously conditioned by the strength of the Congress, gaining wherever the Congress loses. Such a position has its structural implications. Electorate-wise, the Opposition can only hope to function effectively at the local and regional levels. Legislature-wise, however, it also functions at the national level and performs a very useful role in the maintenance of the system. Certain important leaders of the Opposition were given considerable personal importance by the ruling group in the Congress, thus preventing frustration and bitterness from taking undesirable forms. At the same time, this created a wide gap between the leadership and the rank and file in the Opposition, shielding and protecting the former from the radicalism of the later.

3.1.4 DECLINE OF ONE PARTY DOMINANT SYSTEM (1967-1989)

The One Party Dominant System developed cracks and started declining from the year 1967 due to various factors. Though Congress is in power at the Centre during most part of this period, however, its influence in many states reduced considerably. In the 1967 elections, sections of the Congress Party broke away, formed their own regional parties, competed in state elections, and won. Congress lost control of state politics, and it has never been able to regain complete power over the country. More seriously, in the 1970s, under the leadership of Ms Indira Gandhi, the party weakened organizationally. In the 1971 elections, Ms Gandhi appealed to the national electorate across regions, castes, religion and gender on the populist platform of "remove poverty." The federal and consensus nature of decision-making within the party yielded to a highly centralized form of policy-making under a charismatic leader. The party degenerated into a group of favourites or coteries that are close to Mrs Gandhi. In the process it lost its capacity either to represent or to arbitrate between plural and conflicting views. The decisions of the dynastic leader were the decisions of the party. Increasingly the party was to lose touch with the people it had once led to freedom.

The decline in the hold of Congress that began in the post-1960 period is also due to its failure on the economic front. The national humiliation caused by the defeat at the hands of China in 1962, vacuum of leadership caused by Nehru's death and the flowering of agrarian capitalism as a result of 'green revolution' have significantly contributed to the decline of the Congress in late 1960s. This period may be rightly termed as the advent of a political development with many non-Congress national political parties coming to the fore

and the rise of regional political parties in most states of India. The decision of the rightist forces to quit the Congress and to form Swatantra Party too had adversely affected the Congress.

This new political situation had wide ramifications for Indian parliamentary democracy. The increasing strength of the opposition parties and the rise of the regional parties made the party system in India to enter a phase which Rajni Kothari described as competitive dominance because the hegemony of the Congress had to face a serious challenge from the national opposition parties as well as from the regional parties. The strategy of forming United Front against the Congress created formidable challenges before the dominant party in the 1967 parliamentary and the assembly elections. Although the congress was able to retain power at the centre with a reduced majority, it failed to retain power in at least six states. Moreover, the politics of defection deprived it of power in three more states. This marks the beginning of an era of unstable state-level coalition governments. Thus these elections may be primarily seen as the consolidation of anti-Congressism in Indian politics.

However, the dominance of the Congress began to decline by 1974 on account of the failure of Congress government at the centre and in most of the states due to its failure in fulfilling the rising expectations of the masses. The vertical division of Congress into two groups also contributed significantly to its weakening. The declaration of Emergency in 1975 severely damaged the influence of Indira Gandhi led Congress. The 1977 parliamentary election resulted in the victory of the Janata Party and defeat of the Congress due to a strong anti-Congress wave. After these elections, a coalition government headed by Morarji Desai was formed in which Janata Party was a major partner and some regional parties like the Akali Dal were minor partners. This coalition government was known as the Janata government.

It appeared that a two-party system had ultimately emerged in India because the Janata Party asserted as the ruling party and the Congress was the major opposition party. But this situation did not last long owing to the character of the Janata Party which was in fact not a political party in the true sense of the word but a hurriedly formed coalition of political parties having conflicting ideologies and clashing constituencies. Besides, the political ambitions of the leaders of various fractions had resulted in a consistent and brazen struggle for the office of the Prime Minister. Moreover, the party remained plagued by the issue of dual membership of the Jana Sangh group – the membership of Janata Party as well as that of

the RSS. This instability at the centre helped the Congress and discredited Janata Party in the public esteem to the extent that anti-Congressism was soon exhausted leaving behind it an opposition virtually disintegrated. The 1980 parliamentary elections helped the Congress (I) led by Indira Gandhi in restoring one-party dominance. This marked the end of an era of unstable national level coalition governments within a short period.

Post- Indira, Congress had no viable leadership options. The projection of the clean image of her successor, Rajiv Gandhi, by the media on the one hand, and the subtle use of Hindu card by the Congress (I), on the other, enabled this party to receive a massive mandate in the 1984 parliamentary elections. The sympathy wave caused by the assassination of Indira Gandhi was also a vital factor.

However, during the second half of 1980s, the Janata Dal floated by V.P. Singh after quitting the Congress not only forged a National Front that included Janata Dal and some regional parties but also arrived at an understanding with the left and the BJP. It was a rare occasion when the parliamentary democracy in India appeared to grow and mature in the direction of coalition politics.

According to M.P. Singh, 1989 elections transformed the scene at the centre in two unprecedented ways. First, it catapulted to power a coalition government at the centre for the first time, at least in a formal sense, for even the Janata Party government in the late 1970s was substantially a coalition government. Second, again for the first time, the party system at the centre truly acquired a multi-party character, for more than two parties became of consequential relevance in the Ninth Lok Sabha.

3.1.5 REGIONALIZATION OF PARTY POLITICS AND EMERGENCE OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS

Though Congress weakened considerably after 1967, however, its domination continued till 1989. Three powerful forces—often termed “Mandal, masjid, and market”—disrupted Indian politics, prompting realignment in politics.

The first of these forces was the Mandal Commission, a government task force that recommended that OBCs be given access to quotas governing higher education seats and civil service posts. Until this point, quotas—or “reservations,” as they are known in Indian parlance—were restricted to Scheduled Castes/Dalits and Scheduled Tribes. It was on the backs of the agitation around Mandal that India witnessed what Yadav dubbed a “second

democratic upsurge,” or the catapulting of traditionally disadvantaged groups into the corridors of political power. During this period, many caste-based parties representing Dalit and OBC interests firmly entrenched their position among the representative class.

The second force was the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, by pro-Hindu forces associated with the BJP. They sought to replace the mosque with a mandir (temple) marking the birthplace of the Hindu deity Ram. This ethno-nationalist mobilization helped in fuelling the sudden rise of BJP from a party that won just two seats in the 1984 general election to the only national alternative to the Congress. As the successor to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) and a party driven by a Hindu nationalist worldview, the BJP was initially limited to the heartland of the country. Its main votaries hailed from the relatively privileged communities of Brahmins and Banias. The new political context allowed the BJP to make inroads among lower castes and extend its appeal beyond its traditional core geographies.

The third and final factor was the market, due to India’s decision to liberalize its economy in 1991, embrace the forces of globalization, and welcome global economic integration. This rupture with the past redefined the boundaries of mainstream economic discourse in India, creating both new alignments in favour of opening up as well as reactionary forces who fretted about the adverse consequences for India’s poor and its limited industrial base.

Due to these developments, the Congress Party domination in Indian electoral politics comes to an end with rise of coalition politics and governments in India.

3.1.5.1 THE REGIONALIZATION OF ELECTORAL POLITICS

The 1989 election was a turning point, which saw the rise of the BJP, and regional or state parties. Although the regionalisation process dates from 1967, it is since 1989 that the coalition governance triggered the emergence of new regional parties with mergers and alliances, together with the break-up of some national parties and factions and the assimilation of others. Thus, caste and class clusters that were once part of the Congress coalition have found a voice through other parties. The rapid mobilisation of the socially underprivileged groups has resulted in a realignment of political parties along state, sub-state and caste lines. The regional parties came to determine the fate of national governments. There had been a growth in the power of State governments and an increased role for States

in national policy-making; the regional parties representing the socio-economic and political power of the intermediate castes and classes have readily extended support to the government at the Centre and in the States as well. There had also been entry of the propertied intermediate and middle castes, the chief beneficiaries of commercialisation of agriculture. Regional parties have also become powerful advocates of regional business interests.

Due to these developments, the electoral politics since 1989 resulted in regionalisation of electoral process and the party system. This in turn has been a result of the 'participatory upsurge' among the marginalised sections of the society, leading to the decline of the dominant party system of the Congress. This regionalisation was further supported by the total fragmentation of the Janata Dal into several local and regional outfits, such as Janata Dal (U), Janata Dal (S), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Samajwadi Party (SP), Lok Dal, etc., and the splits in the already marginalised Congress Party on the regional lines in West Bengal (Trinamol), Tamil Nadu (TMC) and western Maharashtra (NCP). The social support for all these parties and coalitions varies not only from state to state, but sometimes within a particular state itself.

In 1989 elections, there were three types of broad political formations that were competing for centre stage in Indian politics. These were largely woven around support from among, (i) newly empowered intermediate castes, Dalits, minorities, etc, mobilised on the ideological plank of secularism, pluralism and multiculturalism; (ii) the upper caste Hindus and the upwardly mobile middle castes, the most backward castes and a section of Dalits, under the dispensation of Hindutva identity; and (iii) the third one mobilising the voters around its somewhat 'outdated' political ideology of nation building. It was also the horizontal mobilisation and 'fusion' of smaller caste groups that made it possible for some of these 'bigger' castes to become numerically significant, not only to be taken note of, but even to become dominant partners to decide the nature of the coalition itself. This 'fusion' of smaller jatis and further their social coalition with similar other bigger jati groups have made these social formations increasingly relevant for the capture of political power. Since the composition of these social formations varies from region to region, it is a large conglomeration of apparently diverse regional political formations that bargains and stakes claim for political power at the national level, often looking like a great confederal arrangement of local or regional formations.

3.1.5.2 THE COALITION OF NATIONAL FRONT

The National Front was formed under the leadership of V P Singh, the then Defence Minister of Rajiv Gandhi who resigned from the cabinet protest corruption, particularly related to Bofors guns. The seven parties that were part of this National Front include: the Jan Morcha, the Janata Party, the Lok Dal, the Congress(S), the Telugu Desam, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and Assam Gana Parishad (AGP). The new found unity was a result of strong anti-Congressism exhibited by V P Singh and TDP's N T Rama Rao and their success in bringing together other like-minded parties. Of the seven member parties of the National Front, the Janata Party, the Jan Morcha, and the Lok Dal joined to form the Janata Dal; the other four parties preferred to retain their identity. Thus, the number of National Front constituents was reduced to five: the Janata Dal, the Congress(S), the AGP, the DMK and the TDP. N.T. Rama Rao was made chairman of the National Front. One of the great success of National Front is it brought together two extremely ideologically opposing groups the Jana Sangh and the Left Parties.

The 1989 election revealed that India's first hung parliament resulted from high proportions of Congress' core constituencies shifting their support to newly formed caste, religious and regionally based parties. The result led to the formation of a multi-party system. Outside the Hindi-speaking northern states, the rise of regional parties in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Punjab and Assam substantially reduced Congress' ability to win the super-majorities that had enabled it to be the dominant party for so long.

Even though, the National Front Government was better organised than the coalition government of the Janata Party of late 1970s, it also suffered from similar inherent weaknesses. The egoistic personality clashes within the Janata Dal, the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations for central government jobs, coupled with other issues created serious problems for the survival of National Front Government. VP Singh's so called self-proclaimed expertise of 'management of contradictions' failed to keep him in power even for one year. In mid-1990, the BJP and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) announced their decision to go ahead with the construction of the Ram temple. The BJP leader L.K. Advani started a spectacular Rath Yatra from Som Nath in Gujarat to Ayodhya in U.P. On October 23, Advani was arrested by the Bihar Government. Subsequently, BJP withdrew its support to the V.P. Singh Government.

The Chandra Sekher government that succeeded V P Singh did not survive for a long time due to its inherent contradictions, its dependence on Congress. The failure of minority

governments again given the opportunity to win the 1991 parliamentary elections which resulted in the formation of Congress government as PV Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister.

3.1.5.3 THE RISE OF COALITION POLITICS

The general elections from 1996 onwards produced hung Lok Sabhas which led to the formation of coalition governments. The first Vajpayee government lasted only 13 days and was then followed by the Deve Gowda-led United Front government. This was a minority government but it received outside support of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and the Congress Party until April 1997 when the Congress suddenly withdrew support paving the way for Inder Kumar Gujral to take over the reins of this government and become the second United Front Prime Minister. However, this government too could not complete the remaining period of its term and stayed in power only for about ten months. The Congress again withdrew its support. When elections were held after the fall of the Gujral government, BJP obtained the largest number of seats (182), and Vajpayee became the Prime Minister of a coalition government for the second time. This government lasted for about 13 months, when the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazaghham Party (AIADMK) pulled out of the coalition, the government lost the confidence motion by only one vote. Hence, coalitions formed in the 1990s witnessed instability and most of these coalitions could not complete their term due to internal contradictions among coalition partners. It was only from 1999 onwards that coalitions began to mature. Thus, the year 1999 is the watershed in the evolution of stable coalition governments and since then the coalition politics of India became quite different from that of the earlier ones. The differences are in terms of stability, establishment of structures and institutions of coalition building and management.

After the eleventh Lok Sabha elections, the United Front (UF) formed government. It had learnt lessons from previous coalitions and moved on to establish a three-tier coordination mechanism. At the first tier of the UF management mechanism was the common minimum programme (CMP) that was drafted with an aim to narrow down differences among both partners and supporters. At the second level was the Steering Committee (SC), which included parties not only within the governing coalition but also those outside it (but not all). This complex mechanism was developed for consultation and discussion. The third mechanism of the UF, direct interaction between the prime minister and the Congress was heavily dependent on the personal relationship and goodwill between two individuals.

Subsequently, parties learnt both from their own and others experiences at multiple levels. In this connection we saw that institutionalised coordination mechanisms have played a crucial role in bringing stability and resolving the problem of maintaining unity and diversity. From mere seat adjustments, the repository now includes electoral alliances, common agendas, all party meetings, chief ministers' conferences, multi-level coordination committees, inter-ministerial groups and even agencies outside the sphere of conventional politics. It would be fair to conclude that federal coalitions through the processes of exploitation of past knowledge and exploration of new possibilities evolved newer and sturdier governance mechanisms. Moreover, two grand coalitions emerged at the centre – National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Both of them proved successful and stable in coalition building exercise and completed their full terms.

3.1.5.4 MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF COALITION POLITICS (1989-2014)

The main characteristics of the coalition politics in India from 1989 to 2014 are outlined as below:

1. The single-most important development in this period has been the decline of the Congress, for long the inevitable nodal reference point of both political practice and theoretical reflection on Indian politics.
2. The trend towards federalisation of the party system, a trend already strong in the 1980s, has been substantially deepened. It made its presence felt at the Centre for the first time with the National Front government in 1989, and has become a trend that shows every sign of enduring. Consequently, despite coalition and/or minority governments and related cabinet instability at the Centre, the state level has seen the maturing of bipolar party systems in a majority of states.
3. This decade saw a sharp rise in political mobilization on the basis of social cleavages based on ascribed identities, in particular of religion and caste.
4. Central to parliamentary government is the process of government formation and the constitution of the cabinet. In this decade, this process resulted in, variously, majority coalition, minority coalition and single-party minority governments. In addition, by rational anticipation of the verdict of a hung Parliament, a number of parties have veered towards what can well be labelled an 'alliance culture'. Alliances have become part of the accepted rules of the game, rather than something to be resorted to in exceptional moments.

However, the Indian electoral politics have significantly transformed in 2014 when BJP emerged as a powerful party and Congress could not cross even 100 mark in Parliamentary election, which again moved India towards single party dominance.

3.1.6 RE-EMERGENCE OF ONE PARTY DOMINANT SYSTEM? (2014-PRESENT TIMES)

In May 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) claimed the first single-party majority in the lower house of India's parliament (the Lok Sabha) in three decades. BJP's victory, spearheaded by the party's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi, ushered in a debate among political scientists and political analysts over whether the country's electoral politics was experiencing a paradigm shift. Indian politics was synonymous with coalition politics between 1989 and 2014, following decades of Congress Party dominance at the national level; but for that quarter century, no single party was strong enough to earn a parliamentary majority on its own, relying instead on dozens of pre and post-election allies to form a governing coalition.

The BJP's breakthrough in 2014, therefore, prompted a debate about whether India had left the era of multipolarity, fragmentation, and coalitions behind in favour of a new, dominant-party system in which the BJP assumed the role of central pole that the Congress had once played. For instance, In the *Journal of Democracy*, E. Sridharan wrote: "The results were dramatic, possibly even epochal. The electoral patterns of the last quarter-century have undergone a sea change, and the world's largest democracy now has what appears to be a new party system headed by a newly dominant party." Similarly, Pradeep Chhibber and Rahul Verma noted that with its historic victory, "the BJP has clearly replaced the Congress as the system-defining party" and would likely become the "focal point of electoral alignment and re-alignment" in India.

In the wake of the 2019 general election results, which came on the back of significant political changes at the level of India's states, there is empirical support for more unequivocal judgments. Indeed, the available evidence points in one direction: 2014 was not an aberration; it was instead a harbinger of a new era. In the 2019 general election, the BJP clinched a second consecutive majority in the Lok Sabha, a feat that was last accomplished by the Congress Party in 1980 and 1984. While most political analysts expected the BJP to return to power with relative ease, very few anticipated the magnitude of the victory. The BJP

won 303 seats (out of 543) in the Lok Sabha, while its National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won a whopping 353 seats in total.

However, some of the other political scientists are starkly divided in their assessments. Some scholars downplayed the magnitude of this electoral verdict. “From the perspective of the vote shares won by the country’s main political parties, not as much has changed as the news headlines might suggest,” wrote Adam Ziegfeld. Another assessment, penned by Rekha Diwakar, concluded that “although the Congress decline has continued, and the BJP has won many recent state assembly elections, it is premature to conclude that the Indian party system has shifted to a BJP-dominated one.” Many political scientists and scholars did not agree with a view that India clearly moved once again to single party dominance of BJP by pointing out the BJP failure in winning assembly elections in various states. It has failed to clearly win majority seats in the assembly elections of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Jharkhand and Maharashtra, though it later managed to gain power in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

3.1.7 LET US SUMMUP

As you studied above, Indian party system and electoral politics was completely dominated by the Congress in the first 20 years of post-independence period. That is the reason why many called it as the “Congress System” or “One Party Dominant System”. In this system, the opposition, the pressure groups, the competitive interest groups operated within the Congress since the Congress system allowed the plurality or contradictory groups to function within its fold. However, it did not mean that opposition parties were non-existent. Many of the parties such as Communist Party of India or Jana Sangh did exist during this period. However, their capacity to influence the Indian electoral politics is rather limited due to their restricted presence only in some pockets of India. However, the influence of Congress started witnessing its decline from 1967 when many opposition parties won in the state elections, and in the late 1970s when a coalition of opposition parties formed government even at the Centre, though it had survived very short period of two and half years.

However, the system of One Party Dominance has completely disappeared since 1989 due to regular emergence of hung parliament. From 1989 to 2014, neither the Congress nor the BJP could secure absolute majority in the Parliament. Yet, no stable government could be formed at the centre without the support or tacit approval of either the BJP or INC since

1989. Therefore, “two parties dominant multi-party system” is a pertinent unavoidable feature of the Indian political system in the era of coalition politics. During this period, many regional parties that emerged across the country had dominated the political process in general and electoral politics in particular. As a result, India entered into a new phase of “regionalization of electoral Politics” or “coalition politics”. This system continued for a considerable time till BJP has gained absolute majority in 2014 Parliamentary elections, even though it formed the government by including all the alliance partners of National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The 2019 parliamentary elections further reinforced this trend of Indian politics swinging back to “One Party Dominant System”, but this time BJP at the centre, as it secured more than 300 seats on its own. However, many doubt this proposition on the grounds that the percentage of people voted for BJP has not crossed even the 40% percent mark, and the BJP lost most of the elections held for state legislative elections during and after 2019 parliamentary elections.

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3.1.9 EXERCISES

1. Explain how do you understand one party dominant system.
2. Elucidate the factors responsible for decline of one party dominant system.
3. How do you understand the regionalisation of Party Politics in India.
4. Write a note on Coalition politics in India.
5. Do you agree with the proposition that India has moved once again towards One Party Dominant System with rise of the BJP in Indian Politics?

3.2 LANGUAGE AND STATE POLITICS : ANDHRA PRADESH, GUJRAT AND MAHARASHTRA

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

3.2.0 Objectives

3.2.1 Introduction

3.2.2 State, Language and Politics

3.2.3 Language and Politics in India

3.2.4 Andhra Pradesh

3.2.4.1 Reasons for Demand of Separate Telangana

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3.2.5 Maharashtra and Gujarat

3.2.5.1 The Idea of Linguistic States and the City of Bombay

3.2.5.2 The Controversy over Bombay

3.2.5.3 The Marathi Agitation of 1956

3.2.6 Let us Sum Up

3.2.7 Sources

3.2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson, you will be able to understand:

- the interplay between state, language and politics;
- different dimensions of language politics in India;
- language politics in Andhra, Andhra Pradesh and establishment Telangana;
- language politics in the formation of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

3.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Anthem, Jana gana mana, that we so passionately sing with utmost respect, portrays India as a collection of languages and regions. By combining language-based

regions such as Punjab, Gujarat, Maratha, Utkala, and Banga with the geographical features of the Indian landscape such as the mountains of Vindhyas and Himalayas, the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, and the Indian Ocean, the Anthem endows these linguistic regions with naturality. Just as mountains, rivers, and oceans were seen as primeval features of the national landscape, so, too, were the territorial domains of these languages. Furthermore, in invoking these linguistic regions, the National Anthem also referenced the speakers, their culture, and social life. In marking these fragments of the nation, the Anthem was therefore a site where difference in India was incorporated and domesticated. Even as such difference was assigned roles in the fortunes of the nation.

However, the linguistic and other aspects of diversity have brought a rich heritage and culture that enriched everyday life of all the Indian people. However, they also brought a sort of problems to its social and political life. Many tensions came to bear on this process: tensions between regional cultural nationalism and Indian unitary nationalism, tensions arising from claims and counterclaims for territory between regions, tensions between regional minorities and the majority linguistic groups.

In this lesson, we will study how India's linguistic plurality brought its own tensions and pressures on India's political process and how linguistic demands created fissures between people and groups. Since all the issues related to politics of language are difficult to understand in one lesson, this particular lesson focuses on linguistic politics in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujrat.

3.2.2 STATE, LANGUAGE AND POLITICS

In linguistically plural societies, such as India, language is often a source of conflict. According to Wilfried Swenden, language serves both as a 'thin bond', providing the basis on which social groups within the state compete and negotiate for resources and as a 'thick bond' generating collective and individual identities in which histories are told or cultural and religious practices unfold. States decide on what is/are the official language(s) of the state, i.e. in which language will the state communicate with its citizens through legislation, administration, court action or public policy more widely. Scholars of language policy refer to this process as 'status planning'. States also make decisions on the language of instruction in schools and the use of language in the media more broadly, which is often referred as 'acquisition planning'. Multi-lingual states differ in their chosen language policies. These

choices are rarely neutral. They reflect the normative preferences and understandings of political elites and citizens more widely on what is required to make and sustain a sense of national community within a polity.

The language policy which a state eventually adopts also reflects the demographic, socio-economic and political power associated with certain language groups within the state. For instance, the imposition of Sinhala in Sri Lanka reflected the majoritarian status of this language and its close association with Buddhism as the dominant religion. Ultimately, privileging Sinhala supported the building of Sri Lanka as a Buddhist nation, at the expense of its Tamil-speaking and (predominantly) Hindu Tamil minority. It also reduced, though not extinguished the role of English as an official link-language. These policies led to the onset of violent conflict in Sri Lanka. Similarly, the imposition of Urdu on Bangla people of East Pakistan ultimately led to the separatism and break up of Pakistan and the emergence of independent Bangladesh. The same kind of language politics prevailed in all parts of South Asia and other parts of the world. India is not isolated from this phenomenon. It has witnessed several linguistic conflicts in various parts of the country.

3.2.3 LANGUAGE POLITICS IN INDIA

India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with, according to the 2011 census, 122 languages spoken by more than 10,000 citizens and 60 by more than 100,000. Scholars of comparative language politics and policy usually uphold India as a relatively successful example of the management of linguistic diversity, but the country's language policy has been the product of intense negotiations and power struggles.

During colonial times, English acquired an important status as an elite language, used in higher education, the courts or official communication more generally. Yet, vernacular/local languages were allowed to play a role, especially in education. It simply wanted to establish a small group of elite citizens who through their knowledge of English and one or several vernacular languages could operate as interlocutors between the colonizer and its subjects. However, the linguistic diversity of India has become somewhat problematic in forging unity among different segment of the population of the country.

In 1950 when India's Constitution was drafted and approved, the Constituent Assembly, with its concerns about issues of citizenship, federation, domicile, rights, franchise, and electoral constituencies, understood regions like Odisha and Sindh as more

than just parts of the Indian nation. Regions were not merely considered as geographic areas but linguistic units; rather than just being part of the nation, the region and its language came to mark Indian citizenship and democracy. By the 1950s, the Indian citizen was imagined not only as Indian but also as a member of a particular region and a speaker of a particular language. Hence, by this time, both the Indian nation and the universal Indian citizen came to be marked by linguistic difference.

However, many of the national leaders of the time preferred a strong unitary state and considered the establishment of states on the basis of linguistic uniformity undermines this national unity and cohesion. Even as late as 1952, five years after the independence of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of Independent India from 1948–1964, argued that: “I have been overburdened with the thought that we must give topmost priority to the development of a sense of unity in India because these are critical days. Any decision that might come in the way of that unity should be delayed till we have laid a strong foundation for it. The idea of linguistic provinces will intensify provincial feelings and that, undoubtedly, will weaken the concept of a unified India”.

But at the same time, many leaders within the Congress differed with the idea of making Hindi as an official language. This disagreement was much more visible in the Constituent Assembly. While a plurality of Indians understood Hindi, it was not the mother tongue for about 60 percent of the population. When the matter was put to vote in the Constituent Assembly, 78 members casted their vote in favour of Hindi with 77 against. This is the reason why the language issue took the maximum time to reach consensus, eventually becoming a “half-hearted compromise” between different sections of the Constituent Assembly. After vigorous debates, disagreements, and deliberations, Hindi and English became the official languages of the Indian union for communication between the union and the constituent states. Such a decision was agreeable to most states on the condition that they were free to choose the state’s official language(s).

Although the eventual replacement of English with Hindi was planned, however, this plan coincided with the sanctioning of regional languages enlisted in Schedule VIII of the Constitution. The states were free to promote these regional languages in their communication with citizens or schooling. However, this measure also provoked concerns among speakers of important minority languages within these states. For instance, Telugu speaking citizens of Madras in the South feared that their language was suppressed by the dominant Tamil-speaking political elites of the state.

This provoked massive protests and demands for the creation of linguistic states in other parts of the country, which led to the appointment of a Commission under the chairmanship of Mr. Fazal Ali (known as State organization Commission) to examine the issue of organisation of states on linguistic basis. The Commission after rough consideration of the problem recommended for the formation of sixteen states and three centrally administered areas on linguistic basis. It also made suggestions for safeguarding the interests of the linguistic minorities. The recommendations were accepted by the government of India and the State organization Act was passed in 1956. Under this Act the states were reorganized on linguistic basis. However, the Hindi-speaking states of the North were not merged into one unit, thus preventing the formation of a federal unit which could dominate the others in the union. If anything, state reorganizations after 1966 have divided some of these Hindi-speaking states further (as in the case of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand) as well as for the first time in 2014 a non-Hindi speaking state (Telangana which was carved out of Andhra Pradesh despite sharing the Telugu language).

However, linguistic federalism while making states more linguistically homogenous, has not eradicated linguistic minorities. Linguistic minorities can take on several forms: (1) speakers of major (regional) languages who reside in a state where they are in a minority position either as the result of recent migration or because they populate sub-state territories in which state minority languages have been spoken for a long-time; (2) speakers of small languages which do not find recognition as official languages in Schedule VIII of the constitution; (3) minorities of languages associated with lower castes or tribes, and therefore often 'inferior' in status and official recognition (e.g. Santhali, Gondi); (4) speakers of languages associated with a minority religion, in particular Urdu, due its association with Islam; (5) speakers of languages which are associated with ethnicity other than lower caste or tribe; (e.g. Anglo-Indians). The Indian constitution protects the language rights of these minorities. A Commissioner of Linguistic Minorities (and his/her Office) is tasked to oversee these rights. However, concerns have arisen about the implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations or the seriousness with which state governments complete and submit their annual state reports to the Commissioner.

Moreover, language provisions in the educational sector are contested. For instance, despite its 'high status' Tamil Nadu refuses to enforce Hindi as a compulsory language, confining itself to Tamil and English. Conversely, at the state level instruction in the mother tongue may not be offered to linguistic minorities in view of the lower-status of their

language, e.g. as tribal languages; or it may only be offered until the end of the first grade, after which mainstreaming into the more high-status state majority language is attempted. Furthermore, many parents opt to send their children to private schools where the medium of instruction is English; the most popular language at college or university level and the language with the widest employment opportunities. The prevalence which parents and children place on the medium of instruction may produce a disjuncture between the formal intent of the three-language-formula in education and its perception on the ground. The formula seeks to achieve linguistic plurality but in reality, it created or increased competition between linguistic groups, especially between high status languages such as English and the vernacular state official languages (but also between the latter and state minority languages).

The identification of people with a particular language led to the rise of identity politics in India. Many regional political parties had emerged when the regional political loyalties transformed from language to territory. This is particularly evident in the process through which these local languages become officially recognized as regional languages and come to be the basis of the territorial realignment of Indian regions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, way back in British period. The linking of language and territory is fundamental to this process. As Pritipuspa Mishra so convincingly brings to us, the history of the “landing” of the vernacular languages in India illustrates how they emerge as the most powerful representative category in postcolonial India that determines political and territorial alignments to the exclusion of other categories such as class or caste. That is the reason language can trump other markers of difference is because it can be used as a basis of territorial divisions and then neatly sublimated in ways that religion, caste, and class cannot. The capacity of language to be “landed” and its ability to be identified with a feature of territory makes it potential instrument for politicization and emergence of recurrent demands for special status.

In this way, the major vernacular languages of India are simultaneously able to define Indian regions as exclusive cultural spaces while enabling the inclusion of people who do not belong. However, this identification is the product of elite efforts to define Indian territory and community and often involves the imposition of a certain vernacular language on areas in which they are not spoken. This is particularly true of the areas inhabited by adivasi populations. Apart from this, as discussed above, the local or vernacular language of a particular language is not a language of all the people who are residing in the state. This linguistic complexity within the states has become a source of differences between different

segments of the people. Sometimes, conflict and divisions emerged on the basis of 'dialectical' differences within a particular linguistic group. These differences led to further politicization of identities and agitations which led to severe conflict in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The following sections will pay attention to the linguistic politics in these two states.

3.2.4 ANDHRA PRADESH

Andhra Pradesh witnessed many changes before it emerged as the first linguistic state on November 1, 1956. The years 1947 to 1956 were very crucial in the history of Andhra Pradesh. When India got independence on August 15, 1947, the three main regions of Andhra Pradesh – Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana were not part of Andhra Pradesh state.

When India became independent in 1947, the demand for the establishment of separate state of Andhra for the Telugu speaking people of erstwhile Madras Presidency was increased. This demand was made on the basis of the position the Congress Party taken at the Nagpur Session in December 1920, when the Congress restructured its organisation and constituted Pradesh Congress Committees on linguistic lines.

The government of India set up the Linguistic Provinces Commission (the Dar Commission) in December 1948 to consider the issues, especially regarding the formation of new states of Andhra, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The commission, however, decided against the formation of new states as "it was not in the larger interests of the Indian nation and should not be taken in hand". It also found that in the case of Andhra, all the Rayalaseema districts were facing revenue deficits, while the coastal Andhra districts were in surplus. So there was no homogeneity in the proposed Andhra state either. This caused more agitation in Andhra. When the leader of the movement P Sitaramayya died while on hunger strike huge violence broken in Andhra areas.

On 18 January 1953, the Congress passed a resolution approving the steps taken by the government relating to the formation of Andhra and reaffirmed the policy of the Congress in favour of linguistic provinces. The Andhra state was formed on October 1, 1953, after the Act of Parliament (the Andhra State Act of 1953) received the President's assent on September 14, 1953. It was the first state constituted on linguistic basis after India's

independence. At this juncture, Hyderabad and other Telugu speaking parts of the Hyderabad state are not part of the Andhra State.

Hyderabad remained a separate state till it was split in 1956 for the purpose of forming a large Andhra Pradesh state on November 1, 1956. At this time, the nine Telugu speaking districts of Hyderabad were merged with 11 districts of Andhra state which was created on October 1, 1953 to form a bigger state of Andhra Pradesh. The four Kannada districts in Gulbarga division of Hyderabad state were joined with Karnataka while the four Marathi speaking regions of in Aurangabad division of Hyderabad state were merged with Maharashtra. The remaining two districts of Medak and Nizamabad also became part of the Andhra Pradesh state.

However, the joining of the Telugu people of the Hyderabad State with Andhra region is not that smooth. Many influential sections of the Hyderabad State argued against fearing that their interests would be compromised due to progress achieved by the Andhra region people under British. They feared that most of the educational and employment opportunities would be cornered by Andhra people at the cost of Hyderabad state people.

Then it is not surprising that the Centre constituted State Reorganization Commission (SRC) also expressed its apprehensions regarding the merger of Telugu speaking regions of Hyderabad State with Andhra state. While noting the advantages of the one state for all Telugu speaking people, the SRC also stated that: “One of the principal causes of opposition to Vishalandhra also seems to be the apprehension felt by the educationally-backward people of Telangana that they may be swamped and exploited by the more advanced people of the coastal area”. Due to this the “Telangana itself may be converted into a colony by the enterprising coastal Andhra”.

However, the “Gentlemen Agreement” concluded between leaders of the both the regions, and guarantees given to people of Telangana (Hyderabad State) by the leadership finally resolved the problem and culminated in the formation of united Andhra Pradesh by including all Telugu speaking people. As part of the agreement, educational and employment opportunities were reserved for the people of Telangana, similarly separate Regional Council was constituted to the development of the Telangana region.

3.2.4.1 REASONS FOR DEMAND OF SEPARATE TELANGANA STATE

The formation of unified Andhra Pradesh has not resolved the problems between the people of Andhra and Telangana regions. There are many agitations in Telangana and Andhra regions for the creation of separate states, though the state machinery suppressed all these agitations, sometimes by negotiations, sometimes with brute force. There are many reasons for the conflict between the elites of the two regions. Some of them are highlighted below.

Domination of Andhra Elite

One of the contentions of the elite of the Telangana is that most of the political and economic resources are grabbed by the elites of the Andhra region at the cost of the people of the Telangana. With none of these powerful leaders belonging to Telangana region, the policies of the successive Governments, since 1982, were not generally in favour of equitable development of Telangana. In this context, accusations were made that, during this period, large areas of resourceful land, especially in and around Hyderabad, were acquired at much cheaper prices for and by “outsiders” (persons not belonging to Telangana region) at a great advantage to them ignoring the interest of the locals.

Growth of Hyderabad

In the meanwhile, the economic development and urbanization of the city of Hyderabad, particularly in the aftermath of the Six Point Formula, became a contentious issue. While there was no dispute that the city had developed enormously during the post 1975 period, Telangana protagonists contended that the urban development in Hyderabad was disproportionate and skewed in favour of the needs of the migrants and sacrificed the principles of social and economic equity. The industrial units that came up in the periphery of the city of Hyderabad by the efforts of migrants engaged largely their own “migrant” staff to man the industry, thus depriving the locals of employment opportunities at various levels. United Andhra advocates, on the other hand, insist that Hyderabad is no longer merely a Telangana city and that its identity, particularly over the last 35 years or so, has undergone a complete change in all respects and that Hyderabad today is a major national metropolis. They have extended several arguments such as large investments, major change in demographic profile, massive seasonal employment for the unemployed coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema youth, political neutrality etc.

Increase in Telangana Sentiment

The emotional integration between the people of the two regions that was expected to happen after the formation of a unified state did not take place, at least at a scale necessary to make the unification stable and an uncontested fact. So, the leaders of the Telangana agitation now say that the quarrel is not merely about jobs or water or funds for the development of the region, but one of preserving the cultural identity and self-respect of the people of the region. This is what goes by the name of 'Telangana sentiment', which most political leaders emphasized as the basis for the creation of a separate Telangana state.

Role of Political Elite

The role played by the political elite in Telangana region significantly contributed to the emergence strong separatist sentiment in Telangana region. The problems of intra-party accommodation and the nature of inter-party competition have contributed to the resurgence of the demand for a separate Telangana. Dissident Congress leaders who were unhappy with power-sharing arrangements within the party, led the 1969 and 1973 agitations for separate states in the Telangana and Andhra regions respectively. Similarly, at a time when speculation about the possibility of new states filled the air and the Telangana intellectuals were building up a case for the creation of a separate Telangana, a prominent leader of the ruling TDP, K. Chandrasekhara Rao (KCR) left the party in 2001 to launch the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS). He was a cabinet minister in the TDP government but was dropped after the 1999 elections and made deputy speaker of the state assembly. A gifted public speaker, K.C.R. had the ability to rally the masses and intellectuals around the demand for a separate state based on the slogan of self-respect of the Telangana people, and the hurt caused to the Telangana people in the unified state.

Apart from the above stated factors, there are many other reasons that have contributed to the rise of separatist sentiment in the Telangana region and demand for the establishment of separate state. However, to summarise the whole issue, the formation of united Andhra Pradesh was premised on the all-inclusive Telugu "sub-nationalism". However, the imbalance in the development that existed in the three regions of the integrated state at the time of formation and other social and cultural factors gave each region a distinct identity. This identity continued to influence the state politics and electoral outcomes as well. The same contributed to the emergence of separatist parties with demands for separate state.

Rise of Telangana Rashtriya Samiti (TRS)

The resurfacing of the Telangana issue in electoral politics of Andhra Pradesh provided the ground for the projection of the popularity of the Telangana Rashtriya Samiti (TRS), which was created with the goal of achieving a separate Telangana. TRS provided the Telangana cause with all the needed ideological and logistical support to keep the momentum going. In the process, the party tried to maintain electoral prominence both at the state and at the Centre.

During the parliamentary elections of the 2004, an alliance was formed between the Congress and the TRS, in which Congress won majority of the seats from Telangana region. When Congress-led UPA formed the government at the centre, in which the TRS was a part, the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the UPA included the Telangana issue by stating that “The UPA Government will consider the demand for the formation of a Telangana state at an appropriate time after due consideration and consensus”. Subsequently in the Presidential address to the Joint Session of Parliament on June 7, 2004, mention was made that “the Government will consider the demand for the formation of a Telangana State at an appropriate time after due consultations”.

3.2.4.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF TELANGANA STATE

The movement for separate Telangana state intensified from the late 2009 onwards as most of the social, cultural, economic and political sections of the society became part of the agitation. The city of Hyderabad was frozen number of times from late 2009 till the formation of the separate state with huge agitations. The state government, headed by Sri K Rosaiah had called for an all-party meeting on 7th December 2009. Leaders of the major political parties promised that they would support a Telangana statehood resolution if it was tabled in the state Assembly. As KCR's, who was on indefinite hunger strike, health was deteriorating very fast, on Dec 9th 2009, the UPA government announced that the process of statehood for Telangana would be initiated. The process of establishing a separate Telangana culminated in February 2014 when both houses of the parliament approved the Statehood Bill. The bill received the assent of the President and was published in the gazette on 1 March 2014. Telangana became 29th state of the India on 2 June with Hyderabad as its capital.

To conclude, the division of Andhra Pradesh and formation of Telangana was the first major linguistic state of the country to be reorganized on grounds other than language. Although both Telangana and Andhra will remain linguistically homogenous states even after their reorganization, the belief that people speaking one language should live in one state

stands challenged. Of course, this is already true of the Hindi-speaking population, and in a way, a separate Telangana means an extension of the same principle to the people speaking other languages.

3.2.5 MAHARASHTRA AND GUJARAT

Although the Indian government conducted a large-scale reorganization of states based on linguistic differences in 1956, it was not until 1960 that Bombay state was divided into Maharashtra and Gujarat. This was mainly because there were conflicting opinions on the position of Bombay city, namely whether it should be included in the linguistic state of Maharashtra, if the state were to be created. While there had been a demand among the Marathi-speaking elite for the creation of Maharashtra with Bombay as its capital, there was strong opposition to this idea, mainly among the Gujarati-speaking elite in and outside the city. They argued that Bombay was a multilingual city and was connected historically, economically and socially not only with Marathi-speaking areas but also with Gujarati-speaking ones. While repeatedly rejecting the idea of including Bombay in Maharashtra, the Indian government suggested alternative solutions, which caused serious disturbances.

3.2.5.1 THE IDEA OF LINGUISTIC STATES AND THE CITY OF BOMBAY

The demands for linguistic reorganisation of states began among the elite in several parts of India in the late nineteenth century. In Western India, the Marathi-speaking intellectuals started demanding for the same. In 1891, the editorial in a Marathi paper, *Kesari*, edited by Bala Gangadhar Tilak, criticised the situation which the Marathi-speaking people were divided into different provinces and princely states. Here we need to understand that the Marathi-speaking people, before reorganisation of the states, were divided into as many as four provinces, namely the City of Bombay, Maharashtra, Central Provinces and Berar. After independence, the demand for linguistic states got increased phenomenally.

Comparing with other parts of India, the situation in Western India was much more complex. The fact that the city of Bombay was given the status of a separate state even after the independence presents a clear contrast to other presidency towns, that is, Calcutta and Madras, which were included in the states of Bengal and Madras, respectively. This was partly because the Marathi speakers formed only half of the entire population in the city, while the Gujarati speakers formed more than 20 percent.

For the Gujarati elite in the colonial period, Bombay was an important Centre for their economic, social and cultural activities. They occupied a dominant position in commerce and industry. Those who came from elite families in Gujarat came to look for opportunities for higher education and better jobs. The Gujarati publishing industry began to develop in Bombay from the early nineteenth century, before it started in other places. Various Gujarati social reform organisations and literary associations were also founded; among them, Bombay was considered almost as part of the Gujarat.

From the middle of the 1940s, with the prospect of independence, the elite in several regions in India began to make more vocal demands for the creation of linguistic provinces. In the Marathi-speaking region, the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra (United Maharashtra) was expressed in the Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan and the Maharashtra Unification Conference, which were both held in 1946. A movement was pioneered by these organizations to this end.

In contrast with this development among the Marathi speakers, there was hardly any political movement for the creation of a separate province of Gujarat before independence. Although some Gujarati intellectuals began to stress the unity of the Gujarati-speaking territory, which was at the time divided into a party of Bombay province and many princely states, they showed little interest in the idea of a separate province for Gujaratis. One of the important reasons for this was the Gujaratis attachment to the city of Bombay. Those who had strong links with Bombay preferred not to change the current form of Bombay state to avoid the possibility of losing their claim on Bombay.

3.2.5.2 THE CONTROVERSY OVER BOMBAY

The appointment of Dar Commission, to reorganise the linguistic provinces, triggered active debates in different parts of India. In western India, the future of Bombay became one of the major issues of debate. In August 1948, a meeting of some Congress members of the Bombay Legislature passed a resolution that declared their support for Samyukta Maharashtra, which included Bombay. In the same year, B R Ambedkar, submitted a memorandum to the Dar Commission in which he strongly objected to the idea of making Bombay city a separate state, arguing that Maharashtra and Bombay were ‘one and integral’.

Contrary to this, the Indian Merchant Chamber and the Bombay Committee presented to the Commission their strong objections to the inclusion of Bombay in Maharashtra. The

Bombay Committee, claiming to represent different communities in the city, argued that the creation of new provinces be postponed in the wider interest of the country and that if the reorganisation of provinces on a linguistic basis was to take place, Bombay be constituted as a separate province 'on the strength of political, economic, strategic and cultural considerations and its cosmopolitan and multilingual character'. This organisation dominated by Gujarati industrialists and businessmen, also stressed that Bombay owed its development to 'all communities, such as Parsis, Gujaratis, Cutchis, including Khojas and Memons, Maharashtrians, Canarese, Tamilians, Telugus and Christians, including even the foreign settlers'. It expressed the opinion that the Marathi-speaking population actually constituted only 36 percent and that, from the viewpoint of trade, commerce and industry in the city, the dominant language was Gujarati.

The Dhar Commission also received a memorandum on the issue from an influential Gujarati politician, K M Munshi, in which he criticised 'linguism' and the demands for the creation of linguistic provinces. Regarding the case of Bombay province, he too argued that Bombay should be made into a centrally administered area if the province was to be divided. To support his view, he emphasised the historical, cultural and economic unity of Gujarat, North Konkan and Bombay city and the contributions of the Gujaratis to the growth of the city. If the city was handed over to Maharashtra, Munshi argued, its non-Marathi speaking majority would be subjected to the 'political domination of aggressive linguism'.

The Dhar Commission submitted its report to the Constituent Assembly in December 1948 with a conclusion that establishment of linguistic states is not in the larger interest of India. Regarding Bombay city, it recommended that the City must be kept outside the 'vortex of linguistic politics'. However, considering the agitation in the Andhra region, the Government of India appointed the State Reorganisation Commission (SRC), chaired by Fazl Ali, to re-examine the issue. The non-Marathi organisations, including the Bombay Committee, again made the same demand before the SRC, to constitute the Bombay City as a separate state.

However, outside Bombay, the Gujarati elite started looking the matter differently. The Maha Gujarat Parishad, founded in 1952, argued that the Gujarati region had been exploited historically by Maharashtra and that 'the common man of Gujarat' now felt that without the formation of Gujarat, his vital problems could not be solved. This is an indication that the elite in north and central Gujarat, who were likely to benefit from the administrative

change, preferred to have their own Gujarati state. As to the city of Bombay, however, the Maha Gujarat Parishad was also of the opinion that it should not be included in Maharashtra.

The SRC report that was submitted in 1955 admitted that the demand for a united Maharashtra including Bombay was strong, however, it recommended that the special position of Bombay should be recognised, taking into account the mixed population of the city and the ‘views and apprehensions of the minor language groups’. The SRC proposed that Bombay state be reconstituted as a bilingual state. The Centre started seriously considering the ‘three state formula’ to create Maharashtra, Gujarat and Bombay City as separate administrative units.

3.2.5.3 THE MARATHI AGITATION 1956

This three-state formula was received with strong resentment by the supporters of the Samyukta Maharashtra movement. There were disturbances and agitations all over the Marathi speaking areas. Many demonstrators were killed when police opened the fire. The ‘battle for Bombay’ began to affect the lives of a wide range of citizens. The police firing also increased the tension between Marathi and Gujarati politicians. The supporters of Samyukta Maharashtra claimed that the Chief Minister, Morarji Desai, a Gujarati, representing Gujarati ‘vested interests’ at the cost of Marathi people. They started interpreting the conflict as a fight between the ‘Marathi masses’ and the ‘Gujarati capitalists’.

On 16 January 1956, the Indian government announced the creation of the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat and the placement of Bombay city under central rule. Large-scale disturbances happened in Bombay immediately after this decision. Buses and trams were attacked, and shops, offices and houses were looted; a curfew was announced and a large security forces were deployed to stop the riots. There were attacks on Gujarati shops and houses, which resulted in thousands of Gujarati people moving to safer places.

The situation took a new turn in August 1956 when 180 members of Parliament submitted a memorandum to Nehru requesting the constitution of one ‘bilingual state’ replacing the three-state formula. Surprisingly, this time the Gujarati elite in Ahmedabad expressed their strong objection to this change. A large-scale demonstration was held in Ahmedabad, when police opened the fire many died, mostly the students.

On 01 November 1956 a bilingual state of Bombay was established with Y B Chavan as its Chief Minister. In 1957, the Congress lost significant number of seats to the Marathi

and Gujarati native organisation in their respective dominated regions. The Marathi organisation (Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (SMS)) and Gujarati organisation (Maha Gujarat Janata Parishad (MGJP)) started negotiations on issues related to the bifurcation. The MGJP accepted the claim of the SMS that Bombay city be included in Maharashtra, while at the same time demanding safeguards to protect linguistic minorities. In December 1959, the Government of India decided to bifurcate Bombay State into Maharashtra, with Bombay as its capital, and Gujarat. It was also decided that Maharashtra would provide financial support for Gujarat for the next ten years and in addition furnish ten crore rupees for the building of its new capital.

3.2.6 LET US SUM-UP

Since independence in 1947, linguistic affinity has served as a basis for organizing interest groups; the “language question” itself has become an increasingly sensitive political issue. Determining what should be called a language or a dialect is more a political than a linguistic question. Sometimes the word language is applied to a standardized and prestigious form, recognized as such over a large geographic area, whereas the word dialect is used for the various forms of speech that lack prestige or that are restricted to certain regions or castes but are still regarded as forms of the same language. Regional languages are an issue in the politically charged atmosphere surrounding language policy. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, attempts were made to redraw state boundaries to coincide with linguistic usage. Such efforts have had mixed results. Linguistic affinity has often failed to overcome other social and economic differences. In addition, most states have linguistic minorities, and questions surrounding the definition and use of the official language in those regions are fraught with controversy.

3.2.7 SOURCES

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3.3 CASTE IN STATE POLITICS: UTTAR PRADESH, RAJASTHAN AND BIHAR

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

3.3.0 Objectives

3.3.1 Introduction

3.3.2 Caste in Contemporary India

3.3.3 The Rise of Caste Politics

3.3.3.1 Political Co-Option

3.3.3.2 Political Mobilisation

3.3.4 Caste in India: Views of Rajni Kothari

3.3.5 Caste in Uttar Pradesh

3.3.6 Rajasthan

3.3.7 Bihar

3.3.8 Let us Sum Up

3.3.9 Sources and Suggested Readings

3.3.10 Exercises

3.3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this topic, you should be able to know:

- the influence of caste in Indian society and its changing dynamics;
- the rise of caste politics in India and the explanations provided by scholars, particularly Rajni Kothari
- the interface between caste and politics in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar.

3.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Caste has always been central to modern Indian politics. Even the power structure of mediaeval India was based on caste. Caste also operated as the central principle in the

distribution of power and material resources in the colonial period. Colonialism in India created a democratic and modernist space; nevertheless this space was also predominantly captured by upper-caste groups. The nationalist struggle against the imperial power was aimed at establishing the caste-class hegemony. Non-Brahmin and low-caste movements were active during the colonial era, broadly pursuing two aims: achieving upward caste-class mobility and annihilation of caste.

The caste system played a significant role in determining the content and direction of the processes of political socialisation, political mobilisation and institutionalisation within the framework of modern democracy. The dynamics of caste and class were at the root of the complexity of Indian politics in its functioning.

Behind the seemingly religious and communal movements in post-independent India, it was the dynamics of caste-class hegemony that was the real operational factor. Both the anti-caste and the upwardly mobile caste movements are guiding the pro-reservation movement, which aims at upward class mobility of the hitherto excluded castes.

As a result, caste emerged as one of the influencing factors in Indian political system, as democratisation and electoral politics brought many castes that hitherto excluded from the political process in to the political scene of contemporary Indian political scene. The following sections would highlight some of the issues underlying this process.

3.3.2 CASTE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

More than one hundred years of social reform movements, public pronouncements by political leaders, constitutional declarations, and legislation have undermined the ideological basis of caste in India. No political parties, and no political leaders, no intellectual stating that caste is part of natural moral order based upon hierarchy. There is no public opposition to the preamble to the constitution of India which calls for “equality of status and of opportunity” or to the constitutional provisions that prohibit discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth and call for equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating employment or appointment to any office. This is a significant development considering the caste based discrimination that was practiced so long in Indian society.

Perhaps no other major society in recent history has known inequalities so gross, so long preserved, or so ideologically well entrenched as in India. The notion that men should remain in the same occupation and status of life as their forefathers was due to caste they

belong to was enshrined in religious precepts and social custom. The social dignities in India were marked by indignities: the kissing of one's feet by a beggar and supplicant for a job, the outstretched hands of the grovelling poor, the stooped backs of low-caste sweepers.

However, the principle of equality implied revolutionary transformation in India. The nationalist elite that took power in 1947 wrote a constitution that contained the democratic institutions based on the principle of equal political rights. Equality was to be achieved in part through democratic institutions and procedures, particularly universal suffrage without a literary requirement, equality before the law, legislation banning discrimination, and through the establishment of a system of reservations that would guarantee representation to members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe. Equality was also to be achieved through socialist planning. The nationalist elite did not promise a classless society, but they did offer the promise of a casteless society in which social status would not be based upon hereditary social rankings and individuals would not be denied opportunities because of their birth.

3.3.3 THE RISE OF CASTE POLITICS

The revolutionary transformation did not of course take place. Caste as an ideology may not be pronounced, but as lived-in social reality it is very much alive. The demise of orthodoxy, right beliefs, has not meant the demise of orthopraxy, right practice. Lower castes remain badly treated by those of higher castes. But the gap between beliefs and practices is the source of tension and change. The lower castes no longer accept their position in the social hierarchy, no longer assume that their lower economic status and the lack of respect from members of the higher castes are a "given" in their social existence.

But the movement for change is not a struggle to end caste; it is to use caste as an instrument for social change. Caste is not disappearing, nor caste as an instrument for social change. Caste is not disappearing, nor is "casteism" – the political use of caste – for what is emerging in India is a social and political system which institutionalize and transforms but does not abolish caste. Forty years ago India's distinguished sociologist, M. N. Srinivas, presciently wrote that "caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those who are most vocal in condemning it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action".

3.3.3.1 POLITICAL CO-OPTION

Caste emerged as an important political instrument due to very functioning of the Congress Party in the post independent India. The capacity of the Congress Party to incorporate members of the middle castes and the scheduled castes was strengthened by intra-party factionalism and rivalries among members of the upper castes. As party leaders from the upper castes competed with one another for positions within the party and for seats in parliament and the legislative assemblies, they set out to broaden their own base by recruiting new members. The result of intraparty factionalism, as well as competition between political parties, was to induce party leaders to mobilize caste leaders at the local level and to create vote banks. These recruitment efforts brought into the elite structure social groups that were previously excluded from the political process.

In both UP and Bihar, the opposition parties proved to be particularly skilful in undermining the electoral strength of the Congress Party by building a coalition of the middle and the lower castes, then pulling in large numbers of Muslims alarmed by the growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party. In both states, non-Brahmin, non-upper caste elite took power, first the Jats, then the Yadavs, and by the latter part of the 1990s, UP had a Dalit Chief Minister.

In South India, the mobilization of the non-Brahmin castes was earlier than in the north. In Karnataka the Kalingas and Lingayats became the political base of the Congress Party. IN Tamil Nadu the Dravidian movement was so committed to the destruction of the caste system but, in practice, it used caste as a means of political mobilization and ultimately increased the political importance of caste. In Andhra Pradesh the Reddys and Kammas, the two non-Brahmanic castes, became ruling elite.

3.3.3.2 POLITICAL MOBILISATION

A second factor in the rising political consciousness and organisation of the lower castes was the widespread rejection of the ideological foundations of India's hierarchical social order. Once caste lost its moral legitimacy the upper castes no longer had the moral authority and the political will to stand i the way of lower castes who sought greater political power, access to education, and social respect. With the erosion of the moral basis of caste, the self-imposed barrier to protest by the lower castes, that is, their acceptance of their place in the hierarchy, was also eroded.

In the mid-1970s the Dalits launched a series of political campaigns aimed at improving their economic and social status. In the 1989 parliamentary elections, the newly

formed Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) built a coalition of “oppressed” groups, Muslims, and other backward castes. In 1995 the BSP joined with other parties to form a government in Up, with a Dalit women chief minister, Mayawati.

3.3.4 CASTE IN INDIA: VIEWS OF RAJNI KOTHARI

Rajni Kothari examined the relationship between caste and politics by analysing the issue as to what happens to political system because of the vote of castes. He found that three factors—education, government patronage, and slowly expanding franchise (including 18-21 year old young persons in electorate)—have penetrated the caste system because of which it has come to affect democratic politics in the country. Economic opportunity, administrative patronage, and positions of power offered by the new institutions and the new leadership drew castes into politics.

This involvement (of castes in politics) resulted in two things: the caste system made available to the leadership the structural and the ideological basis for political mobilisation, and two, leadership was forced to make concessions to local opinion and organise castes for economic and political purposes.

The use of caste in politics was analysed by Rajni Kothari in two different stages. The *first* stage involved intellectuals, and antagonism and resentment between high entrenched castes (like Reddi in Andhra Pradesh, Pattidars in Gujarat, Lingayats in Karnataka, Bhumihars in Bihar, and Rajputs in Rajasthan) and high ascendant castes (like Kayastha in Bihar, Jats in Rajasthan). The second stage involved factionalism and fragmentation within the competing castes as a result of which multi-caste and multi-factional alignments develop. The lower castes also are brought in to support high caste leaders and to strengthen a faction.

In the first stage, only three components of caste are involved—the power structure of caste, distribution of economic benefits, and caste consciousness. But in the second stage, other components of castes like caste consciousness, client loyalties etc. also come to be involved. Further, three sub-stages are pointed out by Kothari in the first stage. In the first sub-stage, the struggle for power and benefits is at first limited to the entrenched castes, i.e., those which exercised preponderant influence economically and politically but not necessarily numerically. In the second sub-stage, ascendant castes (i.e., unsatisfied castes wanting higher roles) also start competing for power.

In the third sub-stage, there is not only competition between entrenched and ascendant castes (for power and benefits) but also within these castes. In the second stage, called as the stage of caste fragmentation or factionalism, the leadership cleavages are created and multi-caste and multi-factional alignments come into being. This also creates the problem of rival caste leaders in politics. These leaders come to involve masses too because they want to appeal to wider identities. There is also change in leadership in this stage.

Kothari has talked of the third stage also in relationship between caste and politics. While in the first stage, 'entrenched' high castes are first politicised and 'ascendant' high castes respond with resentment and feeling of relative deprivation (e.g., entrenched caste of Brahmins and ascendant caste of Marathas in Maharashtra) and in the second stage factions emerge within the competing (entrenched and ascendant) castes and lower castes are also brought in for support, in the third stage, identifications other than those of caste are likely to become more important with advancing education, urbanisation and adoption of modern achievement orientation. There, thus, emerge cross-cutting alliances.

3.3.5 CASTE IN UTTAR PRADESH (UP)

Uttar Pradesh retains a central position in the electoral strategies of the national parties as well as within a larger political imaginary. The attention that India's most populous state draws often eclipses important political dynamics taking place in other parts of the country. UP has given India eight of its 14 prime ministers. It has been the home state of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty for five generations. The United Provinces, as it was called at the turn of the 20th century, has also been the stage for many uprisings against colonial occupation. Many of the nationalists who fought British imperialism in the Gangetic plain would play an essential role on the national stage once India became independent.

The political significance of UP is thus not limited to its numerical strength in the Lok Sabha, to which it sends 80 representatives. In recent years, its politics has come to define the dominant narratives of Indian politics: the decline of national parties, caste or identity politics, religious mobilisations and the criminalisation of politics.

Scheduled Caste and Muslims constitute about 25% and 17% respectively of the population, their proportions are higher than the all-India average. UP has upper caste constituting 20-22% and backward classes (BC's) constituting 40-42% of its population. Traditionally, the upper castes were dominant in all spheres of life, but since late 1970s BC's

and SC's have managed to effectively challenge their position. UP politics has its central feature as caste -mobilization and conflicts involving castes.

3.3.5.1 RISE OF BACKWARD CASTES

Uttar Pradesh has a tradition of backward castes politics since the 1950s and 1960s through the efforts of Ram Manohar Lohia, Kanshi Ram and Chaudhury Charan Singh. Lohia mobilised the backwards and advocated for 60 per cent reservation for minorities, backward castes and SCs/STs in government services. Kanshi Ram mobilised the entire backward class (OBCs, SCs/STs and Muslims) through a movement in 1971, which culminated in the formation of the All-India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF) whose aim was to organise the elite of the bahun samaj, essentially wage earners with intellectual qualifications who had benefited from quotas. Charan Singh mobilised the middle castes especially the jats and yadavs in the late 1960s in western districts of UP. The appointment of the Mandal Commission in 1979 by the Janata Party government and the acceptance of its report a decade later by V P Singh's Janata Dal government in 1989 accomplished the twin objectives of mobilisation and empowerment of the backwards. Thus, the 1980s were a landmark decade in our political history where we saw a 'three-dimensional' movement of the backward castes in the political space of India; they moved horizontally leading to better integration among the various subaltern castes; moved downward to establish a hold over grassroot political institutions and processes; and upward to claim a legitimate share in the leadership structure in different parties in different states.

The entire backward movement in the state of Uttar Pradesh since the 1960s has taken three routes – one, through the mobilisation of the peasant class-castes; two, through the mobilisation of the lower middle class of government servants; and three, through the mobilisation of the lower and middle castes by political parties.

The mobilisation of the peasant class-castes acquired sharpness in UP in the wake of the decline of the Congress after the fourth general election in 1967, the rupture between Charan Singh and the Congress, and the formation of the BKD, to mainly protect the interests of the rich peasantry, particularly the jats and yadavs of western Uttar Pradesh, though it was projected as protecting the interests of the peasant class as such.

The mobilisation of the backwards through the efforts of the BAMCEF (1978) under the leadership of Kanshi Ram prepared adequate ground for the backward class movement. The activities of the organisation inculcated a sense of identity among backward class government employees all over the country. Though the BAMCEF failed to keep the dalits and OBCs together, it laid solid ground for the dalit and OBC movement to take firm root in Uttar Pradesh. The mobilisation of the lower and backward castes got impetus through the instrument of political parties in the post-Congress polity. The space vacated by the Congress was open for competitive bidding. Three bidders appeared on the scene – the BSP, BJP and SP.

Despite the popular support it gained, the performance of the backward movement has been less than satisfactory in Uttar Pradesh. The backward movement could not develop a 'class politics'. Congress was a 'catch all' party and had all the blandishments of a 'class party'. The backward class-caste parties operated on the 'cleavage-framework' and tried to develop a backward class Hindu and Muslim combine. They attempted to build a solid bloc of Muslim votes by juxtaposing it to the threat emanating from the BJP and also classifying Hindu society into two sections, the forward and the backward classes, and projecting themselves as the sole representatives and protectors of the backward community. However, 'cleavage politics' is electorally limiting, and warrants a coalition of sorts to cross the electoral threshold. But the SP could not come to an alliance with the BJP owing to its anti-BJPism, with the Congress owing to its policy of non-Congressism, and with the BSP due to tension between the OBCs and the dalits. The anti-BJPism of the party emanates from its ideological commitment to secularism whereas the political history through which Mulayam Singh has evolved inhibits his party from entering into an alliance with the Congress. The possibility of an alliance with the BSP is restricted because of the structure of social relations in which the influential among the OBCs have in no way been less exploitative of the dalits than the upper castes.

The backward movement in Uttar Pradesh failed in mobilising the backwards on four counts. One, it failed to develop a 'backward class constituency' by not succeeding in persuading the dalits to join hands with the OBCs. Two, it failed to attempt a 'homogenisation of the upper and the lower OBCs' by not being able to prevent a vertical split among the OBCs owing to the dominance of yadavs and jats in party structures. Three, it failed to 'consolidate the upper backward castes throughout the state by not evolving a yadav-jat combine. There could not be even a limited and partial backward caste mobilisation at an

all-UP level owing to differences in social stratification, production relations and power structures in different parts of the state. The more prosperous jat peasants of western UP and the more numerous but poor 'kisans' of eastern UP could not constitute a common political platform. Fourth, the backward movement failed to connect the backwards in different states of the country, though it did attempt such a formation with the Rashtriya Janata Dal of Laloo in Bihar.

The SP has gravitated from its 'exclusionary politics' to 'inclusionary politics' which shows that the party is convinced of the limitations of its cleavage politics. Its attempt to attract the thakurs and brahmins of late in UP shows that the party is keener to cross the electoral threshold than retain its distinct identity. It is turning to the urban areas and capitalist friends.

It could not formulate a clear approach to socialism and, hence, its commitment to Lohia and his socialism has been questioned repeatedly. Backward caste politics in Uttar Pradesh under the Samajwadi Party seems to be on a decline.

3.3.5.2 DALIT POLITICS

In Uttar Pradesh (UP), Dalits, who comprise the lowest rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy, had been in all senses subordinated by the upper castes and had to struggle hard to develop a strong identity and move towards political empowerment through identity politics. The process that began under Kanshi Ram, who founded the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 1984 with the aim of politically empowering Dalits or the bahujan (the majority), was successful—BSP President Mayawati was elected Chief Minister of UP four times. This has immensely helped empower vast sections of Dalits and other marginalised groups in the state.

Several studies have shown how the identity generated through a bahujan politics in UP has provided many marginalised castes and communities with the self-confidence, self-respect and self-awareness needed in the struggle for power. Several redistributive claims such as issues related to economic marginalisation, deprivation and so on, and claims for recognition, such as cultural domination, dominant visibility, disrespect, humiliation and non-recognition, were woven into this form of politics. This politics laid a strong emphasis on the construction of a Dalit identity through making icons and symbols of cultural markers of Dalit pride and glory. Kanshi Ram believed that unless the culture and consciousness of the oppressed was put forward visibly in public debate and was prepared to clash with the culture

and consciousness of the enemy in public, a society of equals would remain an illusion. Thus, a strong Dalit identity emerged from creating a dissenting culture based on Dalit heroes, histories and symbols, which helped to culturally and politically empower long-marginalised sections of the population.

In UP, emerging from a strong identity-based movement, the BSP's agenda for dalit uplift is based on the notion of 'swabhiman' (self-respect). Its leadership has argued that "self-respect is more important to dalits than material gains" and "what we are fighting for is dignity and self-respect". Dalit upliftment has been conceptualised as social justice that is both retributive in character and meant exclusively for dalits.

BSP Model of Political Empowerment

The BSP's model for dalit upliftment is based on political empowerment, i.e., it believes that state power is the 'key' or agent to introduce social change. The party has followed a two-fold strategy: electoral and coalitional in order to widen its base and capture power. Based on identity mobilisation which led to increasing politicisation of the dalits, the BSP by the early 1990s was able to replace the Congress as the party representing them in UP. It gradually increased its seat and vote share in the state vis-à-vis both the SP and the BJP throughout the 1990s from 9.2 per cent in the 1991 state assembly elections to 10.8 per cent in 1996 and over 20 per cent in the 2003 assembly elections. Consequently, in a situation where no party had a clear majority, no government could be formed without the participation of the BSP. The formation of three coalition governments with the BJP and the implementation of a number of dalit-oriented programmes played an important role in the consolidation of dalit vote behind the party by the end of the decade.

The BSP believes that an egalitarian order can be achieved by means of 'social engineering from above', i.e., introducing developmental and welfare programmes using the power of the state rather than grass roots mobilisation and revolution from below. The main role of the state following the capture of power is to provide dignity and an alternative 'social justice' to the dalits. Social justice forms the core of the party's political tenets – a tool of mobilisation, an agenda of social and political action and the base upon which the party's programmes rest.

3.3.5.3 DECLINE OF CASTE POLITICS

The 2014 election results in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) indicate a complete saffron sweep. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 71 seats and its ally Apna Dal (AD) won two seats. Thus, the BJP-AD combine won 73 out of 80 seats, completely decimating all their opponents. The Congress barely retained the seats of its president Sonia Gandhi and vice-president Rahul Gandhi. The Samajwadi Party (SP) won only five seats which were contested by Mulayam Singh Yadav's family whereas the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and other parties could not open their accounts.

If we analyse the results of the 2014 general elections, we can see three things are simultaneously unfolding. One, the traditional caste and community-based model of politics was redefined. Two, development became the focal point for voters' aspirational upsurge. And three, regional variations practically disappeared. Not only caste, but class too lost its relevance in this election. Voters of all ages, educational backgrounds, economic statuses and genders supported the BJP. The highest support (47 per cent) came from the first time voters (18-22 years). Even though caste politics took a back seat in this election in U.P., it would be hasty to say that caste politics has ended in the State.

In 2014, the BJP improved upon its previous best performance in 1998 when it won 52 seats and 36 per cent votes. The SP managed a mere 22 per cent then and the BSP got 20 per cent of the vote share. While a high vote share for the BJP is important, it is the difference between the winner and the runners-up which helped the party virtually sweep the State.

Though the BJP got support from all sections of society, there are three critical aspects to its support base in U.P. First, the BJP regained the support of lower Other Backward Classes (more than half of the Kurmi community and Most Backward Classes voted the BJP). Second, the party garnered a substantial proportion of Dalit votes, mainly among the non-Jatavs. And third, there was an unprecedented level of polarisation among the upper caste voters in favour of the party. Since the 1990s, the BJP in U.P. has had two main support groups: the upper castes and the lower OBCs. Mr. Modi's repeated emphasis on his caste background in his campaign speeches seems to have helped the BJP improve its vote share among OBC voters.

The 2014 election verdict in U.P. rather suggests a story of failed social engineering on the part of the SP and BSP. The SP continues to receive support from Yadavs and Muslims; however, its support among Yadavs has decreased. It has also failed to get support

from any other social section. In the case of the BSP, its Jatav support remained more or less intact but it did not receive support from either the lower OBCs or the Muslims. This has left the BSP to shrink to its Jatav vote base alone. With a limited support base, the capacity of both these parties to post any victories was seriously restricted.

The BJP seems to have succeeded in evolving a grand Hindu coalition, while the Muslim vote by and large went to non-BJP parties. Thus, the saffron sweep has created an imbalance in minority representation as there is no Muslim MP elected from U.P. One thing is clear: the rhetoric and the success of the BJP have posed a serious challenge to politics based merely on caste or community identities. Whether this will usher in a new era in the State's politics, where the paradigm of performance and development will shape electoral destinies in the future is an open question.

3.3.6 RAJASTHAN

Most of Rajasthan's population consists of Indians of various social, occupational, and religious backgrounds. The Rajputs (various clans of landowning rulers and their descendants), though representing only a small percentage of Rajasthan's residents, are perhaps the most-notable section of the population; indeed, the state draws its name from that community. In terms of caste structure, the Brahmans are subdivided into many gotras (lineages), while the Mahajans are subdivided into a bewildering number of groups. In the north and west the Jats and Gujars are among the largest agricultural communities.

Aboriginal (tribal) peoples constitute more than one-tenth of the population of Rajasthan. In the eastern part of the state, those groups include the Mina (and the related Meo), most of whom are farmers; the Banjara, who have been known as traveling traders and artisans; and the Gadia Lohar, another historically itinerant tribe, who traditionally have made and repaired agricultural and household implements. The Bhil, one of the oldest communities in India, generally inhabit southern Rajasthan and have a history of possessing great skill in archery. The Grasia and Kathodi also largely live in the south, mostly in the Mewar region. Sahariya communities are found in the southeast, and the Rabari, who traditionally are cattle breeders, live to the west of the Aravallis in west-central Rajasthan.

3.3.6.1 CASTE POLITICS IN RAJASTHAN

Caste has also been an important factor in the politics of Rajasthan. The Rajputs dominated the scene for centuries and even during the Mughal and the British regimes, various states in Rajasthan were being ruled by the Rajput-Princes. At the time of the integration of States and the formation of Rajasthan, the Jagirdari system was prevailing in the State covering more than 60% of the State area. These Jagirdars were the Rajputs and the peasantry constituted most of the Jat community besides other communities. It is a fact that political systems are based on the relationship between the social structure and the political structure. In spite of the fact that the Rajputs have been a dominant force in the politics of Rajasthan, they have not been a numerically dominant caste in the state with less than 6 per cent.

The Congress Party, which was in power in most of the time, in order to consolidate its position and to face the challenge of opposition parties, wooed the Jats and other communities. But it soon became clear that no group can expect to gain significant support in Rajasthan unless it has the support of the important members of the Rajput community.

Hence, Rajasthan's political structure and electoral politics were always always witnessed a close contestation between Rajputs and Jats. The competition between Jats and Rajputs has been transformed into a bipolar party situation some times. In 1952, when the first elections were held, the state has come out from the influence of princes following the merger of states in Indian Union. But in 1952 State Assembly elections, the princes fielded a large number of their nominees. The electorate was under the hangover of the feudal era and they voted in large number in their favour. As a result, 54 Rajputs were elected in a house of 160 in 1952. In this election, the share of Jats was 12, Brahmins 22. But after the 1952 elections, because of greater awareness, the Rajputs started losing their grip and in 1957 only 26 could win. In fact, the Jats started showing their power and in 1957 the number snowballed from 12 to 23. The Rajputs started getting marginalized after the emergence of Jats and Bishnois.

3.3.6.2 MANDAL COMMISSION AND CHANGED POLITICAL CONTEXT

The caste politics in the State transformed after 1989 because of the Mandal Commission report. The issue of reservations for OBCs following Mandal Commission Report and the claims of the OBC leaders for power sharing cropped up. Acceptance of the OBC reservation became a state policy. During the same period, various parties incorporated OBCs resulting in the changed composition of representatives. These developments have meant that the OBCs within themselves would go for greater share of power.

The influence of caste in politics got intensified as competition increased even among the backward communities. Because of caste politics, people vote en bloc as a community and they benefit as a bloc. This is what happened when Jats were granted OBC status. Since they are powerful and well off they started cornering the benefit of reservations. The Gujjars, who has an OBC status, started demanding for ST status. Apart from reservations the Gujjars have another reason to protest. They have had very less political representation and they envy the Meenas who enjoy the ST status with over 500 IAS, IPS and other white-collared job holders. The Gujjars feel that given the benefit of quota they can outclass the Meenas in all walks of life.

3.3.6.3 POLITICS OF RESERVATION: GUJAR AGITATION

Gujjars, who comprise nearly 8 per cent of the population in the State, are not an economically, politically or socially powerful group. The only Gujjar leader who endeared himself to a cross-section of people in and outside the State was Rajesh Pilot. Although his son Sachin Pilot won the Dausa seat in the last Lok Sabha elections, by and large the Gujjar community was left rudderless after Rajesh Pilot's passing away.

The BJP seized upon this vacuum in the 2003 Assembly elections. During her election campaign, Vasundhara Raje promised to look into the grievances of the Gujjar community, particularly its long-standing demand for inclusion in the ST category. In what was seen as a clear appeal to caste feelings, the Chief Minister claimed that she was a daughter of Rajputs, daughter-in-law of Jats, and a relative of Gujjars (her daughter-in-law hailed from the Gujjar community). Whatever is its worth, the caste card paid off. Jats had been mollified by the previous Atal Bihari Vajpayee government at the Centre by including them in the OBC list. Gujjars were aggrieved as they now had to share the OBC pie with the economically, politically and socially dominant Jats.

Coupled with aggressive campaigns in the ST belt, the BJP won major dividends in the elections; it secured 120 seats, winning the majority of the 28 reserved seats, unprecedented in the history of the Party. Six of the eight Gujjar legislators belonged to the BJP. Clearly, the Gujjar base had begun to shift from the Congress to the BJP.

But compared to Meenas, Gujjars appear to be politically dispensable. Vasundhara Raje remained complacent even after the Gujjar legislators submitted their resignation in protest against the police firing.

The Gujjars maintain that they qualify for ST status in every manner. According to their leaders, in 1857 the British branded the Gujjars as a criminal tribe as the community had taken cudgels against the colonial rulers. In 1924, under the Criminal Tribes Act, Gujjars and other tribes designated as criminal tribes were subject to strict regulations. In 1951, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel got the Act repealed. Gujjars figured were among the Backward Castes in 1981. Subsequently, in 1993, the community was included in the list of OBCs.

As the Gujjars were failed to convince either the BJP government or later on the Congress Government, they have undertaken a serious ageitation. The December 2010 agitation was triggered by two High Court orders, one issued in October 2009 and the other on December 22, 2010, both of which rejected a petition seeking 5 per cent reservation as the total reservations are crossing 50 per cent. The earlier order, interim in nature, stayed the operation of the State government's notification, which provided 5% reservations to Gujjar as special backward community. The Gehlot government did not appeal against that. It, however, decided to provide 1 per cent reservation to Gujjars in government jobs, ensuring that the 50 per cent ceiling was not crossed, and decided to wait for the court's approval regarding the remaining 4 per cent. However, the Court consented for 1% reservations and refused to consider 5%.

This resulted in the eruption of violent agitation by Gujjars. They felt very much offended because neither they got ST status nor 5% special reservation. The year-long Gujjar agitation, which claimed 70 lives and disrupted rail and road services on a large scale, was called off after an agreement was reached between the community's delegates and representatives of the Vasundhara Raje government in Rajasthan. The leader of the Gujjar reservation movement, Kirori Singh Bainsla, who participated in the marathon discussions, declared it was time for a truce. But the community is perceived it as betrayal.

Gujjars have actually not got what they demanded: a letter from the Bharatiya Janata Party government recommending the inclusion of the community in the Scheduled Tribes list. Instead, the Gujjar delegates settled for much less and even agreed to certain humiliating pre-conditions. The agreement arrived at between the 11-member delegation of the Gujjar Arakshan Sangharsh Samiti and an eight-member government delegation revolved around granting 5 per cent reservation to Gujjars, Banjaras, Gadia Lohars and Raikas under a "special, separate backward class" category. These groups currently figure in the list of Backward Classes.

The agreement states that the 5 per cent reservation for these socially and educationally backward classes will not in any manner disturb the existing reservation for the Scheduled Caste, ST and Other Backward Class categories. However, in an action aimed at appeasing the other castes, the government announced a 14 per cent reservation for economically backward Rajputs, Brahmins, Vaishyas and Kayasthas. By skirting the main demand of ST status for Gujjars, the government also managed to allay the fears of the Meena community.

In a sense, Gujjars were back to square one. For the BJP government, it was a smart electoral move. The quantum of reservation in the State is 49 per cent. With the creation of the new categories, it has now risen to 68 per cent (1 per cent lower than the quota prescribed in Tamil Nadu, which is the highest in the country). It was not surprising that the Akhil Bharatiya Gujjar Mahasabha rejected the agreement signed the previous day on the grounds that not only was the new reservation open to judicial scrutiny but the government had not even touched the subject of reservation for Gujjars under the ST category. Two members of the Gujjar delegation did not put their signatures on the agreement.

Many consider that the Gujjar agitation was a result of the Raje government's failure to keep the promise made in the run-up to the 2003 Assembly elections. Unfortunately, in contemporary political scenario, the nexus between caste and politics is always centred on game of electoral politics. The electoral calculations are becoming more important than providing some special opportunities to those actually need it. The reality is that the real Scheduled Tribes are in a very bad shape and no one is thinking about them.

3.3.7 BIHAR

The birth of caste politics in Bihar is linked to the issue of separation of Bihar from Bengal. In other words, role of castes in Bihar politics is not only a post-colonial affair but as early as 1894 a local branch of the "All India Kayastha Mahasabha" was established in Bihar. On account of their education and high connections Kayasthas had occupied high posts in Governments of Bihar. They were treated as the most forward caste in Bihar and like the enlightened Muslim house of Bihar they had easy access to the British rulers in pre-independent days. However, their number in Bihar Congress was more than that of the Muslims. In rural areas of Bihar they were dominant political force which is evident from their presence in the districts boards of Bihar. In the beginning, towns of Bihar were the

centres of state politics. But gradually sentiments of caste politics was aroused in the remote villages also due to which the simple village life became comparatively more complicated and poisonous through the venture of capturing power by dint of caste votes.

Dominance of the Kayasthas in public and political life of Bihar generated a sense of rivalry among the educated Bhumihars and Rajputs. As early as 1878, 'The Bihar Landlords Association' had been established with its members in Bhumihars, Rajputs and Brahman castes, who by the time of the formation of Bihar province had developed a keen sense of competition and resultant jealousy. This encouraged the Bhumihar landlords to establish their caste associations known as 'Bhumihar Brahman Sabha' in 1899. Now the Kayastha supremacy was challenged by Bhumihar political leaders on account of which 35% of seats in 1935 were captured by the Bhumihars in Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee. Rajputs had 14% and Kayastha had 28% in comparison to their position of 53 % in 1934. Both the Bhumihars and Rajputs had made much advancement in caste politics.

3.3.7.1 THE BACKWARD CASTES

The backward castes, who constitute nearly 60 per cent of population, and the scheduled castes and the tribes had very meagre representation before independence. Only after independence, they steadily increased their representation, but their numerical preponderance in the population was not and still is not reflected in the Congress leadership. Till the early part of 1970s, these castes were politically not significant.

The political rivalry among the upper castes in Bihar has a significant impact on the way different social groups have been allowed entry into the political system and assimilated. The fact that the upper castes contended among themselves for political power required that each contending caste group go beyond its own VARNA and seek support from other cast groups. This necessarily widened the scope of political involvement and the caste groups which stood on the periphery of political process were inducted into it.

Gradually with expansion of the adult franchise, and the growth of party system Yadav, Kurmi, Koeri, Bania and Scheduled Castes came in and with them came also the Tribal and Muslim communities. The turning point in the organisation of these castes was in 1977 when Karpuri Thakur, the then chief minister introduced reservations for backward castes in government service. The forward castes reacted vigorously against this decision as a consequence of which the process of backward caste solidarity gained momentum. Since then

politics in Bihar has been characterised by a fourfold division – forward castes, backward castes, Harijan, and regional (tribal) politics. Apart from their success at the Legislative Assembly and the ministerial level in Bihar, the leaders of the backward castes had also been successful in capturing power at the Panchayat level in villages where they command numerical superiority. Here also the traditional upper caste leadership had been set aside, gradually.

Though the backward class started sensing this empowerment as early as in the mid-1970s, however, it was fully opened to everybody only when Laloo Prasad Yadav became the chief minister of Bihar. With his implementation of welfare programs for the lower sections of society, especially the Dalits community, they too began sensing the change in the mid-1990s. During anti-reservation struggles of later 1980s and early 1990s, when rest of the India was silent against upper caste agitating people, in Bihar, by contrast, the backwards mobilized and put up a stiff challenge to the Anti-Mandal agitators. There was a prolonged and violent struggle between the anti-reservationists and pro-reservationists. This led to the externalization of the undercurrents of age-old and deep-seated antagonism between the upper castes and backward castes.

One of the major achievements this time was that the majority of the most deprived sections, the Dalit community, were allowed to vote. For the first time, they had a sense that they mattered in electoral politics. They felt that they did have a share in the political power in the state. During the Congress regime, power remained monopolized by the upper castes and no serious attempt was made to incorporate the aspirations and demands of the Dalits and backward castes into governance of the state.

It was the first time, in Bihar politics, upper castes remained on the margins of the political struggle. The backwards managed to have a firm control over political power. The changing social composition of political representation is an indication of the fact that the backward castes have come to play a major role in Bihar politics.

When it comes to Scheduled Castes, in the post-Mandal scenario, the contradictions inherent in the agrarian structure and between the backward castes and Dalits in north India were developing at a rapid pace, particularly after certain backward castes which had a defining historical advantage made good use of new opportunities in land and agriculture. However, in Bihar Laloo Prasad Yadav successfully incorporated the Dalit cause into his self-

respect and social justice agenda for a considerable period of time, at least till the assembly elections in 2000.

However, much before Yadav's legitimacy was lost, Nitish Kumar had shifted away from the Janata Dal. The mid-1990s saw a consolidation in Bihar, a socio-political class alliance of sorts, between the Brahmans and Bunias represented by the BJP; the non-Yadav middle castes under Kumar's Janata Dal (U). Nitish Kumar, hence, represented the political compromise between a section of backward castes and upper castes. While the backward caste and Dalit votes gradually get divided, the upper-caste votes gradually got solidly behind the BJP-Janata Dal (U) combine, along with Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Jana Sakti Party, in recent electoral politics, particularly since 2010. This process has been gradual, but it can be said that the BJP succeeded in gaining acceptability across castes while projecting Nitish Kumar as the backward-caste face of the alliance. This is the alliance that is presently holding success in the electoral politics of the Bihar.

3.3.8 LET US SUM UP

The eradication of caste became a major part of the programme for social change after Independence in India. The hope of many was that the forces of economic development and modernisation would reduce the dominance of caste and result in an egalitarian society. Indeed, there were noticeable signs of change in some parts of the country, especially in urban areas.

However, caste is still surviving and thriving in India. Castes endure in India, but not for the reasons which bound them together in earlier decades, such as rituals, notions of pollution, wedding norms, etc. These are no doubt weakening. But, as Andre Beteille, one of the finest Sociologist in India, says "We will have to turn to a different sphere of activity to understand the peculiar tenacity of caste, and that is the sphere of politics." With adult franchise, the style of electioneering has changed. It is easy for a voter to identify himself more readily with a caste than with a class. "Where caste consciousness was dying down, it was brought back to life by the massive campaigns that became a part of every election."

It is clear that caste remains an important political resource, but it would be mistaken to view caste identities as ascribed. Rather, they are complex constructs that draw upon yet differ from earlier categories. Institutional incentives, that is the provisions and benefits that

state provide, are distributed to caste categories. This is one of the important reasons for the emergence and functioning of number of caste based parties across India.

3.3.9 SOURCES & SUGGESTED READINGS

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Kishore, Raj (2016). “Understanding the Politics of Bihar”. Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 77: 539-545.

Verma, K (2005). “Backward Caste Politics in Uttar Pradesh”. *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 3.

3.3.10 EXERCISES

1. How important caste as a social category in India?
2. Write a note on rise of caste in Indian politics.
3. How do you understand Rajni Kothari views on caste in Indian politics.
4. How rise of backward caste changed political dynamics in Uttar Pradesh?
5. Do you agree with the proposition that the dominance of middle castes in Bihar undermining the upper castes ?
6. Write a note on caste dynamics in the politics of Rajasthan.

3.4 RELIGION IN STATE POLITICS: GUJRAT AND KERALA

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

3.4.0 Objectives

3.4.1 Introduction

3.4.2 The Interface between Religion and Politics

3.4.3 Religion and Politics in India

3.4.4 Communal Riots

3.4.5 Electoral Politics and Religious Mobilisation

3.4.6 Religion in Gujarat

3.4.7 Religion and Politics in Kerala

3.4.8 Let us Sum up

3.4.9 Sources and Suggested Readings

3.4.10 Exercises

3.4.0 OBJECTIVES

This topic provides you basic understanding about how religion has become an instrument in the state politics of India. After reading this topic you will be able to know:

- about the interface between religion and politics
- the roots of religious communalism in India
- the linkage between electoral politics and religious mobilisation
- Understand the role of religion in the politics of Gujarat
- Comprehend the interface between religion and politics in Kerala

3.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The relation between religion and politics continues to be an important theme in political science, despite the emergent consensus on the right to freedom of conscience and on the need for some sort of separation between religion and state. One reason for the importance of

this topic is that religions often make strong claims on people's allegiance, and universal religions make these claims on all people, rather than just a particular community. Thus, it is probably inevitable that religious commitments will sometimes come into conflict with the demands of politics. But religious beliefs and practices also potentially support politics in many ways. The extent and form of this support is as important to political scientists as is the possibility for conflict.

3.4.2 THE INTERFACE BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS

Religion remained to be the main binding force for the people across various periods of history and continues to be so in the present age. Despite the fact that modern age is considered to be the age of reason, religion continues to dominate the hearts of people. Secularization, the normative foundation on which most of the Western democracies were found, does not eliminate religion from the political realm. It is more a matter of religious communities finding themselves in a more politically pluralistic context in which their particular agendas and claims are given less recognition. It is a context, therefore, in which those religious bodies turn, wherever and whenever possible, to parties and/or pressure groups to defend and promote their interests.

It is very difficult in the contemporary world to ignore the presence of religion in public affairs. Virtually on a daily basis, the media provide instances demonstrating that the people, institutions, and ideas that make up the religious sphere have a continuing relevance to the political realm. What they demonstrate, unequivocally, is that religion and politics have a lot to do with each other: they interact in a number of important but complex ways. Whether it is at the local, national or international level, whether it involves ordinary citizens, activists or major leaders, whether it concerns legislative institutions, pressure groups or competing political parties and ideologies, religion and politics relate.

Since religion has many dimensions with multiple realities, detailing the connection between religion and politics requires specifying how each dimension of religion may affect political behaviour. Belonging to a particular religion may influence political behaviour because a religious community may serve as an information for politics. Simply being affiliated with a religious group, without necessarily joining in the practice of its faith, may socialize individuals to certain political and partisan preferences. Behaving, in turn, increases the likelihood that socialized preferences will be reinforced; religious practice places people

in religious environments, particularly organized environments – theological, spiritual or social – where they are likely to receive political information. Religious beliefs, finally, may be a source of social and political values and attitudes that in turn influence political behaviour.

The political participation and action that the people undertake also reflect important underlying beliefs, values and opinions—the mass political culture. This, too, extends the relationship between politics and religion. To what extent, for example, are religious orientations linked to the national political culture and/or given subcultures? Are religious belief systems, such as they are at the mass level, systematically associated with ideological dispositions in the political realm? In general, the answer seems to be positive. In numerous countries and contexts, religion and politics do indeed connect in this way.

3.4.2.1 RELIGION AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Electoral politics is the most visible and symbolic form of political participation. The impact of electoral politics on the political mobilization of people further brought religion closer to the political realm. Since political parties are main actors in electoral politics, numerous studies have focused on the relationship between religion and political parties; the religious composition of their mass base, the religious outlooks of party activists and leaders, and the religious character of the party's ideology and programme are some of the issues extensively probed all over the world.

Many religious groups are functioning as pressure groups to influence the agendas of political parties, promoting their particular views on the current public agenda. They are building and using links with political parties and forming alliances with other like-minded pressure groups. In some cases, religious leaders may even actively seek office themselves. But equally, there are religious groups who seek no engagement at all in the political realm, who see it as a corrupt and corrupting arena.

Political parties frequently play an important role in generating relationships between the dimensions of religion and political behaviour. Parties may form to represent distinctive religious groups or traditions. In these circumstances, the party-group linkage is direct, and party support comes mostly from the social group it claims to represent. Even if not explicitly representing a single religious group, parties may make appeals to particular religious groups, basing the appeals on the group's social status or on policy positions that align with religious

beliefs and values. In another variation, parties may appeal generally to those who practice religion and have strong beliefs, regardless of religious tradition or denomination, thus producing electoral coalitions of religious persons that cut across religious groups.

Religious group leaders may also influence the religious bases of political behaviour. They may reinforce party mobilization efforts and the connection between party policy positions and the group's values and beliefs. The religious leaders, through the organizational structure and cadre that they command, provide vital support network to the political parties in the election campaigns and propaganda.

In addition to these historical considerations, contemporary political issues and electoral strategies may also explain electoral divisions between religious groups. Particularly in countries where electoral system is based on First-Past-the Post principle, a small tilt in voting in favour of a particular political party considerably influences the electoral fortunes.

Lastly, the most important element in the electoral politics is the mass populace. Though in many ways the least powerful in the play of power, one can easily find a rich array of inter-connections between the religious and the political at grass roots level. Perhaps the most significant act is that of voting which, at least in competitive systems, is the major means through which citizens as individuals come to participate in the play of power. Under this heading a variety of important questions are raised. To what extent, for example, are voting decisions founded upon, or influenced by, religious criteria? Many studies carried out revealed that religion retained a remarkable saliency in fixing voting alignments in many countries of the world. To put it another way, religious groups may form moral and indeed political communities, shaping and mobilizing their members' electoral activities as they react to the candidates, parties and issues within the campaign.

3.4.3 RELIGION AND POLITICS IN INDIA

In August 1947, India was finally freed from its prolonged era under British colonial rule, winning independence. Independence, however, was accompanied by a very painful division into two separate states within its borders, the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan. That separation became the source of great turmoil to follow in Indian history.

Independence itself did not involve bloody struggles with the former suzerain, Great Britain, but a series of hideous massacres occurred between Muslims and Hindus, who had lived together as compatriots for a long time. Partition into the two independent

states led to the largest-scale mass migration of religious groups in the history of the Indian subcontinent. Muslim refugees headed for Pakistan, and Hindu and Sikh refugees for India. As they met midway, many cases of bloodshed occurred on a scale comparable to war. This tragedy was caused when religion became linked with the modern territorial state. The dogmatism that brought about such conflict and disputes between religious groups has been called ‘communalism’ or religious confrontationism.

3.4.3.1 ROLE OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

One may be inclined to think that ‘communalism’ between Hindus and Muslims has prevailed since Muslims took over India. As recent historical research has pointed out, however, there are strong indications that it was during the British colonial rule that rigid boundaries were established between Hindus and Muslims. In other words, the unambiguous articulation of religious groups assumed primary importance under the modern governing system, and confrontation became palpable along those articulated lines.

Communalism, as is often thought by some, is not the product of religion; it is, in fact, the product of politics of the elite of a religious community. In other words religion per se does not give birth to communalism. It is also important to note that communalism was not the product of medieval ages but of the modern period. Medieval polity was not competitive, much less democratic. The modern colonial polity was competitive and proto-democratic. It is competitive politics between the elite of two or more communities that give rise to communalism. And when a third Party in the form of a colonial authority is present it assumes grave proportions. Though the British colonial rulers cannot be solely held responsible for the genesis of communalism, they did play a vital role in promoting it as well as in its genesis. Right from the day the British rulers sensed the damage Hindu-Muslim unity could cause to their empire, they began dividing the two communities and distortion of history proved quite a powerful instrument in doing so. This engineering of the division between Hindus and Muslims by the British rulers was aggravated by competitive politics between the elite of the two communities, which ultimate led to the partition of Indian subcontinent and division of the one unified people.

3.4.3.2 RELIGION AND POLITICS IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA

In the background of partition and communal clashes, a crucial issue facing independent India, then, was how to deal with these communities and their concerns. It was clear that religion could not be restricted simply to the private domain, but in what way should religion and religious communities be accommodated? This was the crucial question upon which the unity of India and the viability of her democratic system depended.

The Constituent Assembly deliberated at length on this issue and eventually devised a framework that neither adopted the American model of secularism, which separated religion from politics completely, nor followed the path of many other countries in the region, which endorsed and privileged a particular religion. At the time of independence religious communities, particularly minority communities, needed assurance that they would be equal partners in the emerging democracy, and would enjoy the freedom to pursue their religious and cultural way of life.

3.4.3.3 RELIGION AND POLITICS: CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

There were two choices before independent India. As a separate homeland had been created for the Muslim population, it might have been possible to make India the homeland for the Hindu community. Alternatively, it could opt to become a secular democracy, equally hospitable to people of different communities. India chose the latter path. There was a general consensus that the State would have no established religion of its own and would treat members of different communities as equal citizens.

A consensus emerged that equal treatment for all religious communities would be assured by protecting the religious liberty of all. To ensure this, three kinds of fundamental rights were given by the Constitution. Article 25 gave each individual equal liberty to “profess, propagate and practise” their religion. The personal laws of different communities were also protected, which meant that community institutions and codified community laws would decide all matters relating to family, such as marriage, inheritance, divorce, maintenance, adoption and the custody of children. Assessing positively the work done by different religious institutions in various spheres of social life, as for instance, setting up educational institutions, fellowships, free dispensaries, inns for travellers and provision for drinking water, Article 26 of the Constitution gave all religious communities the right to “establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes”. In addition, Articles 29 and 30 gave all minorities the right to set up their own educational institutions to protect their language and culture and to impart education of their choice. To make this an

effective option, the Constitution included an enabling provision that allowed such institutions to receive funds from the State.

At a more substantive level, religion entered into the public domain, as individuals who shared a religious identity could come together and form political organisations and associations. Based on the view that members of a religion may have shared concerns and even interests, they were at liberty to organise themselves, campaign with existing political parties, or form their own political party to pursue their demands and concerns. Religious political parties claiming to speak on behalf of a community could, therefore, coexist with “secular” parties that were not bound to the interests of any one religious community. Both kinds of parties could voice the demands of a community, so long as they did not encourage inter-community hatred or refer to a candidate’s religion in order to seek votes for themselves.

As a result, different regions saw the emergence of specific religion-based parties, such as the Akali Dal in Punjab, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala. The constitutional framework provided the space for the emergence of religious parties.

3.4.4 COMMUNAL RIOTS

During the first decade after Independence, there was no large-scale intercommunity violence. Possibly, the migration of Muslim leaders and the ban on Hindu organisations prevented communal violence, but unresolved tensions between communities since the time of Partition began to resurface with the beginning of the 1960s. After the Jabalpur riot of 1961, there were a series of communal riots in different parts of the country. In 1967, in Ranchi, 155 people were butchered. On 9 June 1968, a communal riot broke out in Nagpur “between Hindu scheduled castes, now converts to Buddhism, and Muslims”. In 1969, after communal clashes in Ahmadabad, the violence spread to other towns – Meerut, Firozabad, Aligarh and Malegaon. North Indian cities were vulnerable to communal violence, particularly Meerut, Moradabad and Aligarh. The 1987 riots in Meerut and the 1989 riots in Bhagalpur sent shock waves through India. Usually, cities with a sizeable Muslim population or with Muslim-owned prosperous businesses (Aligarh, Firozabad) were sites of violence.

3.4.5 ELECTORAL POLITICS AND RELIGIOUS MOBILISATION

Several scholars argue that political mobilisation and vote-bank politics are the primary bases on which communalism has grown in independent India. It is said that the Muslim vote block has been opportunistically used by almost all political parties. The aggressive stances of the Hindu Organisations have also compelled Muslims to vote en masse. Their underrepresentation in politics and insecurities are a few reasons for their voting behaviour. Many consider that the soft communal policy pursued by Congress in many states actually led to the assertion of the religion in politics.

The numerical strength of the Muslim population gained further political significance from the early 1980s onwards. Political parties tried to capture this vote block and conceded religious demands such as preserving Muslim Personal Law. In the 1980s, the Congress frequently played the “Hindu card” in the states of Punjab, Kashmir and elsewhere and communalised “the state apparatus on an unprecedented scale through the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984 and the subsequent cover-up of the guilty”. Similarly, Oommen explains how apart from its unique social structure and geographic composition, the opportunism of major political parties has intensified communalism in Kerala. For Desai, Hindu communalism does not rest with the RSS and the BJP; leaders from other political parties are profoundly communal and casteist.

It is not only the Sangh parivar that exploits religious sentiments for political gain and the establishment of cultural hegemony. Many Islamic groups have asserted their cultural purity and have appealed to people to go “Back to Islam”, the original Islam followed by the Prophet, and in Mecca. Religious sentiments are exploited and the appeal to follow Muslim Personal Law is always made. Madrasas are seen as sources of growing Islamisation. There may be formal schooling in religious texts, and often the maulana and mulla socialise students into Islamic traditions. Islamisation and political communalism is engineered by the religious groups and exploited by the political elites.

Within the Muslim community, various orthodox groups such as the Jama’at-e-Islami and Tablighi Jama’at invoke different religious interpretations. Similarly, for groups such as the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), Islam is a complete world view and ideology that governs every aspect of a Muslim’s personal as well as collective life. For it, it is not the Constitution of India but Islam that lays down a complete code of

conduct. Unfortunately, its activities stereotype the entire Muslim population in India. For them, democracy and secularism are un-Islamic. According to Sikand, “In SIMI discourse, Hinduism is painted in the most lurid colours, and as an inveterate foe of Islam and its followers. The only way to salvation, then, is by converting to Islam”.

In this way, all the religious organisations in India one way or the other, one time or the other attempted to appeal to their fraternity on matters related to politics, especially during the time of elections. As D. L. Sheth states, “the inevitably messy and chaotic character of this high-intensity politics of democratisation, even as it empowered the socially peripheral majority of the Indian population, is fraught with the danger of the open, competitive politics of representation being reduced to a pure politics of numbers, and democracy to a singular principle of rule by the majority”.

Many scholars also view that the assertion of the religion in India is linked with the competitive electoral politics. For instance, Steven I. Wilkinson states that large-scale Hindu-Muslim violence is primarily premeditated by politicians who seek electoral gains.

3.4.6 RELIGION IN GUJARAT

According to D.L.Sheth, from the days of the Independence movement till about the late 1960's, Gujarat could, relatively speaking, legitimately project itself as 'Gandhi's Gujarat' in certain respects. The political culture of protests and of governance that developed during this period, by and large affirmed the values of nationalism. The numerous instances of nationalist agitation, even though not lacking in aggression and innovation, did not on the whole transgress some basic democratic codes of political mobilisation. The Mahagujarat Movement (the movement for Gujarat as a separate linguistic state) and later even the Navanirman Movement (a student movement against corruption) could also arguably claim such distinction as compared to the kind of collective expressions of social unrest and political agitation that took place in the 1980's and 1990's.

3.4.6.1 COMMUNAL POLARISATION

However, the process of communal polarisation in Gujarat began with the 1969 riots in Ahmadabad. And since then riots of one kind or another have been recurring in some sort of a pattern every few years. From 1969 to this day close to 7,000 lives have been lost and property worth thousands of crores of rupees has been looted or destroyed in these

riots. Most of these riots were communal in nature and they were often engineered by interested parties for short-term political gains. But in the process they created long term consequences in the form of communal polarisation. Even the anti-reservation agitation of 1985 that initially targeted the Dalits ended-up in Hindu-Muslim riots. Communal polarisation in Gujarat is primarily a post-independence phenomenon.

3.4.6.2 FACTORS FOR COMMUNAL POLARISATION

Many factors have contributed to the increased communal polarisation between majority Hindus and minority Muslims. Some of these are explained below.

Urbanisation

There are several factors that have indirectly contributed to the growth of communal polarisation. Gujarat has undergone rapid urbanisation, in the last 50 years. Many former villages have grown into towns, mid-sized towns have grown into large cities and big cities like Ahmadabad, Surat and Vadodara have been fast acquiring the character of metropolises. But more important than the rate of urbanisation is the pattern of urban growth and spread in Gujarat. Every district, including in the tribal belt, has at least a couple of sizeable cities and a number of middle and small towns. Even the villages are much larger than usual. A large part of rural Gujarat could in fact, be described as urban hinterland. Urban-rural transactions of all kinds - not just economic, but social, cultural and political - are close and frequent. Moreover, the growth of media, both the print and the visual media, have created over time a vertically and closely linked system of cultural and political communications which is overly marked by a majoritarian Hindu ethos.

Transformation of Hinduism

All this, among other things, has transformed the local and rural character of Hindu practices into some sort of folk Hinduism, giving it a strong urban imprint of anonymity and marketised entertainment. The anonymous and marketised character of this folk Hinduism has yielded participative spaces to the tribals and dalits. The new folk-Hinduism in Gujarat has however been appropriated by political Hinduism.

The KHAM Alliance

In the course of the last 30 years the demographic composition of urban centres in Gujarat

has radically changed in two major respects. First, there has been a massive influx of OBCs, Dalits and Tribals into the towns and cities of Gujarat. Second, a sizable number of non-Gujaratis have migrated and settled in all urban centres of Gujarat. The former type of migration - i.e., the rapidly increasing rate of urbanisation of the OBCs, Dalits and Tribals - threw up a new kind of leadership from these communities by providing them with an urban base. It was through this process that the challenge to the Congress party's Mahajani-Gandhian leadership emerged in the form of the KHAM alliance, comprising the Kshatriyas (OBCs), Harijans, Adivasis (Tribals) and Muslims. This massive infusion of the subaltern communities into politics provided a basis to the Gujarati-elite fear of political instability. And the influx of non-Gujaratis generated deep anxiety in the Gujarati middle class and was fraught with chronic urban tensions.

Many of the educated non-Gujaratis who migrated to cities in Gujarat have found significant positions in the corporate sector and higher level government jobs where knowledge of the English language is at a premium. Here, most Gujaratis, even the university educated, feel disadvantaged because even middle-class Gujaratis have not developed competence in the English language. More importantly, members of the business communities from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have made significant inroads in the Gujarat business world at all levels. Earlier, as a consequence of the Partition, a very significant proportion of Sindhi traders had already carved a niche for themselves in the Gujarati business world.

Although the percentage of non-Gujaratis in Gujarat is not very high (about 10 per cent) their concentration in the cities makes their presence quite visible. Labourers from Orissa, Maharashtra and Karnataka as well as from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have in significant numbers entered the urban labour market in Gujarat. On the whole, what has been conventionally perceived as the Gujarati character of cities like Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot and many smaller cities has been visibly altered. This is also reflected in the changes in ethnic composition of elected representatives. It is not unusual to find non-Gujaratis in the municipal governments, corporations, universities and college student unions, as well as in the trade unions. Although on the surface a fair degree of peace and harmony seems to exist between Gujaratis and the non-Gujarati linguistic groups, a strong undercurrent of resentment runs among a cross-section of Gujaratis

comprising the businessmen, traders and petty-traders, as well as among the professionals and intellectuals. Interestingly, the resentment is not about the cultural differences of language, life-style or even religion.

Politics of Hindu Ekta

The resentment that has grown in the course of the last two decades comes from a sense of economic insecurity and frustration among the Gujarati youth. They feel they are being systematically edged out or peripheralised from their respective, traditionally occupied arenas of economic activity by the non-Gujarati immigrants. Such feelings are expressed more frequently and strongly in the business world.

Even though the insider-outsider divide in urban Gujarat has been considered a potential source of ethnic conflicts since the inception of Gujarat as a state it has all along remained an undercurrent. It did not give rise to any ethnic-chauvinist sons-of-the-soil movements in the past. This was primarily because the Mahajani-Gandhian political culture dominant at the time was not conducive to such movements. And it is not likely to arise in the future because the present politically dominant hindutva leadership in Gujarat views any such movement as constituting a threat to its politics of Hindu Ekta. Hindutva political leaders instead desire to garner the 10 percent non-Gujarati (mainly Hindu) population as a vote-block and co-opt their leadership into the Party's power and patronage structure.

Thus the fear that the Maharashtra kind of ethnic conflicts ('insiders' vs. 'outsiders') could take place in Gujarat was warded off by the Parivar's politics of Hindu Ekta that took root in the 1990's. In fact, it has almost removed such a possibility from emerging on the political scene in Gujarat. This has been done by co-opting the non-Gujarati leadership in the BJP and directing the Gujarati ethnic passions towards the religious minorities. Even earlier, attempts by the upper-caste middle-class Gujaratis to assert their power by resorting to anti-reservations and anti-Dalit agitations of the 1980's and 90's were thwarted by the hindutva leadership by supporting the reservations and then co-opting the Dalits and Tribals into the party and its front organisations.

The BJP politics of hindutva did not just provide an ideological basis to their goal of converting the religious majority into a political majority and thus help forge a massive electoral majority based almost entirely on Hindu votes. It also created a social-cultural

infrastructure in support of this politics. The hindutva politics of 1990's succeeded in erasing not only the old Mahajani-Gandhian political culture but also its short-lived successor - the subalternist political culture of the KHAM coalition consisting of the OBCs, Dalits, Tribals and the Muslims. This was achieved by bringing large chunks of the OBCs, Tribals and Dalits into the patronage structure of the ruling BJP.

In sum, in the course of 1990's the Sangh Parivar's politics of communal polarisation succeeded in transmuting the ethnic and caste conflicts into communal conflicts, thus securing the consolidation of Hindu votes in favour of the BJP. This resulted in the BJP winning two successive elections in Gujarat with a massive majority.

This communal polarisation led to the violent riots in the aftermath of the Godhra incident in which the Hindus were attacked and burnt to kill when they are on pilgrimage. The riots that took place after this Godhra incident were very serious and brutal in which more than 2000 Muslims were killed, many houses were burnt. Though many consider the Sangh Parivar and BJP were directly responsible for this violence, the BJP refutes these charges. For instance, Amit Shah, then Home Minister and now BJP President said that the violence in Gujarat was inevitable given the massacre at Godhra. In his words: "The BJP has nothing to do with the riots of 2002. The riots were the reaction of the people to the Godhra incident. The reaction was so huge that the established machinery could not meet the challenge of these spontaneous reactions." However, many say that the BJP, over the decades, has so polarised the state that a single incident led to a state-wide orgy of revenge. The reason that so much anger and bitterness and hatred exists in Gujarat is because of the divisive language and policies of the BJP. And this polarisation is helping the BJP to gain electoral victories in the state.

3.4.7 RELIGION AND POLITICS IN KERELA.

Many scholars talk about Kerala's legacy of peaceful co-existence and cosmopolitan social ethos. Two major religions, Islam and Christianity, took root in Kerala from the very early years of both religions and both were introduced through trade and by word rather than through the sword or war. More than 25% of the population is Muslim and more than 20% is Christian. People belonging to the Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities have lived together peacefully for centuries, nurtured their Malayali identity, and played a key

role in enriching the culture, society, economy and political process of the state. In spite of multiple religious and caste identities, it is the cosmopolitan social ethos that has made Kerala a very distinct society, known for communal harmony, peace and social development. People from different religious and caste groups nurtured and shared the same cultural, social, economic and political space.

However, there is a tendency in recent times to assert various shades of identity politics based on the politics of exclusion and also new pressure politics based purely on a religious, denominational or caste identity. There is growing soft and hard sectarianism of various shades. And, above all, there is also a trend towards moral policing even by parties that are expected to uphold 'progressive' values and gender justice. The entrenched patriarchal attitude and the new tendency of questioning any man and woman travelling together gives the impression that regressive trends have crept into this society.

3.4.7.1 COMMUNALISM IN KERALA

KERALA has always been affected by political instability right from its formation in 1956. It has seen no less than 10 elections and 15 ministries between 1956 and 1994. Except twice, no ministry could complete its normal tenure of five years in power. One of the reasons that contributed to political instability was communalism based on religion.

3.4.7.2 RELIGIOUS AND COMMUNAL MOBILISATION IN KERALA

Kerala is noted for its uniqueness in religious diversity and communal harmony as compared to other states. But with all these positive attributes, we find the electorate being swayed by communal feelings and identities. In a similar vein, the appointments to government posts are influenced by communal considerations. Moreover, there is the rising phenomenon of various communities launching their own political parties with a view to strike bargains during the elections and share the spoils of powers in event their alliance wins the elections. Communalism as prevalent in Kerala may be defined as a feeling of group solidarity among different communities and to assert its presence in the day-to-day functioning of society. Its style of operation is peaceful coexistence carried out through milder social processes. The number of political parties that one finds in Kerala are nothing but a conglomeration of pressure groups and are meant to promote the interests of the communities. More employment, more business facilities, more forest land for cultivation, more schools. more

seats in professional colleges, more berths in the ministry, are some of the issues around which communal parties and groups revolve. The communal interest groups bring with them the whole weight of the communities and are, therefore, powerful enough to dictate terms to the government. Before going into the dynamics of communalism, it is imperative to trace the growth of communalism in the state.

The major communities in Kerala are the Ezhavas, the Nairs, the Muslims and the Christians. These four communities comprise roughly 80 per cent of the state's population and various governments have survived or fallen due to the shifting alliances of these communities. The demographic composition is such that each community is in a position to dictate terms to the political parties. One significant factor about these communities is their geographical concentration. Although they are scattered throughout the state, they have certain areas of concentration or what may be called 'pocket boroughs'. Out of the total of 14 districts in the state, the Christians and the Muslims constitute a significant number in six districts. In one district, Malappuram, the Muslims constitute more than 60 per cent of the population. This geographical concentration helps the communal parties like the Kerala Congress (basically a Christian Party) and the Muslim League to win more seats from the Christian and the Muslim dominated areas respectively.

Over the years, the communal groups have created for themselves an important role in the coalition politics of the state due to their ability to become instruments for expressing political preferences and mobilising political resources and support. In the realm of politics, they act as pressure groups and guard the interests of their respective communities. The sharp division of the society coupled with the mosaic nature of politics makes the various community interest groups far more important. They play a crucial role in the making and unmaking of governments. Sometimes, the 'social arms' get converted into 'political arms' so as to project the community interests more forcefully. Accordingly, the Muslims have the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), the Nairs, the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Christians, mainly, the Kerala Congress (Mani) and the Kerala Congress (Joseph), and the Ezhavas have the Socialist Republican Party (SRP). Given the individualistic nature of the Malayalis, the parties underwent fissions resulting in spawning of new parties. This resulted in a situation wherein Kerala began to be ruled by coalition governments as no single party could win majority of seats on its own. As the

coalition government consisted of disparate communal interest groups, interest aggregation became a difficult proposition.

The high level of caste consciousness is also one of the contributing factors in the shaping of political behaviour. The Hindus are divided on caste basis and hence cannot take a united stand in the electoral game. This is in contrast to the Muslims and the Christians who are more organised and show more solidarity in the electoral exercises. This solidarity certainly helps them in greater bargaining capacity in securing concessions from the government. It is the claims and counter-claims regarding the bargaining capacity that reinforces the communal polarisation of the communities giving rise to instability of the political system.

Apart from these specific social conditions, communalism gets intensified in Kerala due to the absence of ideology among political parties and dominance of opportunistic politics. Alliances are formed not on the basis of ideology but on the basis of getting maximum seats at the time of elections. The small communal parties see the advantages of retaining their identity for bargaining with the major parties. The major parties for narrow electoral considerations show no qualms in entering into seat adjustments with communal parties. The result of this opportunism displayed by major political parties is that these small parties begin to call the shots in politics. Any reluctance on the part of the government to accede to their demands results in shifting of their loyalty to the opposite front. The net result was political instability at the macro level. For instance, the Kerala Congress (Mani) quit the LDF under the pretext of law and order problem in 1982. The Kerala Congress (Joseph) threatened to quit the front when the government refused to give title deeds to those who had encroached on the government land. The UDF government had to give in to this demand so as to continue in the office.

Both the Communist and the Congress parties have played a role in the growth of communal politics in Kerala. The Communist Party could attain power in 1957 only because of the cooperation and support extended to it by some communal powers and the tactics of identifying their candidates according to the communal ratio. The Liberation Movement of 1959 against the Communist government strengthened communal pressure groups and the fall of the ministry can be attributed to the agitation led by these groups. The Communist Party's alliance with the Muslim League in 1967 and the formation of Malappuram district

is another instance of a Party succumbing to pressure politics. During the 1987 elections, the CPI(M) severed its ties with the All India Muslim League (AIML) against the background of the Shalh Bano case. But lately EMS Namboodiripad who had advocated a strong stand against the AIML then, is talking of forging alliance with the Indian National League. The compelling factor behind this change of policy is the forthcoming election in the state. The CPI (M) knows that it is difficult for the Left Democratic Front to come to power on its own. The support of splinter parties is crucial considering the wafer-thin majority that separates the victor from the loser in Kerala.

The Congress with all its secular credentials in not aligning with communal parties finally tied up with the Muslim League and the Kerala Congress to fight the Communists. The opportunity it got to rule the state was more powerful than the ideology it professed. At one time, almost all communal parties were part of its front. Sanctioning pensions to the Ulemma, declaring Friday as holiday for schools with a majority of Muslim students and granting title deeds to those encroaching on government land are instances of appeasement of the communal parties by the Congress. Another instance is the Congress (I) vacating its Rajya Sabha seat to the IUML in order to placate the latter which suffered a drubbing during the Guruvayoor assembly election.

Thus, communalism constitutes almost an essence of politics of Kerala. Apart from the unique social structure and the demographic composition, communalism got intensified due to the opportunism displayed by the major parties. By aligning with small splinter communal parties, the major political parties which could have played an important role in the political process became a participant to the communal processes. Consequently, the communal divide in the society gets reinforced and the possibilities of a consolidated secular base for the political systems get narrowed.

3.4.7.3 RISE OF RSS

The rise of RSS in Kerala as a powerful political wing has been significantly facilitated by these endless pampering of the minority communal lobbies in Kerala politics by the dominant groups of the Communists and the Congress. It was more often through their campaigns against these 'appeasements' that the RSS membership was substantially increased. Protests against the so-called preferential treatment of the Wakf boards by the government, state's involvement in Hindu Temple Management, state pensions to the Muslim priests and other

similar issues are raised by the RSS at regular intervals. Obviously all these did really help them to claim for themselves the status of being the champions of the Hindu cause.

The BJP is also making strong inroads into Kerala's politics. In the last parliamentary elections, BJP's vote share in Kerala increased from 6% to 10.8%, encouraging the party to raise its game. It is expecting the debacle of CPM in Kerala as well as it happened in West Bengal. It is considering the popularity loss of CPI (M) will become major gain for its future in Kerala politics. The BJP has many plans for Kerala and it involves weaning away CPM's support base to start with. In a state where the party has not won a single seat ever in the assembly or Parliament, even as there is a fairly strong RSS organisation in place, BJP's target is to make inroads in the civic and panchayat polls in October 2015, to be followed by assembly elections in April 2016. BJP State President V. Muralidharan states that "Since the Left's main support comes from Hindus in Kerala and BJP's voters are also Hindus, our growth will have to be at the cost of CPM."

BJP is targeting Scheduled Castes and OBC communities, a very small chunk of which supports the party at present. But the attempt is to win over the big OBC group of Ezhava which constitutes about 22% of the state's voters and Scheduled Castes which account for 10% of the population.

3.4.7.4 COMMUNAL CONFLICTS

The 1990's had already seen a spate of communal tensions and conflicts and some of them assumed violent proportions causing considerable political embarrassment. The towns of the Nadapuram, Panur, Taikal and Pathanamthitta have witnessed communal clashes. However, the incidents of Marad, a coastal village near Kozhikode, have left deep impact on politics of Kerala. In these clashes nine persons were brutally killed and several injured-on May 3, 2003. It was not a communal riot in the generally accepted sense, in which the members of two communities violently engage with each other, in most cases spontaneously, due to some immediate provocation. In Marad, it was a sudden attack by a group of people well-armed and well organized who carried out the operation in one sweep in less than 15 minutes. Similarly, in 2015 the two communities are indulged in violence against each other in Nadapuram in which one killed and nearly 70 houses were gutted.

The Ministry of Home Affairs report on communal violence in Kerala noted that the state witnessed 100% rise in the number of communal incidents in 2017 as compared to the previous year. While 12 communal incidents and one death were reported in 2017, six incidents were reported in 2016 and three in 2015.

All these incidents are indicating that notwithstanding its plurality, social development, and more literacy, Kerala also experiencing polarisation of communities and politicisation of identities. Each of the religious communities, the Hindus, Muslims and Christians are getting mobilised on religious lines under the influence of various political and non-political organisations mushroomed in Kerala's landscape over a period of time.

3.4.8 LET US SUM UP

In the last decade of the 20th century, profound political changes took place in India. While the changes may have occurred as part of the ongoing process of democratisation, today it seems the changes that were not managed politically and institutionally, have produced a severe breach in the secularising process of democracy. The independent Indian state managed, and considerably evened out, the built-in asymmetrical relationships in a deeply hierarchical, multi-ethnic (lingual) and multi-religious society by redefining, institutionally and legally (constitutionally), the relationship among antecedent pluralities (communities), and between them and the state in new terms of secularism that recognised the basic rights of individuals as citizens and their collectively held cultural rights as members of (ethnic and religious) communities. However, this framework that imparted sustainability to Indian democracy has today been replaced by a new form of pluralist discourse, that totalises interests and community identities, and this has resulted in a battle between majoritarian and minoritarian communalism.

3.4.9 SOURCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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3.4.10 EXERCISES

1. Write a note on interface between religion and politics.
2. Critically analyse how the partition of India influenced the religionisation of politics?
3. Briefly state the impact of communal riots on Indian society and people.
4. How electoral politics are influencing the religious mobilisation?
5. Write a note on the role of religion in the politics of Gujarat.
6. Critically analyse communalism in Kerala politics.

4.1 REGIONAL DISPARITIES : CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

4.1.0 Objectives

4.1.1 Introduction

4.1.2 Regional Disparities

4.1.3 Regional Disparities in India

4.1.4 Regional Disparities: Causes

4.1.5 Regional Disparities: Consequences

4.1.6 Let us Sum up

4.1.7 Exercises

4.1.0 OBJECTIVES

This topic provides you basic understanding about regional disparities India. After reading this topic you will be able to:

- understand what actually meant by regional disparities
- know the nature of regional disparities in India
- comprehend the various causes that are leading to regional disparities in India
- understand the consequences of regional disparities

4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Economic wellbeing of a nation or a region or state depends upon its rate of economic development. The earliest concept of development was interpreted in terms of growth of output over time and later in terms of per capita output. The terms growth and development were used interchangeably. In material terms it means availability of more goods and services for the people in the country. However, in contemporary times, economic development was redefined in terms of a better human life. The main goal of economic development is the improvement in the standard of living of the people which depends not only on per capita

income but also on social and welfare services, satisfaction, self-reliance, self-esteem and economic freedom. Michael Todaro suggested that development should “expand the range of social and economic choices to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence not only in relation to other people and nation states, but also to the forces of ignorance and human misery”.

Economic welfare or wellbeing of a people does not merely depend upon the rate of development but also on its distributive aspect. It has been seen worldwide that development outcomes are not equally distributed among states, causing disparities and imbalances in economic development.

4.1.2 REGIONAL DISPARITIES

Regional disparity denotes regional dualism or regional income or growth differentials. The term “poles de croissance” in French literature defines regional disparity as the presence of socially and economically advanced and backward regions between nations or different states within a nation. Disparity has also been defined as the condition or fact of being unequal as in age, rank or degree. Synonyms for disparity are inequality, unlikeness, disproportion and difference. In different parts of the country sharp differences are found to exist in physical features and resource endowment across states which are responsible for development disparities within countries.

The prevalence of regional disparities is a common phenomenon and present in both developed and developing countries. Even the richest country of the world, U.S.A., has the problem of unbalanced regional development and many small and rich countries are also faced with this problem. Different regions of a country grow at very unequal rates, resulting in inter-regional and intra-regional imbalances, which in turn give rise to socio economic problems. Many countries which are developed today, stressed regional development in fifties, though, in western countries regional development began to receive attention in the 1930’s due to welfare considerations.

Disparity and development are two sides of a coin. In the literature, disparities have been measured in terms of economic backwardness across the states or districts in a state. It is also evident that the economic backwardness has been measured by either sector-specific or composite indices, which often cover more than one sector. The first case measures disparities by developing an Aggregate Composite Index of Development by taking different

sectors into account, these sectors may be agriculture, industry, banking, power, education, health and sanitation, transport and communication and so on.

4.1.3 REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN INDIA

Regional disparity or regional dualism is an important feature of the Indian economy. Disparities in economic development exist in terms of per capita income, poverty, literacy, gross enrolment ratios, life expectancy, indicators of mortality and access to safe drinking water etc. Not only are there interstate disparities but even within the states variations in development exist. Sometimes these are expressed in terms of the northern, southern, eastern or western states when the problem is not confined to a state alone but the entire region including several states of the region. The problem of regional disparities is prevalent in the country. Over development of developed states and lesser development of backward states has resulted in misallocation and underutilization of resources.

Many studies show that regional disparities in India are increasing in spite of measures adopted by the government for their reduction. On the basis of internationally observed pattern of regional changes, it may be pointed out that India has reached a stage when interregional divergence starts generating regional pressures for the development of backward regions. In India there are significant regional differences in terms of size, population, climate, geography and culture and so on. Similarly, there are large differences in the level of economic development and hence the existence of the problem of regional disparities. For example there is a high level of variation among the states in terms of the size of population and manifest in a high percentage of population living below the poverty line as in Bihar and Orissa (40-50%). On the other hand there are states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka where poverty ratios are low.

What is of great concern is that there is a concentration of poverty and backwardness in a group of contiguous states accounting for about as much as 50 percent of the total population of the major states of India. The relative positions of these states as a group in terms of income and of almost all other indices of development have deteriorated over time.

Bihar had the lowest per capita income. In 2004-05, its per capita income was only Rs 5,430 that is about Rs 450 per month at 1993-94 prices. The gap between the highest and lowest per capita income (in 1993-94 prices) among the 15 states

increased from 2.55 times to 3.76 times (in absolute figures, from Rs 5,735 to Rs 14,967) in this period, indicating a stark widening of income disparity among the states. This difference was more in current prices. In 2004-05, the per capita income of Maharashtra at Rs 36,423 was 4.01 times larger than that of Bihar at Rs 9,082.

Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, which had the six lowest ranks in per capita income in 1995-96 and 2004-05, are together referred to here as “backward states” (BWS) and the others as “better-off states” (BOS). The gap between the average per capita income (GSDP) of the BWS and BOS (in 1993-94 prices) drastically increased from Rs 1,862 in 1980-81 to Rs 8,908 in 2004-05, both because the average GSDP of the BWS grew at a slower rate than that of the BOS and also because the average population of the BWS grew much faster.

What is really worrisome is that the current pattern of growth leads to widening disparity not only in income but also in all other indices of development. For instance, the poverty ratio (2004-05) was 46.4 per cent in Orissa and 41.1 per cent in Bihar as against 8.4 per cent in Punjab. The infant mortality rate (IMR) (2005) was 14 in Kerala but 76 in Madhya Pradesh. The life expectancy (2001-06) was only 59 years in Madhya Pradesh as against 71.7 years in Kerala. Bihar had the lowest literacy rate (2001) of 47 per cent and female literacy of 33.1 per cent while Kerala had the highest literacy rate of 90.9 per cent and female literacy of 87.7 per cent. The Human Development Index (HDI) (2001) of Bihar was only 0.37 and of Kerala was 0.64. Kerala is, of course, an exceptional case but even if one takes the next best performing state, the relative indices of the BWS turn out to be quite poor.

Economic growth rates also reflect economic disparity within the country because economic growth rates vary considerably among states. Growth rates vary from 7 percent to 9 percent (as in Gujarat, Haryana and Delhi) to 4-5 percent as in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In Gujarat growth rate is 8.8 percent, in Haryana it is 8.7 percent in Delhi it is 7.4 percent while in Bihar, Uttar-Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, growth rates are very low at 5.1 percent, 4.4 percent and 3.5 percent respectively. This varied economic growth in India is also shown by the fact that rural Orissa and rural Bihar are the poorest regions in the world with the poorest growth rates while rural areas of other states such as Haryana have higher growth rates. There are mainly seven states in India which are lagging behind in economic growth namely Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and states such as Punjab, Haryana, and Gujarat and Maharashtra have maintained a continuous lead over other states.

A study of economic history reveals that development originates in regions which are endowed with resources natural, human and others. These regions also draw investment from other regions. But in India these problems cannot be explained with reference to endowment of natural resources alone. There are poor states possessing rich resources like Orissa and rich states possessing poor resources like Maharashtra. Thus in India the process of development has not been determined by the availability of natural resources alone. Political and social factors have also had an important bearing on development.

4.1.4 REGIONAL DISPARITIES: CAUSES

The economists of India attribute many factors for the regional disparities in India. Early on they focused chiefly on the role of capital as an accelerator of economic growth. However, many developing countries demonstrated that investment does not by itself achieve economic growth. Technical progress enhanced productivity and then with the emphasis on human development by the UNDP, other factors have been brought in to explain growth. They include the stock of different types of infrastructure; human resources such as skilled labour, power and roads. Non-economic factors like quality of public governance, its efficiency in developing infrastructure, delivering social services, etc, are seen as key factors. This is apart from more familiar factors like stability of the financial system, availability of skilled labour and technology locally or through import, substitutes like diesel generated power, using railways when roads are poor or limited, moving to other states where there is better law and order, but the quality of governance in the state in which investment is made provides no substitutes. Literacy, higher education, institutional quality, etc., are all part of human resource development.

Some of the important factors for regional disparities in India have been discussed below; the relative importance of these factors change from one region to other.

4.1.4.1 BRITISH COLONIALISM

The present regional disparity in India has its roots during the British period. In India, the historical factors guided the development of the port cities of Mumbai (Bombay), Kolkata (Calcutta), and Chennai (Madras). These three cities have, in turn, worked as nuclei for the development of Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu respectively, which are, at present, the most industrially advanced states of the country. On the other hand, the areas

having natural advantages in the form of mineral resources such as Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh have lagged far behind. The interest of the British was to 'use' the dependent countries or colonies both as supplier of raw material to home country's manufacturing industry and as a market for its products. Hence, the present day regional disparities have their origin during British period.

4.1.4.2 HISTORICAL FACTORS

Before the independence, the better-off states were having a progressive land tenure system like Ryotwari or Mahalwari, whereas most of the less developed states were princely states and were under exploitative tenures like the Zamindari and Jagirdari systems. The social structure that evolved under progressive tenures has been more conducive to growth and generated incentives for work, whereas the structure perpetuated by the exploitative land tenure has been inimical to enterprise. Even after independence, the system of land tenure has not improved, especially in poorer states. Also, the developed regions have had relatively efficient system of governance in terms of skills, responsiveness and quality of delivery systems, whereas the poorer regions continue to lack such systems of governance. Unlike capital, which is highly mobile across regions and continents, good governance cannot be transplanted in an area. It has to evolve from within. Though it cannot be quantified, but it is an important cause of economic backwardness of states like Bihar.

4.1.4.3 REGIONAL ATTRACTION FOR INDUSTRIALISATION

The mechanised industrial development in India started mainly in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the location of industries the availability of raw material was the main consideration. In such areas once the economic development started, they attracted more industries, especially industries where raw material considerations played an important role in deciding the location. For example, the location of jute, cotton textiles, sugar, tea, and mineral-based industries were located in the areas where their raw materials were available.

4.1.4.4 MIGRATION AND INVESTMENT OF CAPITAL

The dynamic, healthy, skilled, and young labour that migrated to the industrial centres of Mumbai (Bombay), Kolkata (Calcutta), and Chennai (Madras), affected the age structure. The age structure of the place of origin of migration became lopsided where the dependency

ratio increased resulting into an excessive burden of children and old people. The economy of such areas could not flourish and lagged behind. Moreover, because of increasing investment opportunities and expectations of higher profits, capital also moved to the rich region. This outflow of capital further depressed economy in backward regions. Consequently, a circular process of more investment and more income was initiated in the rich regions, while an opposite circular process operated in the poor regions.

4.1.4.5 TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT

During the Pre-Independence period, the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation were closely linked with the development of port-cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in India. From its beginning in 1853, India's railway system expanded rapidly to become, by 1910, the fourth largest in the world. The development of transport (and especially railways) also increased the regional disparities as all parts of the country were not well connected by railway network.

Even presently, the development of transport and communication networks significantly influencing the development outcomes. The states which developed infrastructure in these areas are rapidly growing well, while those states that are lagging are stagnating. For instance, in case of metalled roads considerable variations exist among various states. As against national average of 37 per cent of villages, the variations range between 13 per cent in Nagaland to over 90 per cent in Goa, Haryana and Kerala. With regard to communication, a little less than one-fourth of the villages are covered by post and telegraph facilities. The regional variations in case of these services is surprisingly very high, with states like Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Manipur, Orissa and UP having much less coverage of about 23 per cent, the coverage in states like Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Tripura is about 50 per cent; and in case of Kerala it is 99 per cent.

4.1.4.6 IMPACT OF GREEN REVOLUTION

The green revolution of 1970s considerably altered the growth in various states. The States that are benefitted from green revolution are the states that later on also achieved overall development. The classic examples are Punjab and Haryana in the north, apart from Southern states. The surplus income generated in the agriculture moved to other sectors, particularly to

industrial to increase the growth rate tremendously. The states that missed the green revolution, drastically lagged behind in economic development.

4.1.4.7 MODERN EDUCATION

The improvement in the education significantly influences not only economic development but social and other skill development as well. Those states that have exposed to modern education system early were the states that are presently ahead of the other states in overall development.

For instance, in Madras Presidency, which was one of the first British settlements in India, Missionaries opened many English medium schools in Madras. They concentrated on educating the lower strata there. There were some government schools as well, where the means of school education were vernacular languages. British government gave funds to indigenous schools in need of help and dictated its own terms. Slowly more and more schools got government's aid there. Higher education was granted in English only.

English became just like their mother tongue for educated people in Madras long ago – whether belonging to Brahmin community or non-Brahmin communities. In 1855, Education departments were created in the provinces of Madras, Bombay and Bengal. In 1857 Universities were established in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. All these developments gave leverage to their respective populations.

4.1.4.8 INDEBTEDNESS AND LOWER CREDIT WORTHINESS OF POORER STATES

The debt-GSDP ratios of poorer states are higher and because of their lower creditworthiness are not able to have access to market borrowings to the same extent as the richer states. It is pertinent to mention here that the per capita market borrowing of the four poorest states were almost equal to certain better-off states, viz., Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana and Kerala during the Sixth Five Year Plan but declined to 72 per cent in 2004-05. This has reduced their capacity to allocate sufficient resources for the development of social and economic infrastructure to redress the problem of regional disparities.

4.1.4.8 FLOW OF PRIVATE INVESTMENT TO BETTER-OFF STATES

As there is positive correlation between infrastructure and private capital investment, the infrastructure rich regions attract more private capital. The Foreign Direct Investment and

Foreign Technical Collaboration which sustain growth and bring at least four things of value: financial capital, management skills, technology and access to export market and enhance a country's and its regions' competitiveness in the global market place. But in case of India such investments and collaborations approved from August 1991 to December 2000, the better-off states, viz., Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Delhi together accounted for half the share as against the combined share of less than 10 per cent by the four poorest states. This is because of the fact that the poorer states do not have adequate infrastructure to attract such investments.

4.1.4.9 INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Investment in infrastructure, with its significant impact on regional development, can be an important instrument to contain the regional disparities in economic development. The equitable development of infrastructure, both physical and social, can be a vital yardstick as well as a key element of balanced growth. But its uneven development can accentuate regional imbalances besides creating other vexing problems like migration, overburdened/collapsing infrastructure, pollution, increasing number of unplanned settlements and other socio-political problems in regions which at one time were having rich infrastructure.

The existing studies show that regional imbalances in physical infrastructure have been responsible for rising income disparities across the states. The process of economic reforms initiated in the early 1990s of the last century has uneven impact on various sectors of the Indian economy and there is a growing concern that regional disparities in India have increased after advent of economic reforms.

4.1.4.10 CASTE CONFLICTS IN NORTH

The caste demography of the South and West was quite different from the North. Its people have been more conscious of their legitimate rights. The Dravidian politics in South, the influence of Ambedkar and other social reforms in West somewhat undermined the social hierarchies. As a result many of the backward and Scheduled Castes people were also attained some kind of education which in turn contributed to the socio-economic development. The prevalence of rigid caste structure in the North somewhat narrowing the social development in northern states.

4.1.4.11 GOVERNANCE

Good governance is the present day slogan for arresting all evils in the society and economy. Hence, every country in the world is praising governance. Governance is indicated by the efficiency of the governments to deliver goods and services as quickly as possible, reducing influence of bureaucrats, adhering to the rule-based system, usage of technology in the administration, systematization of processes, etc. All these create an investment atmosphere so that the companies can come and invest. The states that are better governed are the states which are receiving maximum investment, especially from private sector, both foreign and domestic.

4.1.4.12 LOBBYING

Some states are attracting huge investments because of the efforts made by its political and bureaucratic class. There are continuous efforts by some of the state governments to pursue the multinational companies and Indian companies to start their activities in their states. The states are hiring foreign consultancies to lobby for investments. As a result, some of the states that are showing dynamism are attracting more investment and in that process attaining economic development. However, mostly private investment prefers to travel to the states that are already developed and have a good consumer market. Apart from this, due to coalition politics, some of the regional parties are attaining more clout with the central government and influencing the governmental decisions for public sector investment.

4.1.5 REGIONAL DISPARITIES: CONSEQUENCES

In India, sectoral and regional imbalances have always been a source of great social and psychological tensions. Fruits of economic boom have never been equally shared by all the regions and their people throughout India. It has given rise to new tensions – social, economic and political. It poses a danger to the integrity and stability of the whole society as well as unity of the nation.

There is a wide gap between region to region/province to province. There are pockets of poverty amidst plenty within each province/state. Dry and hilly areas as well as those with tribal populations are still far below the national average. It has widened the gap between the prosperous and backward states and created a wide gap between the rich and poor within a region.

Uneven regional development results in numerous complications such as wastage of resources increase in public costs, social justice, deceleration of economic growth, threat to national integration and possibility. There is an urgent need to tackle these problems; otherwise, they will aggravate the imbalances in the economy. Political, economic, social and ethical considerations also call for measures to attain greater parity in the levels of development. Many experts in the field of regional economics and development economics have graphically narrated the adverse consequences of persisting disparities in various studies.

Harvey Armstrong and Jim Taylor contend that severe regional differences in levels of employment and dangerous for social cohesion. Co-existence of backward regions along with developed ones with lower purchasing power in former makes inflation worse than it otherwise would be. According to them, national employment and output could be substantially enhanced if regional unemployment disparities are reduced. When such disparities reduced with more geographic distribution of demand for labour, inflationary pressures would be less severe. There will be optimum utilization of social overhead capital.

As pointed out by Friedman and Alonso, reduction in regional disparities would pave way for greater national integration, increase in economic growth and political stability. On the contrary, if the disparities are widening, a sense of unfairness and injustice may kindle regional and parochial movements, as seen in many countries. Reduction in income disparities is also in line with noble goal of social justice. There is a general agreement that there should be greater equality in the living standards of people residing in different parts of the country.

4.1.5.1 CONFLICT BETWEEN RICH AND POOR STATES

The prevailing regional disparities are increasing friction and conflict between various states, especially between rich and poor states. When the Central government allocates more resources to the poor states, the relatively developed states are complaining that they are penalising for their development efforts. Their efforts to reduce population growth and improve the relative standard of living of people is becoming a negative factor to allocation of finances, since the Finance Commission is factoring the population and poverty as a criterion for allocating the resources. This is creating a sort of friction between various states in India.

4.1.5.2 DEMANDS FOR STATEHOODS

The regional imbalances are quite often leading to the demands for separate statehood, especially in a state where inter-state disparities are creating a sense of discrimination among the segments of population. The Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh states were created due to demands from the people of backward regions in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Similarly, there is a long-standing feeling that Telangana has not received its due share in investment allocations, and that the 'surpluses' from Telangana have been diverted to the other regions. Ultimately this sense of deprivation led to the long struggle which culminated with the creation of Telangana in 2013. Similarly, other movements such as Gorkhaland, Vidharbha, etc. are related to the same regional imbalances. The backwardness and lack of investment in Darjeeling Hills is the region for separate state demand by Gorkha people. Similarly, in Vidarbha, the biggest grouse of the people relates to water resources. Thirty-six per cent of the country's dams are in Maharashtra, but Vidarbha faces drought almost every year, leading to farmers committing suicide. Similarly, the demand for Purvanchal and Harit Pradesh in Uttar Pradesh are primarily based on demand for development. Purvanchal, the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, falls in the Gangetic plains and is rich with fertile soil, but it is not as developed as the western part of state proposed as Harit Pradesh. While successive state governments in Uttar Pradesh have demarcated funds for development of Purvanchal, the region's power and infrastructure is one of the worst in the country. People in Purvanchal think the benefit of the green revolution was reaped by western Uttar Pradesh and they have gained very little.

4.1.5.3 SEPARATISM

Many demands of separatism, particularly in Northeastern region are becoming serious and violent due to prevailing poverty and regional disparities in the region in general and within each of the Northeastern states in particular. The demand for Bodoland was largely a fight for getting more access to resources, both human (employment) and material. The claims and counter claims of each of the groups increasing unrest among the people and it is leading extremism and separatism.

4.1.5.4 MAOIST VIOLENCE

The main support for the Maoists, according to a report of an expert group set up by the Planning Commission entitled *Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas* (March 2008), “comes from dalits and adivasis”. The group identifies large-scale displacement, forest issues, usury, land alienation, insecure tenancy contracts among other socio-economic reasons in backward areas as the main reason for the spread of Maoism. It also clearly states that for dalits, apart from sub-human poverty, there are issues of unemployment, discrimination and exclusion which are the main reasons for discontent. The adivasis, on the other hand, fare the poorest in terms of all human development indicators. The report goes on to locate the rise of Maoism in the context of the developmental paradigm of the Indian state.

4.1.5.5 FLOW OF RESOURCES FROM POORER REGIONS

The regional disparities are also creating a situation where the human and material resources are moving from backward regions to rich regions. For instance, all the savings which were kept the banks of the backward regions are utilized to the industrialization process in rich regions. Since private companies prefer to start industry in a developed regions due to availability infrastructure and market, they are indirectly contributing to the flow of resources from poor regions to rich regions. Similarly, the educated and skilled people are also moving from their respective areas to industrial and urban centres. This material and brain is further aggravating the backwardness and leading to increase in poverty. The balanced regional development with an aim to reducing regional disparities only can stop the shifting of resources from poor regions to developed parts of the country. Since, the public investment has drastically reduced in the post-reform period, there are fears that the regional imbalances might increase in the future. This is going to create serious strains to Indian state and its political system.

4.1.6 LET US SUM UP

Disparities between the people, regions within a country and even between countries are the result of natural differences, socio-cultural conditions and policy decisions. Though because of inherent natural differences, it is difficult, if not impossible to remove all disparities completely, it is possible as well as necessary to remove the entire man made obstacles such as social constraints and policy decisions that stop people and regions within a country from developing their full capabilities. In the context of Indian economy, the man made obstacles have their differential impact on the development of different regions. For instance, before

independence the better-off regions had a progressive land tenure system, whereas the less developed regions were under exploitative land tenure system and the social structures that evolved under these systems had different impact on economic growth of various regions. The policies pursued by British to suit their colonial interests are to a large extent responsible for present regional imbalances. Similarly, in the post-independence period, though Government of India made significant efforts in terms of Planning Commission, still Indian states are divided as rich and poor based on various criteria. Some states like Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu are marching ahead while others are lagging behind. Four most populous and large states of Bihar, MP, Rajasthan and UP lag far behind and are known as BIMARU states.

The Five year plans in India have stressed on industrial development in the backward regions as industries were concentrated in urban areas and port cities. In the second and third five year plans an effort was made for balanced regional development through industrial development of the backward regions by providing tax concessions, cheap land, concessional freight etc. and a separate chapter in the plan documents was devoted to balanced regional development in the third five year plan. Various measures were undertaken in subsequent plans for the development of less-developed and backward regions. Balanced regional development has been an important objective of economic planning.

Focused investments in social and economic infrastructure can enable people and regions to develop their full capabilities as per their potential. Such investments in infrastructure with its significant impact on regional development can be an important instrument to contain regional disparities in economic development. The equitable development of infrastructure, both economic and social, can be a vital yardstick as well as a key element of balanced growth.

4.1.7 EXERCISES

1. How do you understand regional disparities? Explain in the context of India.
2. Explain various causes for the regional disparities in India.
3. What are consequences of regional disparities and how they are affecting Indian society?

4.2 DEVELOPMENT PLANNING: STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND IMPACT ON FEDERAL RELATIONS

- Zain Bbat

STRUCTURE

4.2.0 Objectives

4.2.1 Introduction

4.2.2 History of Planning in India

4.2.3 Five Year Plans in India

4.2.4 Impact of Development Planning on Federal Relations

4.2.5 Post-Liberalisation India: Irrelevance of Planning Commission

4.2.6 Planning Commission to NITI Aayog

4.2.7 Let us Sum up

4.2.8 Exercises

4.2.0 OBJECTIVES

This topic provides you basic understanding about Planning in India and its impact on federal relations. After reading this topic you will be able to:

- understand history of planning in India
- comprehend policies and strategies pursued under Five Year Plans
- know impact of these plans on federal relations
- comprehend the various causes that are leading to regional disparities in India
- grasp the how planning has become irrelevant in post-reform India and how this led to the dissolution of Planning Commission and establishment of NITI Aayog

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1947, the Indian economy has been premised on the concept of planning. This has been carried through the Five-Year Plans, developed, executed, and monitored by the Planning Commission. With the Prime Minister as the ex-officio Chairman, the Commission has nominated Deputy Chairman, who holds the rank of a Cabinet Minister. The Eleventh Plan

completed its term in March 2012 and the Twelfth Plan is currently underway. Prior to the Fourth Plan, the allocation of state resources was based on schematic patterns rather than a transparent and objective mechanism, which led to the adoption of the Gadgil formula in 1969. Revised versions of the formula have been used since then to determine the allocation of central assistance for state plans.

4.2.2 HISTORY OF PLANNING IN INDIA

Five-Year Plans (FYPs) are centralized and integrated national economic programs. Joseph Stalin implemented the FYP first time in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s. Most communist states and several capitalist countries subsequently have adopted them. China and India both continue to use FYPs, although China renamed its Eleventh FYP, from 2006 to 2010, a guideline (*guihua*), rather than a plan (*jihua*), to signify the central government's more hands-off approach to development. India launched its First FYP in 1951, immediately after independence under socialist influence of first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The First Five-Year Plan was one of the most important because it had a great role in the launching of Indian development after the Independence. Thus, it strongly supported agriculture production and it also launched the industrialization of the country. It built a particular system of mixed economy, with a great role for the public sector (with an emerging welfare state), as well as a growing private sector (represented by some personalities as those who published the Bombay Plan).

4.2.3 FIVE YEAR PLANS IN INDIA

Indian planning is an open process. Much of the controversy and the debates that accompany the preparation of the plans are public. The initial aggregate calculations and assumptions are either explicitly stated or readily deducible, and the makers of the plans are not only sensitive but responsive to criticism and suggestions from a wide variety of national and international sources. From original formulation through successive modifications to parliamentary presentation, plan making in India has evolved as a responsive democratic political process and the culmination of the same in the final document is an impressive manifestation of the workings of an open society. But by its very nature it also generates many problems from the point of view of mapping an optimal strategy for economic development.

4.2.3.1 FIRST PLAN (1951-1956)

The first Indian Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presented the First Five-Year Plan to the Parliament of India and needed urgent attention. The First Five-year Plan was launched in 1951 which mainly focused in development of the primary sector. The First Five-Year Plan was based on the Harrod–Domar model with few modifications. The total planned budget of Rs.2069 crore was allocated to seven broad areas: irrigation and energy (27.2%), agriculture and community development (17.4%), transport and communications (24%), industry (8.4%), social services (16.64%), land rehabilitation (4.1%), and for other sectors and services (2.5%). The most important feature of this phase was active role of state in all economic sectors. Such a role was justified at that time because immediately after independence, India was facing basic problems—deficiency of capital and low capacity to save.

National income increased more than the per capita income due to rapid population growth. Many irrigation projects were initiated during this period, including the Bhakra Dam and Hirakud Dam. The World Health Organization (WHO), with the Indian government, addressed children's health and reduced infant mortality, indirectly contributing to population growth. At the end of the plan period in 1956, five Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) were started as major technical institutions. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was set up to take care of funding and take measures to strengthen the higher education in the country. Contracts were signed to start five steel plants, which came into existence in the middle of the Second Five-Year Plan. The plan was quasi successful for the government.

4.2.3.2 SECOND PLAN (1956-1961)

The Second Plan was particularly focused in the development of the public sector. The plan followed the Mahalanobis model, an economic development model developed by the Indian statistician Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in 1953. The plan attempted to determine the optimal allocation of investment between productive sectors in order to maximise long-run economic growth. It used the prevalent state of art techniques of operations research and optimization as well as the novel applications of statistical models developed at the Indian Statistical Institute. The plan assumed a closed economy in which the main trading activity would be centred on importing capital goods.

Hydroelectric power projects and five steel plants at Bhilai, Durgapur, and Rourkela were established. Coal production was increased. More railway lines were added in the north east. The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research was established as a research institute. In 1957 a talent search and scholarship program was begun to find talented young students to train for work in nuclear power. The total amount allocated under the Second Five-Year Plan in India was Rs.48 billion. This amount was allocated among various sectors: power and irrigation, social services, communications and transport, etc. The target growth rate was 4.5% and the actual growth rate was 4.27%.

4.2.3.3 THIRD PLAN (1961–1966)

The Third Five-year Plan stressed agriculture and improvement in the production of wheat, but the brief Sino-Indian War of 1962 exposed weaknesses in the economy and shifted the focus towards the defence industry and the Indian Army. In 1965–1966, India fought a War with Pakistan. There was also a severe drought in 1965. The war led to inflation and the priority was shifted to price stabilisation. The construction of dams continued. Many cement and fertilizer plants were also built. Punjab began producing an abundance of wheat. Many primary schools were started in rural areas. In an effort to bring democracy to the grass-root level, Panchayat elections were started and the states were given more development responsibilities. State electricity boards and state secondary education boards were formed. States were made responsible for secondary and higher education. State road transportation corporations were formed and local road building became a state responsibility. The target growth rate was 5.6%, but the actual growth rate was 2.4%.

Due to miserable failure of the Third Plan the government was forced to declare "plan holidays" (from 1966–67, 1967–68, and 1968–69). Three annual plans were drawn during this intervening period. During 1966-67 there was again the problem of drought. Equal priority was given to agriculture, its allied activities, and industrial sector. The main reasons for plan holidays were the war, lack of resources, and increase in inflation.

4.2.3.4 FOURTH PLAN (1969–1974)

At this time Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. The Indira Gandhi government nationalised 14 major Indian banks and the Green Revolution in India advanced agriculture. In addition, the situation in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was becoming dire as the Indo-

Pakistan War of 1971 and Bangladesh Liberation War took funds earmarked for industrial development. India also performed the Smiling Buddha underground nuclear test in 1974, partially in response to the United States deployment of the Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal. The fleet had been deployed to warn India against attacking West Pakistan and extending the war. The target growth rate was 5.6%, but the actual growth rate was 3.3%.

4.2.3.5 FIFTH PLAN (1974–1979)

The Fifth Five-Year Plan laid stress on employment, poverty alleviation (Garibi Hatao), and justice. The plan also focused on self-reliance in agricultural production and defence. In 1978 the newly elected Morarji Desai government rejected the plan. The Electricity Supply Act was amended in 1975, which enabled the central government to enter into power generation and transmission. The Indian national highway system was introduced and many roads were widened to accommodate the increasing traffic. Tourism also expanded. It was followed from 1974 to 1979. The target growth rate was 4.4% and the actual growth rate was 5.0%.

4.2.3.6 ROLLING PLAN (1978–1980)

The Janata Party government rejected the Fifth Five-Year Plan and introduced a new Rolling two Year Plan (1978-1980). This plan was again rejected by the Indian National Congress government in 1980 and a new Sixth Plan was made. The Rolling Plan consists of three kind of plans that were proposed. The First Plan is for the present year which comprises the annual budget and Second is a plan for a fixed number of years, which may be 3, 4 or 5 years. Plan number two is kept changing as per the requirements of the Indian economy. The Third Plan is a perspective plan which is for long terms i.e. for 10, 15 or 20 years. Hence there is no fixation of dates in for the commencement and termination of the plan in the rolling plans. The main advantage of the rolling plans is that they are flexible and are able to overcome the rigidity of fixed five year plans by mending targets, the object of the exercise, projections and allocations as per the changing conditions in the country's economy. The main disadvantage of this plan is that if the targets are revised each year, it becomes very difficult to achieve them which are laid down in the five year period and it turned out to be a complex plan. Frequent revisions make them resulted in instability of the economy which are essential for its balanced development and progress.

4.2.3.7 SIXTH PLAN (1980–1985)

The Sixth Five-Year Plan marked the beginning of economic liberalisation. Price controls were eliminated and ration shops were closed. This led to an increase in food prices and an increase in the cost of living. This was the end of Nehruvian socialism. Family planning was also expanded in order to prevent overpopulation. In contrast to China's strict and binding one-child policy, Indian policy did not rely on the threat of force. More prosperous areas of India adopted family planning more rapidly than less prosperous areas, which continued to have a high birth rate. The Sixth Five-Year Plan was a great success to the Indian economy. The target growth rate was 5.2% and the actual growth rate was 5.4%.

4.2.3.8 SEVENTH PLAN (1985–1990)

The Seventh Five-Year Plan marked the comeback of the Congress Party to power. The plan laid stress on improving the productivity level of industries by upgrading of technology. The main objectives of the Seventh Five-Year Plan were to establish growth in areas of increasing economic productivity, production of food grains, and generating employment. As an outcome of the Sixth Five-Year Plan, there had been steady growth in agriculture, controls on the rate of inflation, and favourable balance of payments which had provided a strong base for the Seventh Five-Year Plan to build on the need for further economic growth. The Seventh Plan had strived towards socialism and energy production at large. The thrust areas of the Seventh Five-Year Plan were: social justice, removal of oppression of the weak, using modern technology, agricultural development, anti-poverty programmes, full supply of food, clothing, and shelter, increasing productivity of small- and large-scale farmers, and making India an independent economy. Based on a 15-year period of striving towards steady growth, the Seventh Plan was focused on achieving the prerequisites of self-sustaining growth by the year 2000. The plan expected the labour force to grow by 39 million people and employment was expected to grow at the rate of 4% per year. The target growth rate was 5.0% and the actual growth rate was 6.01%.

4.2.3.9 ANNUAL PLANS (1990-1992)

The Eighth Plan could not take off in 1990 due to the fast changing political situation at the centre and the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 were treated as Annual Plans. The Eighth Plan was finally launched in 1992 after the initiation of structural adjustment policies.

4.2.3.10 EIGHTH PLAN (1992–1997)

1989–91 was a period of economic instability in India and hence no five-year plan was implemented between 1990 and 1992, there were only Annual Plans. In 1991, India faced a crisis in foreign exchange (forex) reserves, left with reserves of only about US\$1 billion. Thus, under pressure, the country took the risk of reforming the socialist economy. P.V. Narasimha Rao was the tenth Prime Minister of the Republic of India and head of Congress Party, and led one of the most important administrations in India's modern history, overseeing a major economic transformation and several incidents affecting national security. At that time Dr. Manmohan Singh (former Prime Minister of India) launched India's free market reforms that brought the nearly bankrupt nation back from the edge. It was the beginning of privatisation and liberalization in India. Modernization of industries was a major highlight of the Eighth Plan.

4.2.3.11 NINTH PLAN (1997-2002)

The Ninth Five-Year Plan came after 50 years of Indian Independence. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister of India during the Ninth Five-Year Plan. The Ninth Five-Year Plan tried primarily to use the latent and unexplored economic potential of the country to promote economic and social growth. It offered strong support to the social spheres of the country in an effort to achieve the complete elimination of poverty. The Ninth Five-Year Plan also saw joint efforts from the public and the private sectors in ensuring economic development of the country. In addition, the Ninth Five-Year Plan saw contributions towards development from the general public as well as governmental agencies in both the rural and urban areas of the country. New implementation measures in the form of Special Action Plans (SAPs) were evolved during the Ninth Five-Year Plan to fulfil targets within the stipulated time with adequate resources. The SAPs covered the areas of social infrastructure, agriculture, information technology and Water policy.

4.2.3.12 TENTH PLAN (2002–2007)

The main objectives of the Tenth Five-Year Plan were: attain 8% GDP growth per year; reduction of poverty rate by 5% by 2007; providing gainful and high-quality employment at least to the addition to the labour force; reduction in gender gaps in literacy and wage rates by at least 50% by 2007. 20-point program was introduced. For a target growth of 8.1%, the Plan achieved: 7.7% growth.

4.2.3.13 ELEVENTH PLAN (2007-2012)

Rapid and inclusive growth, poverty reduction, emphasis on social sector and delivery of service therein, empowerment through education and skill development, reduction of gender inequality, environmental sustainability, are main targets of Eleventh Plan. Efforts were made to increase the growth rate in agriculture, industry and services to 4%, 10% and 9% respectively.

4.2.3.14 TWELFTH PLAN (2012–2017)

The target of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan was to achieve a growth of 8%. With the deteriorating global situation, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia has said that achieving an average growth rate of 9 percent in the next five years is not possible. The government intends to reduce poverty by 10% during the 12th Five-Year Plan. Mr Ahluwalia said, “We aim to reduce poverty estimates by 9% annually on a sustainable basis during the Plan period”.

4.2.4 IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING ON FEDERAL RELATIONS

The resolution to set up the Planning Commission in India was passed in February, 1950, in an era when centralised planned development was perceived to be a means of raising a country’s standard of living. India was experiencing significant turmoil - inflationary pressures were high, balance of payments was poor, and the supply of essential commodities such as food had become deficient. A pressing need was felt for a body that could perform a comprehensive appraisal of nationwide resources and formulate a plan for the utilisation of the same.

The working of the Planning Commission led to the setting up of another extra-constitutional and extra-legal body, namely, the National Development Council. The Council was formed in 1952, as an adjunct to the Planning Commission, to associate the States in the formulation of the Plans. The functions of the Council are “to strengthen and mobilise the efforts and resources of the nation in support of the Plans, to promote common economic policies in all vital spheres and to ensure the balanced and rapid development of all parts of the country”, and in particular to review the working of the National Plan from time to time

and to recommend the measures for the achievement of the aims and targets set out in the National Plan.

The Chief Ministers exercise their influence through this forum. The National Development Council had appointed a Standing Committee in 1954 consisting of members of the Planning Commission and the Chief Ministers of nine States. It had been also decided that the Chief Ministers of one or more of the remaining States could be invited to attend meetings of the Committee. The Chief Ministers have been especially effective in making claims on the Central Government for their States—for larger grant-in-aid and, above all, for the establishment of public sector enterprises and in providing licences for expansion of the private sector.

4.2.4.1 FEDERAL TRANSFERS

The Planning Commission was set up with the assumption that it would assist and advise both the Union and State Governments. Over the last six decades of post-independence period, a pattern of Centre-State relationships has developed within the framework of certain common premises and mutual interests between the Centre and the States. The Government of India accepted its responsibility to provide resources and technical assistance to support developmental activities in the States and the States also recognised the interdependence that exists between the economic advancement of different parts of the country and the nation as a whole.

The federal economy under planning could well be governed by four principles, first, the Centre has a special place and function in terms of overall national perspective, as also inter-state relations; second, the states shall not be reduced to 'receiving ends' of Central charities, but will constitute member units in the federal family with all the rights and responsibilities; third, some states have peculiar problems and certain needs which require separate treatment on merit; fourth, there is no rigid formula applicable for all situations and for all time. Mutual understanding and common exercises are needed to impart dynamism in a functional sense.

In the context of fiscal federalism, the Planning Commission had the mandate of coordinating the development plans of the centre and the states, such that they conform to national objectives. In addition, it was responsible for plan transfers (CPA) to the states through its Normal Central Assistance (NCA) scheme. Each state was allocated a portion of

the total plan transfers which was tied to its development plan budget (part of the state budget; prepared by state governments) and was negotiable on a bilateral basis. These transfers were in addition to the funds available to states through the Finance Commission and Union Ministries, also known as non-plan transfers.

Based on my analysis of RBI data on state finances, the share of plan assistance in total grants from the centre to the states was 47.6% in 2010. In other words, the Planning Commission is responsible for allocating almost half of the total grants from the centre to the states, and plan expenditure is a significant component of total public expenditure.

The Indian federal transfer system has been widely criticised for its 'gap-filling' nature - it helped deficit-plagued states to use the transfer system for filling their revenue-expenditure gaps. Many studies found that states with higher fiscal deficits receive higher non-plan transfers, and continue to be high-deficit states. Further, states with lower income receive more non-plan transfers over time, but they don't seem to be moving up in the National State Domestic Product (NSDP) ranking over the years.

The most severe criticism against centralised planning is that it undermined the decentralised development in India. There is widespread feeling among many that the autonomy of the State visualised in the Constitution has been reduced by the operation of Five Year Plans and the federal system functioned almost in an unitary way. The States are treated as 'Legatees' rather than partners. Perhaps, the planning process has upset the Centre-State relationship and enabled the Centre to exercise a degree of control far exceeding than envisaged in the Constitution. The excessive dependence of the States upon the Centre, arose in part from the dominant place external resources happened to occupy in the scheme of resource mobilisation for the plans and in part from the fiscal arrangements built into the Indian Constitution in the pre-planning period.

Introduction of planning has been the greatest single factor for the increase in State's expenditure. The basic federal financial equations of the distribution of revenues and through them the division of powers, became rather notional with the phenomenal increase in Central assistance to States. Though the quantum of plan-aid has increased substantially, many States expressed dissatisfaction both with what they have received.

The increasing reliance of State Government on discretionary Central grants under Article 282 of the Constitution has led to a situation in which the Constitutional division of functions between the Centre and the States got blurred, and the Centre's influence increased

over State Government's policies. The extraordinary dependence of the States on Central assistance, had indeed distorted the Centre-State relationship into that of 'creditor-borrower' relationship. Such trends are inevitable concomitants of Central economic planning and necessarily cut across the lines drawn by the Constitution between the Centre and the States. For the plan seeks to promote certain national priorities and objectives, some sacrifice of independence of action on the part of the states cannot be avoided.

4.2.5 POST-LIBERALISATION INDIA: IRRELEVANCE OF PLANNING COMMISSION

Can there be a role for centralised planning in a market economy such as India's after liberalisation? The question was debated at some length in the wake of the reforms launched in the nineties to liberate the economy from licensing and controls. It was realised that after liberalisation planning in the way it was practised in the first four decades after independence was no longer tenable.

Following liberalisation, the role of the public sector in the Indian economy has palpably shrunk and is shrinking further. Three-fourths of investments in the economy are now flowing from the private sector. Financial constraints emanating from the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management law coupled with inefficiency and waste in service deliveries have led to demand for the state to vacate even areas hitherto regarded as the responsibility of the government, like education and health. "Public-private partnership" or PPP is now emerging as the preferred vehicle for initiatives in development, wherever possible.

4.2.6 PLANNING COMMISSION TO NITI AAYOG

On January 1, 2015, the Central Government announced that the Planning Commission had been revamped and rechristened as the NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog, with a multi-tiered structure including a governing council. To be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the revamped institution will serve as a government "think tank" with the mandate to provide strategic and technical advice on issues of "national and international importance" to the Centre and states. The Prime Minister's Office said that the centre-to-state one-way flow of policy, that was the hallmark of the Planning Commission era, is now sought to be replaced by a genuine and continuing partnership of states.

The NITI Aayog, set up by a resolution of the Union Cabinet, will have a multi-tiered structure, with the PM as the chairperson, a governing council comprising the chief ministers of all states and lieutenant governors of union territories, regional councils to be set up on region and state specific issues, and experts and specialists as the PM's special invitees. The regional councils will be convened by the Prime Minister and will comprise the chief ministers of all the states and lieutenant governors of union territories in the region. These will be chaired by the chairperson of the NITI Aayog or his nominee. In addition, the full-time organisation framework of the NITI Aayog will comprise the PM as its chairperson, who will appoint a CEO and vice-chairperson. It will also have some full-time members and two part-time members, while four union ministers will serve as ex-officio members. A noted economist, Arvind Panagariya, has been appointed as first Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog.

While the Planning Commission was primarily responsible for deciding on plan spending of the Centre and allocation to state governments, the NITI Aayog will provide a "national agenda framework for the Prime Minister and the chief ministers" after evolving "a shared vision of national development priorities, sectors and strategies with the active involvement of states".

4.2.5 LET US SUM UP

Although the Nehruvian vision of planning had been part of the nationalist movement and had been central to the development of modern India, which included various sectors, heavy industries and institutions, since the opening up of the economy in the early 1990s and more action shifting to the states, questions began to be raised about the suitability of the planning commission. Facing a more demanding situation at home, states found the mechanism of somebody else calling the shots an obstacle to governance. More often than not, the planners were technocrats and bureaucrats who were far removed from the real challenges at the grassroots.

Besides skewed and top-down decision making and resource allocation in a federal set up, the problems of the planning commission included vertical programmes and uniform prescriptions that do not take into account the socio-economic development diversity of the states. Most of these national programmes are irrelevant to at least some states because they would have crossed the milestones that the planners in Delhi had envisaged for the whole

country. Moreover, as former Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa had said in the past, implementation of such programmes were a drain on the state's resources.

In post-liberal era, when planning loses its relevance and market forces are influencing the economic direction of the country, the old organisation cannot survive as public investments have drastically reduced over the period. The establishment of NITI Ayog is just a reflection of the changed circumstances.

4.2.6 EXERCISES

1. Outline the history of planning in India.
2. Explain the contribution of various Five Year Plans for India's development.
3. Critically analyse the impact of development planning on India's federal relations.

4.3 LAND REFORMS : NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

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4.3.0 OBJECTIVES

This topic provides you basic understanding about the nature of land reforms initiated in India, the reasons for initiating these land reforms and how far successful these reforms are. After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- know the background for the land reforms;
- understand the main objectives the land reforms;
- comprehend the various land reforms initiated in India;
- develop a critical perspective relative success of the land reforms in India.

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Land reform usually refers to redistribution of land from the rich to the poor. More broadly, it includes regulation of ownership, operation, leasing, sales, and inheritance of land. In an agrarian economy such as India, with great scarcity and an unequal distribution of land, coupled with a large mass of the rural population below the poverty line, there are compelling economic and political arguments for land reform. Not surprisingly, it received top priority on the policy agenda at the time of the Indian Independence in 1947 considering the benefits the land reforms to the farmers as well as to the economic growth of the country. Land redistribution increases employment in agriculture because small holdings systematically employ more labour per hectare than large holdings. And, there need be no loss of productivity per hectare, because, given equal access to credit and material inputs, small farms yield more output per hectare than large farms.

Most importantly, land reform is not simply a question of social justice. On it depends the solution of the country's manifold problems of economic development. Success or failure of land reform measures should be judged by such criteria as whether surplus land has been taken away, and whether it has been distributed, whether the tenants are really protected. Due to this importance, in this lesson, we will attempt to understand issues related to land reforms.

4.3.2 LAND REFORMS: THE BACKGROUND

The British rule in India introduced permanent land revenue system which, over time, became widely known as zamindari system. Under this system of land settlement, those who agreed to pay a fixed sum of land revenue regularly to the British government were made the owners of demarcated lands. They, in turn, collected whatever land revenue they wanted from the actual tillers who were their tenants. There was also a practice of sub-letting, which involved middle-level land lords in between the zamindars and the tenants. The zamindari system created one of the worst exploitative land relations in India and strengthened the feudal socio-economic system. Zamindars became staunch supporters of British rule in India. This annoyed the Congress party, which was mobilising the Indian masses against British rule.

So, the Congress party declared in one of its annual sessions that after independence it would support abolition of the zamindari system. In pursuance of this resolution, the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of J.C.

Kumarappa, which recommended a wide range of reforms in 1949. After independence the Congress government, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, abolished the zamindari system. But since the Constitution had guaranteed the right to property under Article 19, the zamindars approached the Supreme Court, which ruled that the policy of abolition of the zamindari system violated the right to property and was hence unconstitutional. The Congress government amended the Constitution to limit the scope of the right to property. Thus, a major institutional /structural was achieved by abolishing the zamindari system of land relations. This policy helped the farming community in general and tenants of the zamindars in particular.

4.3.3 MAIN OBJECTIVES OF LAND REFORM

The severe economic hardship on account of growing unemployment and rising prices, created a serious situation of acute mass discontent among the millions of landless poor when India became independent in 1947. Land being the basic source of livelihood, the demand for land became the key demand of the agrarian struggle. This struggle assumed a new dimension in many states, with mass resistance of tenants to evictions which were being carried out at that time by landlords in order to save maximum area of their land from the ambit of ceiling legislation acts. The peasant movement took a new turn when landless labourers and small peasants began to forcefully occupy areas of surplus land in many parts of the country under an organized movement of left and democratic political parties.

This is the background in which the Government of India has initiated the measure that led to the land reforms in India. Land reform policy has economic, social and political dimensions.

4.3.3.1 THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The economic dimension of land reforms involved the ownership of land by a small group that did not actually cultivate but exploited the actual tillers who were the tenants and agricultural labourers. On the other hand, because of inadequacy of returns and absence of surplus with the tenants, they could not undertake improvements on land. The landlords having no personal interest in the lands they owned, also did not take interest in investing on land improvement. As a result, land productivity went on declining. This was the dynamics of underdeveloped agriculture.

4.3.3.2 THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

As far as the sociological dimension is concerned, traditionally, the upper castes owned land and the lower castes were the tenants/agricultural labourers. Even today we do not find the lower castes owning land in any significant measure and the upper castes working as tenants/agricultural labourers in India. This social dimension perpetuated the social inequalities. It is here that the economic inequality created under the economic dimension got reinforced by the social inequality in agrarian relations.

4.3.3.3. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

Coming to the political dimension, it may be noted that, historically, the owners of land have been supporters of the governments in power. This was much more evident during British rule in India. Because of the numerical minority position of the former zamindars and the later landlords and their economic stranglehold over the tenants, they depended on the government for their protection, (thus promoting their own self-interest). At the same time, the government depended upon them for its own survival so long as tenants, though large in number, did not organise themselves against the exploitative political and social systems. This has been the experience of almost all countries that faced agrarian problems.

4.3.4 LAND REFORMS IN PRACTICE

While recognizing the need to bring about land reforms in the country, the Constitution of India provided under Article 39 that: (1) the ownership and control of the material resources of the country should be so distributed as best to serve the common good; and (2) the operation of the economic system should not result in a concentration of wealth or a means to production to the common detriment. The Constitution of India also made land a state (provincial) subject. So, only state legislatures have the power to enact and implement land-reform laws. However, the central government played a significant advisory and financial role in land policy based on its constitutional role in social and economic planning (a role held concurrently with the states). The Government of India established a National Planning Commission immediately after Independence to fulfil this role of social and economic planning.

The Planning Commission has prepared a series of Five-Year Plans since 1951. Land policy has been one of the important components incorporated in all the plans. The policy

statements are sometimes quite explicit in the plan documents, but are more often implicitly stated. Land reform policy was spelt out in the First Five-Year Plan. The plan aimed to reduce disparities in income and wealth, to eliminate exploitation and to provide security to tenants, as well as to achieve social transformation through equality of status and an opportunity for different sections of the population to participate in development initiatives.

4.3.4.1 PHASES IN LAND REFORMS

Land policy in India has undergone broadly four phases since Independence.

Phase I (1950-72)

The first and longest phase (1950 - 72) consisted of land reforms that included three major efforts: abolition of the intermediaries, tenancy reform, and the redistribution of land using land ceilings. The abolition of intermediaries was relatively successful, but tenancy reform and land ceilings met with less success.

Phase II (1972-85)

The second phase (1972 - 85) shifted attention to bringing uncultivated land under cultivation.

Phase III (1985-95)

The third phase (1985 - 95) increased attention towards water and soil conservation through the Watershed Development, Drought-Prone Area Development (DPAP) and Desert-Area Development Programmes (DADP). A central government Waste land Development Agency was established to focus on wasteland and degraded land. Some of the land policy from this phase continued beyond its final year.

Phase IV (1995 onwards)

The fourth and current phase of policy (1995 onwards) centres on debates about the necessity to continue with land legislation and efforts to improve land revenue administration and, in particular, clarity in land records.

As we come to know through the phases mentioned above, the focus and emphasis on land policy has changed during the last 50 years, but the core issues continued to revolve

around a just distribution of land resources. Land reforms predominated the land policy issues during the first three decades after Independence. Initially land reforms and community development came more or less together and these interventions were meant to provide a means of production to the millions of poor, who either lacked resources or did not have know-how to use them. Among the first phase reforms were: (1) the abolition of intermediaries, aiming to eliminate the land rights of intermediaries who held large share of the land resources; (2) tenancy reforms to eliminate middlemen. In addition to these economic goals, the tenancy reforms were taken as an intervention to provide tenants with more secure and profitable land rights. Efforts to establish ceilings on the size of land holdings followed. These were intended to reduce the concentration of wealth in the hands of few and provide a means of living to others.

The second important intervention that was superimposed on the ongoing process of land reforms came in the form of the area-development programmes like the Drought-Prone Area Programme and Desert Development Programme. Both programmes focused on building land resources in ecologically fragile regions and providing employment opportunities to their inhabitants.

In the earlier phases of land reforms, the emphasis was on food production, extending technology and abolishing regressive institutions; poverty as an issue was not explicitly addressed. Raj Krishna grouped land-reform measures into four groups: liberative, distributive, organizational and developmental. These groups help to clarify the role of land policy as a process of overall development. The *liberative measures* aimed at the emancipation of the actual tillers of the land from the yoke of the landlord. This was to be achieved by conferring the land title or occupancy rights of the tenant. Fixing of rent was undertaken in a few states like West Bengal. The *distributive measures* were meant to achieve this by delivering material resources to the poor as promised by the Constitution of India, especially those who required land as a productive resource. This was to be achieved by redistributing landownership from large landholders to the landless, specifically from socially weaker sections. The tenancy reforms and ceiling on land holding represented liberative and distributive measures. *Organizational reforms* aimed at selecting and implementing a particular form of agricultural production practice, with the help of technological change, were introduced in the mid-1960s. These three policies operating together put pressure on land resources, prompting a need for developmental reform. *Developmental reforms* encompassed other issues interconnected with land policy, which

impacted the overall development of the agricultural sector. All four components taken together form a part of the overall distributive and development initiatives that were taken immediately after Independence.

4.3.5 MAIN COMPONENTS OF LAND REFORMS

Immediately after Independence four important components of land reform were thought of as major policy interventions in building the land policy. These included: (1) the abolition of intermediaries; (2) tenancy reforms; (3) fixing ceilings on land holdings; and (4) consolidation of landholdings. These were taken in phases because of the need to establish a political will for their wider acceptance. By 1960, the whole process of legal enactment of the abolition of intermediaries was completed. This was the most successful component of the land reform process.

4.3.5.1 TENANCY REFORMS

The major planks of tenancy reform included security of tenure, termination of tenancy, resumption for personal cultivation by the landlord, regulation of rent and confirmation of ownership rights. Various state laws were enacted between 1960 and 1972. These differed across the states and territories. Owing to the diverse and complicated nature of social and agrarian structure in the countryside, no uniform guidelines could be formulated for the whole country. However, some broad guidelines were given in addition to the directives in the successive plan documents. The consensus on the policy of tenancy reforms favoured neither complete expropriation of landlordism nor the interests of the tenants. In the national guidelines the following measures were communicated to the state governments for incorporation in the state legislation:

- security of the tenancy to be conferred on the actual cultivator;
- fair rent to be fixed between 20 and 25 percent of the gross produce;
- landowners may be permitted to cultivate land for their personal use;
- the surrender of the tenancy rights with mutual consent;
- in respect of some of the area, the landlord - tenant relationship to be ended and the tenant cultivator be brought directly into contact with the state;

- disabled persons, defence personnel and other such exemptions to be allowed to lease their land;
- the term "personal cultivation" should be clearly defined if landlords are allowed to remove tenants in order to resume cultivation;
- tenancy records should be corrected and oral tenancies should be abolished.

Because land is subject to state control in India and the relationship between production and land tenure varies from state to state, the national policy recommendations resulted in differing tenancy reform laws in each state. Among the various exceptions given under the tenancy acts, provisions allowing the landlords to remove tenants in order to resume personal cultivation assumed greater importance as the dominant landlords took advantage of this clause. The clause was entered with a view to induce the landlord to undertake personal cultivation and also to control absentee landlordism. Tenancy acts in almost all the states allowed the landlord to return land, if required, for personal cultivation, but the terms and definitions differed.

The enactment of tenancy legislation in 1962 - 77 appears to have resulted in a sharp decrease in tenancy. National sample surveys (NSS) also record a dramatic fall in the area under tenancy from 23.34 percent during 1952 - 53 to 10.7 percent in 1961 - 62, down to 7.2 percent in 1982. This settled down to 8 percent by 1991 as revealed by the 48th NSS round.

4.3.5.2 CEILING ON LAND HOLDING

Land distribution at the time of Independence was extremely skewed. Fifty-three percent of the land was held by 7 percent of the landowners, whereas 28 percent of landowners with sub-marginal and marginal holdings owned about 6 percent. Central policy-makers felt that ceilings on landholdings were essential because of three economic compulsions: (1) there was strong evidence indicating an inverse size - productivity relationship, hinting that the aggregate production efficiency is hampered when land is held in large holdings; (2) there was some evidence that large holders of land left large areas fallow thereby perpetuating uneconomic land use; (3) a large proportion of the population were land-based poor who wanted land as an economic resource for their livelihood. It was thought that surplus land could be distributed to such poor people. The general position in favour of land ceilings was based largely on providing social justice and equity and not on the grounds of increasing production and developing agriculture.

Legislation providing for ceilings on agricultural holdings was enacted in two phases, 1955 to 1972 and 1972 to present. The second phase was more radical in its content and to a large extent was based on the ineffectiveness of the first phase. The implementation process revealed several loopholes which landlords effectively exploited. Among the major loopholes that existed in the ceiling acts of various states included an ambiguity in various definitions, retrospective transfers, large numbers of exemptions, and the basis of fixing ceiling limits. High ceiling limits exempted a large number of landlords. Ironically, legislation was passed by those who were likely to be affected by it. Various exemptions and loopholes left by individual states allowed landlords to retain control over land holdings, most infamously through benami (nameless entity) transactions, whereby village recordkeepers (patwaris) could be bribed to register holdings in the names of deceased or fictitious persons.

4.3.6 THE IMPACT OF LAND REFORMS

Contrary to the claims repeatedly made by the governments at the Centre as well as in the States regarding the progress on the implementation of radical land reforms it is widely accepted that their programmes have neither helped to increase productivity nor arrest the exploitation of the peasantry. Even the Planning Commission had to admit this fact. The report of the Task Force on Agrarian Relations constituted by the Planning Commission admits that: “The programmes of land reform adopted since independence have failed to bring about the required changes in the agrarian structure”.

As on July 31, 1977, after the initial implementation of the ‘ceiling on landholdings’ the total area ‘declared surplus’ was 4.04 million acres, the area ‘taken over’ by government was 2.10 million acres, and the area actually distributed was only 1.29 million acres. We may point out here that the total area of ‘potential surplus’, according to the Planning Commission estimates, would be 21.51 million acres after allowing for self-cultivation by surplus owners. It means only about 10 per cent of the ‘potential surplus’ area were ‘taken over’ by the government and only about 25 per cent of the ‘declared surplus’ area were actually distributed.

4.3.6.1 REASONS FOR FAILURE

First and foremost, the loud talk about radical land reforms on the one hand and the time elapsed between a legislative proposal and its enactment and non-implementation on the

other, have enabled the landlords to successfully evade the legislation and defeat the very purpose of land ceiling and redistribution of land. A spate of fictitious transfers, sales, benami transactions, partitioning of family property etc. by big landlords with the intention of circumventing the ceiling legislation took place throughout the country which went unchecked. Splitting up of agricultural estates had already taken place so that by the time the new legislations came, very little land in any case was available for distribution.

Another factor responsible for the failure was the weak administrative machinery for implementing land reforms. The responsibility for implementation of land reforms rests with the revenue administration of the States whose traditional function is the collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order. The attitude of the bureaucracy towards land reform is generally lukewarm, and often apathetic. This is, of course, inevitable because as in the case of the men who wield political power, those in the higher echelons of administration are also big landowners themselves or they have close links with big land owners. Surprisingly enough, no State has taken necessary steps to forge a suitable administrative apparatus to cope up with the task of implementing land reform measures. And as a matter of fact, there have been cases where administrators who tried to implement land reform laws honestly and efficiently were hastily transferred elsewhere.

According to many critics, the judiciary is also a major obstacle in the way of implementing land reforms. A large number of legislations were invalidated by the High Courts and the Supreme Court. As pointed out by various government and non-government Reports, in a society in which the entire weight of civil and criminal laws, judicial pronouncements and precedents is thrown on the side of the existing social order based on the inviolability of private property, an isolated law aiming at the restructuring of property relations in the rural areas has hardly any chance of success. And whatever little chance of success there was, completely disappeared because of the loop-holes in the laws and protracted litigation.

4.3.6.2 REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The Report of the Task Force of the Planning Commission (1973) gives various reasons for the non-implementation of land reform measures. The major conclusions drawn by the Task Force for the poor performance of land reforms were lack of political will, inadequate land policy, legal hurdles and the absence of correct land records.

(a) Lack of political will:

The lack of political will is amply demonstrated by the large gaps between policy and legislation and between law and its implementation. In no sphere of public activity has the hiatus between precept and practice, between policy pronouncement and its actual execution been as great as in the domain of land reform. With resolute and unambiguous political will all the other shortcoming and difficulties could have been overcome; in the absence of such will even minor obstacles became formidable road blocks in the path of land reform.

(b) Absence of pressure from below:

The beneficiaries of land reform, particularly share-croppers and agricultural labourers, are weighed down by crippling social and economic disabilities. Except in a few scattered and localised pockets. The poor peasants and agricultural workers all over the country are passive, unorganised and inarticulate. The basic difficulty arises from the fact that the beneficiaries of land reform do not constitute a homogeneous social or economic group. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that there has been no insistent pressure from below, a prerequisite for effective implementation of land reform laws.

(c) Inadequate administrative organisation:

The responsibility for the implementation of land reform, only one among its many functions, rests with the revenue administration. As the department is over-burdened with multiple duties, land reform does not get the attention it needs. Besides the attitude of the bureaucracy towards the implementation of land reforms is generally lukewarm, and often apathetic. This is, of course inevitable because, as in the case of men who yield political power, those in the higher echelons of the administration are also substantial landowners themselves or have close links with landowners. The village functionaries too are invariably petty landowners. In the result, practically in every state, the administrative organisation has proved to be an inadequate instrument for the speedy and efficient implementation of land reforms.

(d) Legal hurdles:

In a society in which the entire weight of civil and criminal laws, judicial pronouncements and precedents, administrative tradition and practice is thrown on the side of the existing social order based on the inviolability of private property, an isolated law aiming at the restructuring of property relations in rural areas has hardly any chance of success. Practically in every state protracted litigation has delayed and often frustrated the implementation of land reform laws.

(e) Absence of correct updated land records:

A programme that aims at the redistribution of income and wealth in rural areas cannot succeed unless the beneficiaries can produce evidence of their rights. No amount of legislation will help the tenant in the court unless he can prove that he is in fact a tenant. The position regarding record of tenancies, particularly in the matter of entries relating to rights of share-croppers, is not satisfactory anywhere in the country and no record exists in some areas.

4.3.7 LAND REFORMS: CRITICAL EVALUATION

Many analysts of the Indian land-market situation have noted that the process of marginalization is sharply increasing in the country, proliferating the number of holdings considered economically unviable. Moreover, demographic pressures are reducing the size of holdings in the top brackets and leading to marginalization of holdings in the smaller brackets. A recent study on the causes of farmers' suicides in Karnataka noted that the land size has been fast declining making many holdings inefficiently small to sustain a farm family. India's First Five-Year Plan suggested the concept of an economically viable holding, which was then about 2 acres for self-cultivation. The Maharashtra law defined the economic holding as four permanently irrigated acres. Presently, more than 60 percent of the holdings fall under the definition of marginal and submarginal land holding (less than 1 ha). It must be emphasized that during 1961-62 this proportion was only 47 percent.

The entire emphasis of placing ceilings on landholdings was to detect surplus land that was above economic holding size, acquire that land and redistribute it among the landless who require an economic base. However, redistribution failed in most states. Acquiring surplus land was not effective and as the acquisition was meagre the redistribution was also insignificant. This failure was mainly a consequence of the associated political process and the village-level politicization of the issues. The relationship between the bureaucrats and politicians substantially fuelled this.

Despite the limited success in the redistribution of surplus agricultural land, ceiling laws have succeeded in keeping a check on concentration of land in the hands of a few. A large number of experts now agree that the further lowering of ceilings and further implementation of ceiling laws is no longer a feasible option of engendering social equity. Marginalization of the size of holdings, with the proliferation of miniscule holdings, has emerged as a new challenge.

4.3.8 LET US SUM UP

Land reforms have been considered as important tools of socio-economic change in India. They constituted an important component of the strategy of agrarian reform that was designed to transform and modernise Indian agriculture. Political parties, political leaders, economists and administrators have all played their roles in justifying as well as in evolving appropriate legislation for implementing land reforms in post-independent India.

In the first three decades after Independence, land reforms remained high in the stated agenda of governments and state administrations. However, the success rate of these reforms is rather mixing, substantial in some areas and very poor in other areas. Actual success was significant in the abolition of large estates, for which there was high political backing because the zamindars of the past were close allies of the British colonial rulers. The success in redistributing ceiling-surplus land, abolishing or regulating tenancy, allocating surplus cultivable government land to the landless, and preventing land alienation from tribal and other socially vulnerable land holders was, however, much more limited.

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4.4 AGRARIAN CRISIS : IMPACT ON POLITICS OF MAHARASHTRA, ANDRA PRADESH AND PUNJAB

- V. Nagendra Rao

STRUCTURE

4.4.0 Objectives

4.4.1 Introduction

4.4.2 Agrarian Crisis in India

4.4.3 Reasons for Agrarian Crisis

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4.4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, we are going to study the most important aspect related India's largest people, that is crisis in agriculture sector. After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- understand what actually called as agrarian crisis in present-day India;
- know the various reasons for agrarian crisis;
- the impact of this agrarian crisis on farming community;

- how similar or different this agrarian crisis in the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab.

4.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Agriculture accounted for around 15 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but it is a source of income and employment for more than 50 per cent of the nation's population. Yet, the nation is engulfed with a continuous agrarian crisis from 1980s onwards, which is still continuing. The root cause of the crisis is that agriculture is becoming an economically unviable activity when compared to other enterprises. It means that the profitability of agriculture is low or nil or negative, and therefore, the income derived from these activities are not sufficient enough to meet the expenditure of the cultivators. The poor farmer is squeezed between high input costs and low returns, which is resulting in shifting of occupation.

Due to this, the rate of growth of agricultural output is gradually declining in the recent years. The relative contribution of agriculture to the GDP has been declining over time steadily. The performance of agriculture by crop categories also clearly indicates the slowing down process of agriculture in India. The onset of decline in agriculture began from early nineties and it became sharp from the late nineties. There are many reasons for this crisis in agriculture. The present lesson is intended analyse some of the factors responsible for agrarian crisis in contemporary India.

4.4.2 AGRARIAN CRISIS IN INDIA

The agricultural scenario has experienced various changes over the period. Prior to the introduction of the British rule, agriculture was mostly specific to local needs and the area under cultivation was adjusted to increases and decreases in population. Crops were grown according to the suitability of climatic conditions and agricultural operations were carried on with commonly practised and simple technology. The social framework of agriculture was organised within caste, family and kinship relations. Due to similar socio-economic backgrounds, the farmers shared common values and their needs and aspirations were limited. By and large, agriculture was well integrated with the social structure.

British colonialism brought a series of changes through the introduction of new land tenure, commercialisation of agriculture and expansion of the politico-legal system. The

provision of new land tenure enhanced the propensity to invest more in land, and the privileged and affluent sections started acquiring more land. The area under cultivation was increased and the emphasis was on the cultivation of cash crops like cotton, sugar cane, jute, etc, to feed Britain's industries. The cultivation of these crops was largely profitable because of rising demands in domestic as well as international markets. The rich upper-caste people reaped the benefit of the expanded forces of production because of their large-scale landholding and better economic position.

However, from the late 1980s onwards, several unfavourable trends in Indian agriculture – farmers' suicides, declining prices of several crops, widening disparities between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and a marked slowing down in the rate of agricultural growth – have attracted much comment and discussion in the media, among scholars and in public forums. Cumulatively they have contributed to generating a sense of a deepening agrarian crisis in the country.

Farmers' suicides, which have been headline news for several months, are the most widely discussed phenomenon. They have also highlighted the human tragedy and socio-economic crisis precipitated by this phenomenon in several regions. But the suicides and the factors underlying them are only a part of a more general crisis facing Indian agriculture.

4.4.3 REASONS FOR AGRARIAN CRISIS

There is unanimity among the policy makers, scholars and activists that Indian agriculture is witnessing one of the longest crises without any signs of recovery. They seek to relate this distress to the changing nature of agriculture, economics of production, policies of the government, and the ongoing reforms in the country. In the following sections, we try to find out some of the reasons for this agrarian crisis.

4.4.3.1 THE GREEN REVOLUTION

The green revolution started in the 1960s, following the introduction of high yielding variety (HYV) technology based on water-seed-fertiliser strategy, and the associated land- and crop-based subsidised formal credit facilities generated a strong impression that agriculture is relatively profitable source of income. The first phase of the green revolution was limited to a few food crops (wheat and rice) and water-rich regions; the 1980s witnessed the second phase of the green revolution, which diversified into non-food crops like cotton.

The traditional system of agriculture that prevailed till the early 1960s was mostly self-sufficient in terms of inputs. The agriculture was closely integrated with the inward-looking village economy and was marginally linked with the market outside the village. Farmers were preparing seeds traditionally by selecting the best lot from their crops. The seeds were exchanged within the farming community, and were used and reused a number of times. Following the introduction of HYV technology, the production and distribution of new seed varieties were undertaken by the government with a set of supporting institutions set up for this purpose.

Though the agricultural revolution initiated in the planning period spelt prosperity for the farmers, it also created conditions that were likely to push the farmers to undesirable grave consequences. True, efforts were made to expand irrigation, but excepting a limited number of states, the area under irrigation did not increase substantially and cultivation of high value crops like cotton left to the vagaries of monsoon. As the new HYV seeds require high doses of pesticides, fertilisers and other inputs, the cost of cultivation became higher.

4.4.3.2 PROBLEMS IN RAINFED AGRICULTURE

Within the farming sector, rainfed agriculture is a major constraint in raising overall agricultural growth and bridging regional inequalities. Some 200 million hectares in India constituting 62.0 per cent of the total geographical area of the country fall in this category and represent the geography with the largest concentration of poverty. Productivity of rainfed agriculture has lagged, causing widespread distress. This is due to inadequate support in terms of soil management, seed availability, provision of water, support price, market access, agricultural research investments, etc. But even at their low land productivity levels, the absolute contribution of rainfed agriculture is by no means small. It accounts for 56.0 per cent of total cropped area, 48.0 per cent of the area under food crops and 68.0 per cent of that under non-food crops. However, the major victims of the present day agrarian crisis are the farmers from this rainfed areas due to poor support extended by the government agencies for these regions.

4.4.3.3 LIBERALISATION

During the 1990s, the Indian state embarked upon a new framework of economic liberalisation. The language of development discourses and politics of social change

witnessed many shifts. The most obvious issue in this category is the marginalisation of the rural people in general and of those dependent on agriculture in particular. It is not only ideologically that agriculture experienced marginalisation in the popular imagination of the Indian people over the last two decades; its share in the national income has also declined considerably. Though a large majority of Indians continue to live in the countryside and work on land, the share of agriculture to the national income has come down to less than a quarter. The growth rates in agricultural sector have also been much slower than other sectors of the economy. The irony in India is that the marginalisation of agriculture in the Indian economy is not being accompanied by a similar degree of shift of population to non-agricultural employment.

4.4.3.4 DECLINING INVESTMENT

The initiation of liberal reforms drastically reduced investment in Indian agriculture. The reduction of investment in the rural sector is to the tune of 60 per cent compared to the year 1985. During the period between 1976–80 and 2001–03 public investments in agriculture declined from over 4% of agriculture GDP to 2%. As a research study stated that under the guidance of the IMF and World Bank, successive Indian governments slashed their expenditure on rural development from 14.5 per cent of GDP in 1985-90 to 5.9 per cent in 2000-01. Rural employment growth is now flat; per capita food grains consumption has fallen dramatically to levels lower than the 1939-44 famine. Decline in public investment on agriculture is based on the policy of minimum intervention by the government enunciated by the policy of globalisation. The expenditure of the government in rural development, including agriculture, irrigation, flood control, village industry, energy and transport, declined from an average of 14.5 percent in 1986-1990 to six per cent in 1995-2000. When the economic reforms started, the annual rate of growth of irrigated land was 2.62 per cent; later it got reduced to 0.5 percent in the post-reform period.

4.4.3.5 REDUCTION IN AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES

In order to encourage crop cultivation, the Government of India announced several subsidies time to time. Providing subsidies were unavoidable as the cost of cultivation was increasing and any modernisation required huge additional cost and burden for cultivators. Moreover, to raise the output of agriculture and to improve the productivity levels additional investment were encouraged upon. In the post-reform period, the government reduced different types of

subsidies to agriculture, and this has increased the production cost of cultivation. No doubt that this move has adversely affected the agricultural sector. It has increased the input cost and made agriculture less profitable.

4.4.3.6 RURAL CREDIT AND PRICE POLICY

The risks and uncertainties associated with modern agriculture multiplied following the economic liberalization initiated in the 1990s. After the nationalisation of banks in 1969, a package of policy initiatives ensured that the share of moneylenders in rural credit fell from an average of over 75% in 1951-61 to less than 25% in 1991. But in the post-liberalization reform period, there has been a sharp decline in the share of the formal sector in rural credit. The share of the public sector banks in rural credit has fallen continuously from the peak of 15.3% in 1987 to 8.4% in 2006, and the share of rural deposits has fallen steadily from its peak of 15.5% in 1990 to 10.8% in 2006. The “targeted priority lending” or “directed credit” to agriculture was put on the back burner at the recommendation of the Narasimhan Committee (1992) on financial reforms. As a result, farmers are required to depend on moneylenders/private shopkeepers, who usually charge exorbitant rates of interest, for a timely agricultural input requirement.

The National Commission for Agriculture, headed by Dr M.S. Swaminathan, also pointed out that removal of the lending facilities and concessions of banks during the post-reform period have accelerated the crisis in agriculture. Low incomes on one side and relatively high consumption needs on the other side squeeze the farmer into a situation of overdue payments and possible defaults on loans. When the farmers were not able to pay back loan with high interest, they fell into the debt trap, with suicides as a extreme response.

4.4.3.7 LIBERAL IMPORT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

The fall and fluctuations in the prices of agricultural products is directly related to the liberalisation policy of the government. The policy of removal of quantitative restrictions and lowering of import duties adopted in India were according to the agreements of the World Trade Organisations (WTO). The main reason for the crash of prices of agricultural products, especially of cash crops, in India was removal of all restrictions to import these products. Thus, cultivation of such products became unprofitable and so their production was fully or partly stopped.

4.4.3.8 A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

The social structure of the rural society also witnessed profound changes. The joint family, the rural caste hierarchy, and the harmony of village life have lost their tenacity. The traditional joint family was the predominant feature of agrarian economy and it was a link between continuity and change with a major potential to provide stability and support at the time of crisis. In the recent years the joint family and kinship ties have gradually weakened due to the spread of urban values, education and the impact of development planning, etc.

As a result, in most cases a single person bears the burden of taking responsibility for a satisfactory livelihood. Individualized decisions made place an unduly large burden on individuals, which compounds the sense of loneliness and individualisation. Withdrawn into their individualised households and families, agriculturalists are often unable to understand the risk involved in engaging with an unpredictable market, varying and unreliable climatic conditions, unreliable quality of agricultural inputs and untested forms of agricultural practices.

Due to these developments, agriculture no longer draws on established principles of local knowledge and kin-based ties. It has become primarily an independent, household or family enterprise with more links between each cultivator and the market than among cultivators themselves. The new agriculture practices have restricted the interaction among the farmers, who were earlier cultivating land mostly through exchange of labour services and consulting one another regarding farm-related decisions.

It is argued that modern agriculture has led to disintegration of “community” and the kinship support system, and rise of individualist orientation. Thus, the cumulative effects of agrarian change in India broke down the traditional family, kinship, caste and community ties of the farmers and enhanced their coal and economic aspirations, which ultimately led to the emergence of anomic suicidal currents in context of growing egoism in rural society.

4.4.4 FARMERS’ SUICIDES

The consequence of economic liberalisation lowered the prices of many Indian agricultural products like cotton due to the pressure at the international markets (due to imports). At the same, the production costs have drastically increased due to mechanisation, high yielding variety seeds, extensive use of pesticides and fertilisers, etc. In the post-liberalisation period, the farmers face not only yield risk but also price risk. Due to this, Indian agriculture has

always submerged from crisis to crisis. If the monsoon is good then there are floods, if they are bad there droughts, if the production of mangoes is excellent then there is a problem of plenty and prices fall, if the onion crops fail then that too brings tears. The artisanal nature of agriculture has always kept farmers on tenterhooks, not knowing quite how to manage their economy, except to play it by year.

Due to factors mentioned above and with losses and indebtedness, more than 250,000 farmers have committed suicide across the country in the decade of 2000s. Studies have indicated that the farmers who committed suicide were driven to their tragic end by a three-fold crisis caused by trade liberalisation and globalisation policies; deregulation of inputs, imports and prices; and the inevitable consequence in deepening debt. The cumulative effect on India's poor has been devastating. Today, nearly half of India's children below the age of three are malnourished and stunted, and 40 per cent of rural India eats only as much food as Sub-Saharan Africa.

Most of these suicides have been located in the so-called better-off states. Unofficial figures put the number of farmers committing suicide in Punjab even higher than in Madhya Pradesh. In Maharashtra, the largest number of farmer suicides have occurred in the Vidarbha region in the last decade-and-a-half. Out of the six districts of Vidarbha, Yavatmal has recorded the highest number of suicides year after year, almost two-thirds of the total suicides recorded in the Vidarbha region.

4.4.5 AGRARIAN CRISIS MAHARASHTRA

Agriculture is the main occupation for people in rural Maharashtra. Nearly 58% of the State's population live in the rural area and around 55% of the population is dependent upon agriculture. Despite this, in 2001, Maharashtra constituted about 9.4 per cent of the all India population but accounted for 13.5 per cent of the total suicide deaths in the country. The total number of farmer suicides in Maharashtra increased from 1,083 in 1995 to 4,147 in 2004.

The state governments attribute these self-inflicted deaths mainly to crop failure, especially Cotton, the media highlights factors such as the rising cost of cultivation, indebtedness and bottlenecks in agricultural marketing. Then it is not surprising that most of the suicides reported in Maharashtra are from the cotton-growing Vidarbha region. In Maharashtra, since 2001 the districts of Amrawati, Akola, Yavotmal, Buldhana, Washim and

Wardha are the hotspots for farmers' suicides. All these districts are located in Vidarbha region of the state, traditionally famous for cotton cultivation.

Hence, it is interesting to understand, the regional specificity of agrarian crisis in Maharashtra and the reasons for this regional specificity. In the following section, we will try to understand the reasons for the agrarian crisis in Maharashtra.

4.4.5.1 REGIONAL DISPARITIES

Disparities in development across Marathwada, Vidarbha and rest of the Maharashtra state have been a matter of socio-economic and political concern ever since the existence of separate statehood in 1960. After the formation of Maharashtra state in 1960, development efforts continued in the three regions. During the sixth plan (1980-85), State Planning department undertook a study on district wise development achievements and pointed to the noticeable disparities across regions in irrigation, roads, public health and technical education. During the sixth plan, government announced development programmes for all three regions i.e. Vidarbha, Marathwada and Konkan mainly for the removal of the regional imbalance. However, low budgetary outlays for the removal of backlog, inadequate deployment of implementing machinery and inequitable allocation of funds for non-backlog schemes resulted in the increase of regional imbalance. Which had the negative multiplier effects on the regional economy. The Western Maharashtra has developed whereas Vidarbha and Marathwada regions remained backward.

4.4.5.2 GLOBAL CONTEXT

As we studied above, the suicide rate is high in cotton growing areas of the state. This increase in cotton farmers' suicides can be traced to the stagnation of the Indian cotton farmer against the backdrop of an international setting, which was dynamic. Liberalisation in agricultural trade policies of the government had a major impact on the cotton economy. Since 1970, imports had been canalised through the Cotton Corporation of India. However, in 1994 with the opening up of the economy, cotton lint exports were placed under an open general licence (OGL), that is they were freely importable. Further, from July 2001, raw cotton exports were also under the OGL. This made India's cotton economy susceptible to price shocks from the world market. Such a shock came at the turn of the century when world cotton prices began to decline rapidly.

4.4.5.3 DECLINING RATIO OF AGRICULTURE IN GSDP

In Maharashtra, the contribution of agriculture and allied activities to the net state domestic product (GSDP) came down from 40 per cent in 1960-61 to 13 per cent in 2004-05, whereas as per the 2001 Census 55 per cent of the total workers are either cultivators or agricultural labourers. Between 1993-94 and 2003-04, the growth rate of Maharashtra's gross state domestic product (GSDP) at 4.8 per cent per annum was lower than that of India's gross domestic product (GDP) at 5.8 per cent per annum. However, the employment opportunities in other sectors have not increased tremendously to accommodate those who lost work in agriculture due to its declining rate. That means the income generated from agriculture has reduced drastically without providing any other means of income to those involved in agriculture. This resulted in poverty and other serious problems associated with poverty. All this resulted in increased suicides in rural Maharashtra.

4.4.5.4 DECLINE IN GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Studies show that after the economic reforms started, the government's expenditure and investment in the agricultural sector have been drastically reduced. The expenditure of the government in rural development, including agriculture, irrigation, flood control, village industry, energy and transport, declined from an average of 14.5 per cent in 1986-1990 to six per cent in 1995-2000. When the economic reforms started, the annual rate of growth of irrigated land was 2.62 per cent; later it got reduced to 0.5 per cent in the post-reform period. The consequences were many. The rate of capital formation in agriculture came down, and the agricultural growth rate was also reduced. This has affected the purchasing power of the rural people and subsequently their standard of living.

4.4.5.5 RESTRUCTURING OF THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (PDS)

As part of the neo-liberal policy, the government restructured the PDS by creating two groups—Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL)—and continuously increased the prices of food grains distributed through ration shops. As a result, even the poor people did not buy the subsidised food grains and it got accumulated in godowns to be spoiled or sold in the open market. As the in-take from PDS was less it has affected the food security of the poor, especially in the rural areas, and this has indirectly affected the market and the farmers.

4.4.5.6 ISSUES OF BT COTTON

The issue of BT cotton has generated serious debate in India during late 1990s and early 2000. In 1999 India's largest seeds producing company Marico was acquired by Monsanto. Two years later the Indian government authorized the sale of Bt Cotton, a genetically modified cotton. Monsanto is a global company which wants to dominate the seed market. It has patented the seeds of Bt cotton, and in the process, it has developed a monopoly in the market since only it can sell the patented seeds. It has tried to maximize this advantage by selling the Bt cotton seeds at high cost. There are other costs too and the total cost of Bt cotton cultivation comes out to be Rs. 6593 per acre. In 2006 majority of the farmers grew Bt. Cotton with an expectation that they could double the production. However, the production failed miserably with the growth of rotten cotton. The Net Income of the farmer for acre is on average of Rs. 1194, not even enough to meet the interest of the loan borrowed from the bank or the money lender. Due to this the farmers have become bankrupt, their debt increased manifold, which driven many to suicide. The deaths in 2006 amounted to 1886, highest we compare with the previous years.

4.4.5.7 SUICIDES

Due to the factors mentioned above, the total number of farmers' suicides, which occurred in Maharashtra during 2006 was around 1800. These are official deaths reported by the Government, there may be many without reporting. Vidarbha region, with only slightly over 10 per cent of the population of Maharashtra accounted for 55 per cent of its suicides. This implies that its farmers' suicides rate was around 5.5 times as high as that of the whole of Maharashtra. Thus, suicide rates in 2006 were 24.37 per 1,00,000 for Maharashtra and 134 per 1,00,000 for Vidarbha.

Unfortunately, the successive governments in Maharashtra have not learnt any lessons from the continuous agrarian distress the farmers are witnessing in Maharashtra. The almost 20 years of agrarian crisis, the governments have not initiated any policy measures to save the agriculture sector in general and farmers in particular. We can see this as Maharashtra witnessed one of the serious farmers protests in recent times. These protests were due to the misery and pain the farming community is experiencing in Maharashtra and its suicide rate is continuously increasing over the period. For example, according to state Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vijay Wadettiwar, as many as 14,591 farmers committed suicide in Maharashtra between October 2014 and August 2019. He also said that 1,286 farmers ended

their lives only in 2019 in just 11 districts falling under the Nagpur and Amravati revenue divisions of Maharashtra.

4.4.6 AGRARIAN ANDHRA PRADESH

Apart from Maharashtra, the phenomenon of suicide has been most virulent in Andhra Pradesh (AP), which then includes the present Telangana as well, with two-thirds of suicide deaths in India in the first half of 2000s recorded in that state alone. Apart from the general factors that are responsible for this phenomenon across India, there are some other factors that led to this alarming and disturbing situation in the state.

Studies in various states identified an unbearable debt burden as the main reason for farmers' suicides. But the point is that indebtedness is not something new to rural areas of Andhra, but farmers are not committed suicides earlier for that. Probably this phenomenon needs to be explained by examining the qualitative difference in the nature of indebtedness then and now. Secondly, this indebtedness is itself the result of the combined effect of several other factors that characterises the present state of affairs in agriculture. Thirdly, the model of development pursued in the wake of liberalisation policies all over India, and more so in the AP, added further woes to the farmers' condition. More than anyone else in the country the farmers of India do not have a say in the formulation of governmental policies, but are subjected to the adverse consequences of these policies. Fourthly, the changed nature of politics, especially at the state level, which now centre around the urban classes – the business people, traders, investors, professionals and salaried classes – and political representatives, who have little interest in agriculture, have also played a part in causing this phenomenon.

The following section discusses some of the dimensions of agrarian distress in Andhra Pradesh, the agrarian condition in the state that contributed to the collapse of the farmer's economy.

4.4.6.1 DECLINING PROPORTION OF AGRICULTURE IN GSDP

One simple feature of the rural economy of AP over the past several years is the dwindling share of agriculture in the gross state domestic product (GSDP). It declined from about 53 per cent in 1960-61 to about 13 per cent in 2002-03. If we take the post-economic reform period, it almost halved. But the workforce in agriculture declined only marginally from 69 per cent

in 1960 to 62 per cent in 2001. That means the population engaged in agriculture, which remained more or less stable, has been sharing the increasingly declining income. In a way this provides us a clue to the changing place of agriculture in the state's economy and the livelihood condition of the farmers.

4.4.6.2 INCREASED COSTS

Although the area under cash crops had increased over the years, the growth rates of yield for these crops had declined. In addition, the cost of cultivation for these commercial crops is higher in AP when compared to other states. The higher cost of cultivation in the state could be mainly attributed to the high cost of paid-out inputs (pesticides and fertilisers). Purchase of seeds was most common in AP and highest among the Indian states. Eighty-one per cent of farmer households purchase seeds, compared to 48 per cent for India. During the period 1992-2002, the prices of cotton and chilli seeds have gone up by 400 per cent. It is not simply the case of growing commercial crops, but heavy investments on account of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides that have made farming qualitatively different from what it was earlier.

With a high cost of cultivation, diminishing productivity and low returns, it becomes difficult for farmers to withstand crop failures, with high debt. When a farmer cannot clear all the outstanding debt even by giving up all that is produced, assuming that a good crop is possible, he has to keep borrowing to meet agricultural and family expenses every year. The 59th round of the NSS survey on farmers' condition reveals the distressing picture in AP. First, the incidence of indebtedness among farmers is the highest in the state. About 82 per cent of the farmer households are indebted. Most of the debt was incurred for agricultural expenses (about 62 per cent) and very little on education, health, social ceremonies and consumption. The high cost of inputs seems to be the main factor in the growing indebtedness of the farmers.

4.4.6.3 DECLINING PUBLIC INVESTMENT

One of the most disappointing developments in AP's agricultural sector over the last two decades has been the declining public sector capital formation. Adequate expenditure on rural infrastructure like roads, markets, storage, communication, health, education and research apart from irrigation is a prerequisite for sustainable agricultural growth. The expenditure on the infrastructure will sustain the growth in production, productivity and income generation

in agricultural sector. The share of agriculture and allied activity in state government expenditure under various plans has declined from 11.8 per cent in 1980-81 to 1.8 per cent in 2001-02. When compared to other states, AP had the lowest share of agriculture spending in total plan expenditure till 2002-03. While the expenditure on agriculture to total expenditure is around 7 per cent in Karnataka and 5 per cent at the all-India level, it was only around 3 per cent in AP. Clearly, the planning process in AP has neglected long-term issue of sustainable development.

Finally, we have to mention that after the initiation of economic reforms in the state, an atmosphere has been created that the agriculture as was practiced was no more a “growth engine”. The emphasis was on urban infrastructure, information technology and transforming AP into a knowledge society. The then government, led by Chandrababu Naidu, claiming to be an active reformer, virtually stopped talking about agriculture. Instead of taking long-term measures to increase irrigation potential in the state, emphasis was laid upon watersheds and rainwater harvesting pits and they came a cropper, as there was anyway little rain in those years. The middlemen, commission agents, those in, agribusiness and contractors got more benefits out of these schemes and their political clout had enormously increased. As an occupation, cultivation came to be looked down upon. In their own eyes, agriculture had little esteem for the farmers and the experience of low incomes, crop failures and indebtedness vindicated this for them.

As a result, the space for farmers in the policy process is shrinking, as they are least organised and can hardly lobby with lawmakers. Political parties seem to be little interested in organising and mobilising farmers. The disunity among farmers and their inability to pool resources to conduct any sustained agitations make the political parties take them for granted. Over the years the role and importance of traders in agricultural produce, contractors and commission agents have been growing in politics at the district and state level. All these have increased the agrarian crisis in which the state has locked in for a long time.

4.4.7 PUNJAB’S AGRARIAN CRISIS

Punjab, until recently the most prosperous state of the country, is in deep economic crisis. Its predominantly agrarian economy is at the cross roads as agricultural production and crop yields have nearly stagnated. Profit margins of the farmers have come down drastically. Farmers are resorting to suicides. Soil resource, which is a critical requirement for sustainable

development, has sharply deteriorated because of excessive use of chemical fertilisers and growing the same crops over and over again. Underground water table is going down at an alarming rate. Beginning with early 1980s, the word “crisis” became the dominant mode of representing Punjab. From politics and economics to culture and ecology, everything seemed to be in a state of crisis in Punjab. The following sections outline the reason for this crisis and its impact on Punjab agriculture in general and to its farmers in particular.

4.4.7.1 GREEN REVOLUTION AND AGRICULTURE IN PUNJAB

The green revolution that was initiated in 1960s was successful in other parts of India as well, but it was Punjab that it primarily came to be identified with. The Punjab model of agrarian transformation was born out of the food shortages of the 1960s when a nation lacking the resources to buy food grains from abroad had to ask for food aid from the US under the PL-480. Around the same time India had an unexpected war with China in 1962, has had two consecutive droughts in 1964-65 and 1965-66 and another war with Pakistan in 1965. The major donor of food grains, US, was threatening India to withdraw the food aid unless the country accepted the policies suggested by western powers. As a result of the drought and diversion of resources, the domestic production of food grains in India during 1965-66 was just 72 million tonnes against a market demand of around 90 million tonnes.

Thus, came into existence the Intensive Agricultural Districts Programme (IADP) which with the advent of new high yielding varieties of wheat, rice, maize and bajra and package of other inputs like chemical fertilisers, insecticides and pesticides and assured irrigation facilities came to be known as a ‘new agricultural strategy’ or ‘green revolution’. The most important feature of this ‘new strategy’ was the focus on popularising modern inputs and practices in the most productive areas where these were most likely to show results rather than spending the limited resources thinly over a large area. Punjab, which was a relatively developed state with requisite irrigation facilities and infrastructure, became a major beneficiary of this national strategy and was projected as a showpiece of India's successful green revolution strategy’.

After more than three decades of the adoption of new agricultural strategy with its obsession with grains to the exclusion of other foods and cash crops, Punjab's agrarian economy with a highly skewed agricultural base is in deep crisis. In the meantime, the food scenario at the national level has completely changed from the food shortages of mid-1960s to the high surpluses of late 1990s and early years of the 21st century. In this changed context

Punjab's wheat-paddy dominated agrarian economy is becoming economically as well as ecologically non-sustainable and the state is being treated as if it has become a liability for the nation.

4.4.7.2 REASONS FOR AGRARIAN CRISIS

There are many reasons for the present-day agrarian crisis in Punjab, some of them are related to problems faced by agriculture sector in entire India, and others are unique to Punjab only. In the following the sections, we study some of these factors.

First, the growth rate of nearly 5 per cent per annum achieved by the state's agricultural sector since the beginning of 'green revolution' in mid-1960s, though remarkable by almost any standards, has been declining over time. Second, the Punjab agriculture's capacity to absorb labour has also declined over time. Third, given the input and output price structure and superior yields of wheat and rice compared to the competing crops, Punjab agriculture has become essentially a wheat-rice monoculture, with more than 76 per cent of the total gross cropped area of the state is under wheat and rice. Fourth, the Food Corporation of India is saddled with burgeoning food stocks. FCI and other state procurement agencies have no storage space in the state. Open fields, schools, government buildings, godowns, unused roads, or for that matter any vacant space you name, are overflowing with gunny bags containing wheat and paddy. Fifth, farmers in Punjab have made huge investments in farm machinery. The tractor population of the state constitutes about 25 per cent of all tractors in the country. More than nine lakh tube wells are being supplied electricity by the state free of cost. This is leading to depletion of underground water table which is falling at a rate of 23 cm per annum. Sixth, the state's agrarian economy is in crisis not only because of the slowdown in growth rate, but more so because of declining profitability of the major crops.

Particularly, the new innovations of threshing, cultivation of land through tractors, use of pesticides and insecticides, diesel pump sets and electric tube wells increased the use of mechanical power for tilling and harvesting operations. Mechanisation of harvesting of major crops and intensive use of biological technologies have not only reduced the household use of labour power but also substantially contributed to the rise in the cost of production. Over capitalisation of mechanical power such as tractors and tube wells has made available the use of the tractor on a hire purchase basis to the small farmers which has reduced the use of family labour as well as completely eliminated tilling of land by bullocks even by the small and marginal farmers. The farmers have turned managers of the production processes of

agriculture because the manual operations have been almost eliminated and the remaining tasks are being done by the migratory workforce available at low level of wages.

Due to the above-mentioned factors, there are reports of suicides by farmers because of their inability to return loans to increased costs and declining incomes.

4.4.7.3 STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO FARMING COMMUNITY

Punjab agriculture has been undergoing some interesting shifts since late 1970s. The total number of landholdings in the state declined from 13,75,392 hectares in 1971 to 10,27,127 hectares in 1981. This decline of more than 3 lakh holdings obviously suggests a sudden move away from agriculture. The decline is most clearly visible in the category of marginal and small landholdings. Though average size of the holdings has been narrowing in Punjab, the bigger farmer is not necessarily becoming more rural. While marginal and small cultivators seem to be moving out of agriculture, the bigger farmer is moving out of the village. The big farmers of Punjab invariably have a part of their families living in the town. Their children go to urban schools/colleges, and they invest their surplus in non-agricultural activities.

These processes of change have had a direct implication for the political agency of the farming classes in Punjab. The earlier solidarity of farmers reflected in their powerful mobilisation during the 1980s is nowhere to be seen today. The Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), which had provided leadership to Punjab farmers during the 1980s, is split into four factions. Apart from the different factions of BKU, communist parties and other leftist groups also have their farmers' unions. Put together there are a total 10 different organisations claiming to represent farmers' interests in Punjab. Though some of them occasionally come together on a common platform, most of the time they remain divided.

4.4.7.4 FARMERS SUICIDE

Though the phenomenon of farmers' suicides in Punjab started during the 1980s, it witnessed a sudden increase during the 1990s. The situation became alarming when as many as 418 cases of suicides were reported from rural Punjab only 1997.

The suicides were mostly concentrated in the Malwa districts of Sangrur, Bhatinda, Ferozepur, Mansa and Faridkot. More than 70 per cent of those who killed themselves were small/marginal farmers or landless labourers. In most cases agriculture was their only source

of livelihood. A large majority of them were engaged in cultivation of wheat and paddy crops (65 per cent) or in wheat and cotton (20 per cent). More than 70 per cent of them were jats caste, and with the exception of one, they were all men, from a relatively younger age group. The report prepared by state government also recognised that because of the declining growth rates, agriculture was no longer a profitable avenue, and the cultivators had no alternative sources of employment available to them. This scenario led to rising debts. However, in some cases conspicuous consumption and drug addiction were also important factors that led to chronic indebtedness of those who committed suicide.

To summarise the above, the contemporary crisis of the Punjab agriculture emanated from (a) limitations of the green revolution and lack of inner dynamism to build up forward and backward inter-sectoral linkages; (b) decline in the size of operational holdings and fragmentation of land as well as pauperisation of small and marginal farmers; (c) decline in the growth rate of productivity; and (d) increase in input costs and a corresponding fall in income of the small and marginal farmers.

4.4.8 LET'S SUM UP

The country has witnessing agrarian distress for a long time, from the late 1970s onwards and continuing to the present times, with more severity. The central question related to the agrarian crisis revolves around the prices the farmers get for their produce. Input costs are not adequately compensated through the existing price mechanism the market offers to the farmers. As a result of this mismatch, today the farmers are, more or less, debt ridden and the quantum of debt continues to grow in such a manner that there seems to be no easy way out of this. As explicitly brought out by the many government reports, there is now a degree of reluctance to continue in farming. In fact, we do witness large-scale migration to urban centres for daily wage labour work. This fact is more pronounced in the dryland and rainfed areas of the country. The crisis in agriculture is thus manifold. The many layers include debt, non-viable farm sizes, non-availability of assured water supply for irrigation, and no assurance of reasonable prices for the produce, etc. This has also had a cascading effect in the rural context as less income for the cultivating class means much less income for others down the ladder, the landless labour, the marginal farmers, the small-time traders, and dependents on the agricultural sector as a whole.

Studies on agrarian distress and farmers suicides in major crisis-ridden states have convincingly proved that trade liberalisation led price fall for agricultural commodities, compounded further by the hike in production cost coupled with near total absence of state withdrawal from procurement and market interventions in 1990s and 2000s have caused the distress to take its roots in rural India claiming thousands of lives of farmers.

4.4.9 SOURCES

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