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# DEMOCRACY IN INDIA ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

A Textbook in Political Science  
for Class XII

₹ 150

Polity (11th - XII) Democracy Polity



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## CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

### Part IV A

## Fundamental Duties of Citizens

#### ARTICLE 51A

Fundamental Duties - It shall be the duty of every citizen of India —

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wild life and to have compassion for living creatures;
- (h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- (i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.

## FOREWORD

Political Science is introduced as an elective subject at the Higher Secondary Stage. At the Secondary Stage of school education, the study of civics as a component of Social Science, has been dealt with in a very general manner avoiding the rigours of Political Science. In fact during the first ten years of schooling the learners study the working of civic and political institutions, and the contemporary problems facing India and the world. In consonance with the objectives of general education, the focus during these years is on the development of an understanding of the various civic and political processes which form an important component of an integrated Social Science syllabus which has been introduced up to the Secondary Stage.

The present textbook entitled *Democracy in India : Issues and Challenges* is a new book based on the new syllabus of Political Science developed by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as a follow up of the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education — 2000* (NCFSE — 2000). In keeping with the approach of the new syllabus the present book aims at developing among the pupils the knowledge and understanding of the functioning of Indian Democracy. The course content also aims at inculcating in them the values of democratic culture and of scientific temper.

Some of the core areas mentioned in the NCFSE — 2000 have been suitably infused into the relevant chapters of the book. Besides the terminal exercises at the end of each chapter, the book also contains a glossary of difficult terms and concepts.

The Council is grateful to the author for taking considerable pains in developing the manuscript, which was thoroughly reviewed in a review workshop by subject experts and experienced teachers. The NCERT is thankful to the editor, subject experts and teachers whose suggestions and comments have helped in finalising the manuscript.

Comments and suggestions from the users of this textbook are welcome.

March 2003  
New Delhi

J.S. RAJPUT  
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## GANDHIJI'S TALISMAN

“I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test :

Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it ? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny ? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions ?

Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.”

*M.K. Gandhi*

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## Introduction : Democracy in India

THE beginning of India's independence on 15th of August 1947 was a great day in the long and eventful history of this ancient country. The attainment of independence, however, was not an end in itself. It was not only political freedom that the leaders of the freedom struggle were fighting for, but also for the establishment of a new order of society. The leaders had a vision for minimisation of economic and social inequalities, removal of mass poverty, unemployment and underemployment, restoration of human dignity, guarantee of civil rights, restoration of communal harmony and justice for all. These hopes and expressions were embodied in the Constitution of India which was adopted on 26th January, 1950. The visions were largely reflected through the Preamble to the Constitution and the parts dealing with Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. To achieve the prescribed goals, the framers of the Indian Constitution relied completely on the norms of democracy.

You might have already studied that framers of the Indian Constitution

provided for a representative democracy in a liberal frame work. The main characteristics of liberal democracy are:

- The government is formed by elected representatives of citizens and is accountable and responsible to them.
- More than one political parties compete for political power.
- The competition for power is open and not secretive. It is through open elections.
- There are periodic elections based on universal adult franchise.
- Pressure and other organised and unorganised groups are also allowed to operate in the system. They are also able to influence government decisions.
- Civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, religion and association, etc. are guaranteed.
- There is separation of powers and check by one over the other, e.g. control over the executive by legislature.

The above characteristics primarily refer to the aspects of a democratic form of government. Most political thinkers of the present age, however, agree that

democracy does not mean merely a form of government. In a broader and moral sense, it means a way of life, an order of society, a way of social and economic relations, and above all a belief system. Such a political and socio-economic system is based on the ideals of dignity and equality of citizens, principles of equality, liberty, fraternity, and justice and norms of government responsible and accountable to people. These ideals, principles and norms to be implemented require certain conditions, which we may call as prerequisites of democracy. These prerequisites are required in every sphere — social, economic and political. The social conditions require: social equality of status, equality before law and equality of opportunity; educationally and culturally developed citizenry; absence of all kinds of discrimination; and equal opportunities to participate in social, cultural, and educational processes. Economic conditions mean: absence of widespread inequalities; fulfilment of minimum material needs for a dignified human existence; justifiable distribution of resources; equal opportunities for gainful employment, equal pay for equal work and protection against exploitation. Political conditions include: rule of law; equality of citizens and equal opportunities for participation in political affairs; guaranteed and protected rights — particularly freedom of thought, belief and expression. It also include freedom of participation in civil and political

processes; government by the people or their representatives free and fair elections and respect for dissent and opposition.

Many political thinkers and observers believe that without social and economic prerequisites, political conditions of democracy cannot be achieved. They, therefore, suggest that before a society or state decides to be governed democratically, it is essential for it to have a minimum level of social and economic development. Many others, however, believe that democracy itself provides a better and successful means for attainment of social and economic development. The framers of Indian Constitution were fully committed to this view. In fact, their faith in democracy was so deep that soon after independence they made provisions for the universal adult suffrage, i.e. right to vote to every adult citizen without any discrimination.

Even in highly developed countries like UK and USA, this right was granted to all citizens gradually by stages. Therefore, it can be said that introduction of democracy in India, in the — then prevailing conditions, was a revolutionary act. Establishment of parliamentary democracy and universal adult franchise, gave the Indian masses a sense of identity and also raised at new hopes.

The very first General Election of 1952 under the new Constitution was hailed an epic achievement of a country of millions of illiterates. Thereafter, scholars and observers from all

over the world have been attracted by the successful working of a system of popular democratic government based on adult franchise, guaranteed fundamental rights and an independent judicial system. Successive general elections at scheduled intervals and the peaceful and relatively efficient manner in which they have been conducted, have demonstrated that in spite of their poverty and widespread illiteracy, the people in general have proved the framers of the Constitution right. With every election, the base of democracy in India has got widened. This is particularly important in view of the fact that in most of the countries which attained independence after the Second World War, democracy has been replaced by military dictatorship or one party system. In India, it has not only worked but has also provided a considerable amount of political stability.

In social and economic fields also, the country has made great strides. Fifty years ago, the life expectancy for the average Indian was 27 years. It is now 63 years. The literacy level at the dawn of independence was much less than what it is today. Agricultural breakthrough of the early seventies has not only made India self-sufficient in food but we now produce surplus. Milk production has gone up significantly. At the time of independence, country produced just 1362 MW of electricity; which is now over 10,000 MW. Industrial production also has greatly diversified.

There is also a considerable futuristic euphoria about the prospects of industrial, economic and technological progress. It is expected that by 2020, India would be amongst the first 10 countries in terms of per capita income. It is also predicted that India would be the largest software developer in the world and its advances in space technology would greatly enhance its potential for education, meteorology and disaster management, etc. India is also playing an important role in world affairs.

However, Indian democracy is flawed in many respects. India has not been able to acquire a stable national unity and the political system has not been able to fulfil the aspirations of all groups, sections, and classes. A vast majority of the Indian people are caught in the situation of abject poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. More than 60 per cent of the Indian population does not have access to basic sanitation. There is almost a collapse of public health. The population has increased more than three times since independence. Of course, the Gross National Product (GDP) has increased four fold and in the last decade alone per capita GDP has doubled. But in view of increase in population and concentration of benefits in few hands this increase remains insufficient. Result is about 50 per cent of all children below 5 years of age are under weight and malnourished.

The reality of Indian society is the fact that economic development has not

been accompanied by institutional changes that could have moved it in an egalitarian direction. It could not abolish mass poverty and was not able to secure a minimum level of living and opportunities for all its citizens. The richest 20 per cent have taken away about 50 per cent of the gains and the poorest 20 per cent are left with only about 8 per cent. Almost 35 per cent of the population is below the official poverty line. In human development, India ranks 128th amongst 173 countries as per the UN Human Development Report 2002. Representation of women at all the levels of government is not even 6 per cent. Relentless pursuit of power and wealth has been the dominant preoccupation of many in public life. Consequently, the ideals and aspirations which had inspired the millions to participate in the struggle, still have remained to a large extent unrealised.

There is thus a peculiar situation. The very fact of political independence, establishment of Parliamentary government and grant of universal adult franchise, has given the common people of India a sense of identity as well as a conscious recognition of their position of exploitation and discrimination. Politicians wanting their votes have played up this feeling but have taken no concrete action to see that the weaker sections were given a participatory and effective role in the socio-economic development of the country. Consequently, people are getting alienated from the system and

losing faith in the electoral system. To keep them in the game of elections, ambitious individuals have started counting on caste base, communal, linguistic and regional loyalties. Elections, as such, have become ends in themselves, instruments of the status quo and of self promotion rather than of change. With this another serious factor has emerged; it is politicisation of crime, and criminalisation of politics.

Altogether, Indian society today presents a picture which is far from being in line with the lofty doctrines of liberty, equality, fraternity, social justice, secularism, fair play and above all rule of law enshrined in our Constitution. Instead of national integration, we now have growth of divisive forces and separatist elements and groups. Communalism, regionalism and casteism are becoming conspicuously visible forces that are weakening, if not actually negating the attempts to build solidarity into Indian society.

During the last 55 years of India's independence, India has witnessed both successes and failures in running the democratic processes. Our country has achieved success in many fields. It has evolved a lasting Constitution, a viable political system, a functional federal polity and strong democratic traditions. It has achieved a relatively self-reliant economy. Quality of life has improved. India has achieved breakthrough in science and technological research. Diverse races and ethno-lingual groups have been unified without

destroying their identities. Above all, a vast multi religious, multi ethnic and multi cultural country has been kept united.

These achievements, however, are facing serious challenges from the negative trends that have crept in over the years. There has been of late stagnancy and decay in the political field. Economic development remains dissatisfactory. India is still far behind the developed countries. Caste, communal and linguistic tensions are growing in such proportion that the unity of the country appears to be threatened. Society is looking towards younger generation with hope. They have to understand that democracy cannot be frozen into a static mould adopted at one time. It has to adapt,

adjust and evolve itself to continuously changing situations and circumstances. For that, it is important to understand the existing nature of system — how it has been working, why and what aberrations and problems have crept in, what lessons can be learnt from the past experiences and what needs to be done? The purpose of this book on Indian democracy is to make you aware of all these and to prepare you participate in the system as a proud citizen of a great ancient country and contribute effectively in the task of making corrections, and improvement. There is no doubt that with the efforts of younger generation India can look forward to emerging as a great nation.

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UNIT I

ELECTIONS IN INDIA

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## CHAPTER 1

# Adult Franchise and Electoral Participation

**L**IKE other democracies of the present day world India, also is a representative democracy. It means it is a system of government in which political decision making is done by the elected representatives of the people. For choosing representatives the most common method is elections and voting. Elections may not in themselves be a sufficient condition for political representation, but there is little doubt that they are a necessary condition. In fact elections are the very heart of democracy. It is through free and fair elections, the rulers are called to account and if necessary replaced. Apart from giving an opportunity to citizens to participate in choosing their representatives, elections are also important instruments for political education, informing the people about national problems and placing before citizens various alternatives of policies. Thus, there can be little doubt that elections are a vital part of any democratic process by which people exercise their political choice and their right as citizens. Therefore, right to vote is provided to make elections meaningful and representative.

### UNIVERSAL ADULT FRANCHISE

While importance and significance of elections in a democracy has been universally accepted, there has been a debate about who can vote. Conditions attached to such right to vote have varied both over time and within countries. For example, in United Kingdom, to begin with, right to vote was given only to men with property. It was gradually extended during the nineteenth century. Until 1918 all men could vote but only some women obtained this right. Women were granted right to vote only in 1928. Now in almost all democratic countries adult citizens irrespective of property, education, race, religion, gender or other differences have been given right to vote which is popularly known as Universal Adult Franchise/Suffrage. Which offices or posts are subject to elective principle depend on constitutional and governmental systems of each country. In some countries, large number of offices including those of Judiciary are elected ones whereas in some these are primarily for legislative bodies. But in

general democratic principle accepts that at least those responsible for making laws and imposing taxes must be elected. Another important aspect of elections in democracies is that these are held periodically. That is representatives are elected for a fixed tenure and they have to seek fresh mandate at the end of tenure. For conducting elections there are various methods as also rules and regulations framed by each country. These set of methods and rules is called electoral system. We will discuss later some type of prevailing electoral system. But you can keep in mind that an electoral system is essentially a method of converting votes cast by electors to seats in the elected bodies. The central factor, which distinguishes one electoral system from another, is the method by which it allocates seats. There are broadly three ways in which this can be done: seats can be allocated to candidate obtaining plurality of votes (that is maximum among the contesting candidates), or candidates obtaining a majority of the votes (more than 50 per cent), or to political parties in proportion to percentage of votes polled by each of them. Accordingly, there are three systems: plurality system, majority system; and proportional system. In India we have all these three systems for elections to various bodies and offices.

The plurality system which is also known as the first past the post system has been adopted for elections to the House of People (Lok Sabha) and State Legislative Assemblies (Vidhan

Sabhas); the majority system for elections to the offices of President and Vice-President; and proportional representation for Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and Legislative Councils (Vidhan Parishads). Details of these and procedures associated with them will be discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter let us first look at the electoral politics in India in general in the context of working of democracy.

### ADULT FRANCHISE IN INDIA

India is a Parliamentary democracy. Therefore, its governance draws its ultimate legitimacy from the will of the people which they exercise by participating in elections at regular intervals. Citizens' right to vote, therefore is crucial in sustaining India's democracy. This right has been given to the citizens by the Constitution of India. Article 326 of the Constitution provides that the Election to the House of People and to the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be on the basis of adult suffrage; that is to say, every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than 18 years of age (earlier up to 1989 it was 21 years) "on such date as may be fixed in that behalf by or under law made by the appropriate legislature and is not otherwise disqualified under this Constitution", has right to vote.

It is thus clear that every citizen of India irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex, place of birth, social or economic status etc. has an equal right to vote. In other words, irrespective of

educational or economic status each citizen's value of vote is equal. Constitution, however, prescribes certain conditions under which a citizen becomes disqualified to be a voter. A citizen having an unsound mind or having been punished for election related offences comes under this category.

The extension of political power (right to vote) to the common man of India, is no doubt an important instrument of social justice. It may be mentioned here that while even in many developed (Western) countries universal adult franchise developed in steps; in India, it was introduced right in the beginning. Right to vote in India was considered not only as an essential mechanism for working of Parliamentary democracy but also as an instrument for achieving socio-economic justice through peoples' participation, accountable and responsible government and mobilisation of citizens' participation in political process. It should also be kept in mind that apart from Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies elections are also held for local self governance bodies like Municipal Committees and Corporations and Panchayati Raj Institutions, thus giving opportunity to voters to exercise their control and choice at different levels. Elections are also held for the offices of President and Vice-President of India; but in these citizens do not participate directly, it is their representatives in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies who vote in these elections. As a whole,

elections have become one of the most central political processes in India. They are keenly contested and participated. During last 52 years of the adoption of the Constitution, India has had thirteen general elections to the Lok Sabha and various to the State Legislative Assemblies. There had been democratic changes of governments, both at the Centre and in States, several times through the electoral process. Though, during elections a number of aberrations and malpractices have crept in, elections more or less have been instrumental for peaceful change of governments and expression of people's aspirations and protests.

### POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

First general election was held in India in 1951-52 on the basis of adult suffrage. This was a simultaneous election both for the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies. Second general election held in 1957 was also a simultaneous election. In third general election in 1962, elections for two State Assemblies i.e. Kerala and Orissa could not be held simultaneously with general election. Similarly, in 1967, simultaneous elections could not be held in Nagaland and Pondichery along with fourth general election to the Lok Sabha. After 1967, election to most of the assemblies had to be held separately from that of Lok Sabha. Fifth general election for Lok Sabha was held in 1971 and thereafter general elections were held in 1977, 1980, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998 and 1999.

In terms of participation in elections, there has been a steady increase in percentage of voting turn out (although, there have been some fluctuations here and there) (see Table 1.1). Further, studies show that the increase has been both in urban and rural areas. Similarly participation by women has also increased with each

election, although the level of turn out for women is lower in some rural constituencies.

It clearly shows that the right to vote and system of free elections has drawn millions of very differently situated people into the political process, opening up opportunities for them in sharing and controlling power.

**Table 1.1: General Elections at a Glance**

Year	Elective Seats	Candidates	Electorate	Vote Turnout (in percentage)	Polling Stations
1952	489	1,864	173,213,635	59	196,084
1957	494	1,591	193,652,069	42	220,478
1962	494	1,985	216,372,215	65.0	238,244
1957	520	2,369	249,003,331	63.8	267,555
1971	518	2,784	274,094,493	65.7	342,944
1977	542	2,439	321,174,327	60.5	358,208
1980	542	4,629	355,590,700	60.0	358,208
1984	542	5,411	399,816,294	60.1	358,208
1989	543	6,150	498,906,429	60.0	358,208
1991	543	8,693	514,126,390	60.0	358,208
1996	543	9,912	542,572,283	60.0	358,208
1998	543	10,720	605,821,102	60.0	358,208
1999	543	10,720	613,559,341	60.0	358,208

\* Excluding Jammu and Kashmir

Sources : PIB, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Election Commission of India.

and in claiming a share in the benefits. At the same time, it is also true that the act of voting itself is not evidence of political awareness or involvement. Many a times voters are just pushed into and coerced to vote in favour of candidates either under emotional pressures of caste, religion or community or under threat from economically and socially powerful. Voting by such uninformed and disinterested voters obviously is qualitatively different from voting by one who is politically conscious. Results of various elections and trends of voting also suggest that voting behaviour of Indian voter is not determined by any single factor. These include social, political and economic factors. Let us look at how various factors determine voter's participation and behaviour.

#### **DETERMINANTS OF ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION AND BEHAVIOUR**

As has already been mentioned, elections provide the people with opportunity to influence the political process, and also help directly or indirectly, to determine who will hold government power. Elections are also a visible manifestation of public interest. The reason to vote and vote in favour of a candidate, therefore, is determined by both individual's own reasons and perceptions as also by her/his being a part of a collectivity or group. At the same time the voting behavior is shaped both by short term and long term influences.

#### **SHORT TERM INFLUENCES**

Short term influences are specific to a particular election and therefore do not determine the voting patterns in general. An important short term factor is the state of economy at the time of election. This includes situation of unemployment, inflation, availability or non-availability of essential commodities, etc. We have cases in India when main issue of election campaign had been the price of commodities like onion or governments inability to control inflation. Local conditions of life, like water and power supply, road conditions, law and order situation has also determined voting behavior either in general or in particular constituencies. Another short term influence on voting is the personality and public standing of party leaders. In 1971, charismatic leadership of Indira Gandhi and her popularity won a number of votes for her party. In 1985, Rajiv Gandhi's youthful and honest image influenced various sections of voters. Again in 1989 V.P. Singh's growing popularity made many people to vote for him and his allies. Similarly in 1999 elections, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's charismatic personality brought quite a few votes for his alliance. Let it be clear that image and popularity of leaders by itself is only one of the factors to influence voting behavior and it may not remain for long.

Specific and significant events preceding an election also influence the outcome of elections. India's victory in Indo-Pak war over Bangladesh in

1971 brought large number of votes for Congress (I) in State Assembly elections in 1972; but in 1977 in the wake of Proclamation of Emergency Congress lost votes both in Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections. In 1985, militancy in Punjab and some other parts of India followed by the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi brought sympathy votes to Congress (I) but again exposure of corruption took people away from Congress (I) in the next election in 1989. In 1996 election, events — related to Ram Janma Bhumi brought gains for BJP and it emerged as the largest single party in Lok Sabha for the first time. Again in 1999 elections for thirteenth Lok Sabha, events like testing of nuclear bomb and Kargil war did influence voting behavior of certain sections in favour of BJP and its allies.

Another short term influence that has become particularly important in recent years is that of media. Patterns of media coverage of issues, projection of leaders in good or bad light, conduct of opinion polls, etc. do influence voting behavior of a number of voters. But as has already been mentioned, all these factors have short term influences on voters. These may make some voters vote in a particular way in a particular election. Of course a little shift in voting behavior even of a section of voters can some time significantly change the final results. Nevertheless major influences on voters come from social, economic and ideological factors and these are long term influences.

## LONG TERM INFLUENCES

### Social

Among the social factors influencing electoral behavior can be age, sex, education, inhabitation (rural or urban), caste, community, religion, etc. Various election studies have shown differences in voting turn out and voting behaviour of voters on these grounds. For instance, it has been found that younger people participate less. Voting percentage is the highest between the age-group of 30 to 50 years and intermediate in the persons crossing 50 years. Similarly, it has been found that in Indian situation women, as compared to men, tend to be less politically efficacious, less politically interested and less informed. Particularly, in rural areas they either don't vote or vote according to the desires of men folk in the family. Higher level of education in general is considered a critical norm for rational decision making. Many studies, however, show that in terms of participation percentage illiterates or persons with low education outnumber the higher educated persons. Of course in choosing the candidate the two may be acting differently.

In terms of inhabitation, earlier India's urban constituencies were electorally more politicised but lately rural voters have started participating in elections in a significant way and determining the election outcomes. There are, however, substantial variations from one election to another

and among the different States. The voting pattern of the two differs on issues as well as on caste loyalties. Rural voters are influenced more by caste considerations, while in urban areas issues are considered important.

### Caste

In India, it has become a very important factor to influence electoral behaviour. People, particularly in rural areas are motivated to vote because of caste loyalties. There are direct and indirect appeals by contestants on caste and sub-caste lines. Earlier it was higher castes that used to mobilise their support base. During last two decades Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes have been significantly mobilised on caste basis. There had also been reports of higher castes intimidating or coercing lower castes to vote according to their directions. In recent years, lower castes have become particularly active to react against such intimidation and consolidate and mobilise themselves to vote in accordance with their own choices. In this context an important development is that leaders of all major parties and formations agree that the crucial *dalit* vote can make or break their fortunes. Some observers find a very positive aspect of introduction of use of caste in elections in India. This, they find is the transfer of authority from the higher to the middle castes and also a move towards empowerment of lower castes. The other view is that the Adult Franchise and elected Panchayati Raj

Institutions have in fact helped existing ruling classes in consolidating and legitimising their power by using caste in electoral politics. We will study in a subsequent chapter various aspects of casteism in politics. Here, it is important to note that in Indian electoral behaviour, particularly in rural areas, caste has become an important instrument of mobilisation, a channel of communication, representation and leadership.

### Religion

Like caste another factor that has been used to mobilise voters has been religion. In a country like India where people are deeply religious minded, leaders find it quite useful to identify themselves with the people on the basis of their religious sentiments — both in negative and positive terms and ask votes for them. In early years of independence, some parties exploited the apprehensions of minorities about their safety and place in India in post partition conditions. Minorities, therefore, chose parties keeping in view security of their religious identity and safety. These came to be known as communal vote banks.

### Economic Factors

In terms of economic factors, it is expected that people with higher, middle and lower income groups vote differently. Higher and middle income groups are more concerned with the problems of the society, are more politically aware and conscious of the

effects of governmental policies on their long term interests. The poorer sections of the society, on the other hand, are concerned with their personal economic problems. Their main worry is making both ends meet, holding on to their jobs or finding one. They therefore, vote to deal with the most immediate and pressing livelihood problems. They may also be coerced to vote according to the directions of their employers or *maliks* or to sell their votes.

Fact of the situation is that it is the majority of population living below and just above the poverty line which has the major share of votes. Poor, illiterate, superstitious with a sense of belonging only to the caste or religion and with no access to proper communication this enormous wave is driven to the polling stations. Many studies have pointed out that voting by poor in the villages often follows the lines of what the *malik* says: whether they are labourers or share croppers, *dalits* or next higher caste, the land owner dictates to them the party/candidate they have to vote for. Of course, lot of awareness is coming in these sections, but as yet their voting behavior is not determined according to their interests and choices.

There is also difference in voting behaviour on class and professional/vocational basis. Choice of parties by propertied and labour classes, industrialists and farmers, business men and professionals mostly depends on class lines, though other factors of caste, religion, etc. also play their role in that.

While socio-economic factors are very important in influencing individual's and group's voting behaviour, some political factors also play a significant role in its long term determination. Important factors are ideology, family and party association. In every society quite a number of people are committed to certain ideologies and values like capitalist, socialist, conservative, liberal, secular, fundamentalist, etc. Their voting behavior obviously is determined primarily by these commitments rather than short term influences or their social status. In most cases ideological commitment itself is determined by one's social status; for instance, working class people tend to be tilted towards socialist and communist ideologies. Similarly, industrialists and business people have a natural tendency to favour capitalist values.

Political family background is also an important determinant. Early political socialisation in politically active families has direct and indirect influence on children. In fact, parents who are active or interested in politics encourage their young children to participate in elections according to family traditions and associations. It is not necessary that children always follow their parental loyalties, but early socialisation remains an important determinant.

An important determinant in voting behavior has been *party identification* in the sense of psychological attachment to parties. There are people who are either formal members of



political parties or identify themselves with a party. They are thus long term supporters of parties and vote for them. In such cases voting is a manifestation of partnership, not a result of calculation influenced by factors such as policies, personalities, campaigning and media coverage. Party identification in voting behavior was very strong in the initial years of independence because of people's involvement in freedom struggle and visions for a new India. Now it is not that strong. Voters, by and large prefer to vote on the basis of their evaluation of parties from election to election as also on the basis of other influences. Some long term associations are still visible on ideological, traditional and caste or communal basis. Political parties, however, are unable to depend on these firm commitments. Most of them, therefore, try to attract general voters using various techniques mentioned above.

### **ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS AND TRENDS**

From the above discussion of the determinants of voting behaviour, it becomes clear that voter's decision does not depend on any one factor. It is influenced by the social group she/he belongs to, her/his long term association with political parties, understanding of issues involved in an election, state of economy, prevailing social conditions, types of leaders leading the party, the party image, election campaign, etc. In addition,

media has also started playing a very effective role in influencing voter's choice. It is, therefore, very difficult to describe the voting behaviour of a society in general. However, there are some visible trends which point towards the voting behaviour, of the society in general and that of certain groups and individual voters in particular. Some of the important patterns and trends in voting behaviour are as given below:

#### **Voting for Parties**

During the last thirteen General Elections it has emerged quite clear that in general, Indian voters vote for the party rather than the individual candidates. One result of this is that in spite of close social relations and influences, independent candidates are not able to perform. With the time, fortune of independent candidates have been fading significantly.

It is observed that though the voters vote for the party and not the candidates, yet they are influenced by the personality and popularity of the leader of the party. In this respect individual remains important. This, of course, is true in several cases and it is because of this that most parties do project the heroic images of their supreme leaders. A consequence of this is that parties become dependent on the image of leaders rather than their programmes and ideologies.

#### **Social Loyalties**

While people in general vote for parties rather than individuals, it is found that it is not only due to psychological or

ideological attachment to a party. In fact they vote more as an expression of loyalty to a social group, like caste, religion, region, ethnicity, and class. An important outcome of this is growth and success of caste and religion based parties. This is contrary to the belief that with modernisation and development, traditional ties of caste and religion will get weakened. This of course does not mean that individuals do not focus on their personal self-interest. In fact, as a result of various developments, particularly due to the failure of economic development process, individual's self-interest in many cases has converged with social group interest. Popularity of Bahujan Samaj Party among Scheduled Castes, consolidation of Other Backward Castes in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, mushroom growth of caste associations every where, growth and success of regional parties, and use of religious events and issues in elections are manifestations of these.

### **NATIONAL AND LOCAL ISSUES**

It is true that masses in hundreds and thousands of Indian villages and in urban slums are unable to make a distinction between myth and reality and are prone to emotional mobilisation. Still their voting act is not isolated from their evaluation of the performance of governments or issues at stake. In fact, various election results prove that people have not only understood the importance of elections

but have also developed a spirit of rebellion to be expressed in a democratic manner. By rejecting parties in power, in spite of alleged misuse of official machinery and rigging, both at the Centre and in all the States, more than once people have shown that they are capable of using election as a very effective instrument to throw out non-performing governments. Clear example of this was rejection of Proclamation of Emergency in 1977 elections.

### **MALE DOMINATION**

Another trend in Indian elections continuing from the very beginning is that of neglect of women's representation. It is interesting to note that during last two decades almost all political parties have been talking at great length about empowerment of women and have even promised 33 per cent reservation for them in legislatures, but when question of fielding candidates come most of them neglect women candidates.

### **MONEY, MEDIA AND MUSCLE POWER**

Another disturbing trend that has emerged in Indian elections is the use of powers of money, media and muscle. Unfortunately, during last three decades or so political power in India has become important in itself. It is being used as an instrument for

privileges, status quo and self-interest rather than for change. Elections have become ends in themselves. These must be won at all costs. As a result, our electoral processes have been considerably polluted. To win elections both candidates and parties apart from appealing to caste and religious sentiments are using money power to purchase votes and finance high pitched campaigns. They are relying on criminals and mafias (muscle power) to coerce voters, capture booths and threaten opposition campaign. Services of media to build a leader's image, project party's popularity through manipulated reports or opinion polls, report events in distorted ways that may influence voter's mind in favour of or against a party, etc. are being used. All parties are compelled to put up candidates who can muster these resources in abundance, in order to have a realistic chance of success. There is no doubt, that willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously voting behavior of people is getting influenced by these powers.

We have discussed above that elections lie at the heart of a democratic process. It is through the instrument of elections that notions of consent and representation are translated into reality by conversions of votes into seats in legislatures. Elections secure people's participation in public affairs, ensure orderly transfer of power and provide the authority of government legitimacy. Elections thus, not only

sustain democracy but enliven it as well. It is in this background that framers of Indian Constitution wisely put their trust in people and decided to have universal suffrage on the basis of equality of all citizens. They did it in spite of reservations expressed by some that in a country like India universal suffrage would not work, because the people were not educated, they were backward and all that. In general, people in India have proved framers of Indian Constitution right. In spite of complexities of social structure in a developing society people in India have not only understood the importance of elections but have also used them for rejecting non-performing governments and expressing their desire for change.

Of course this does not mean that voters behavior in India had been always rational and informed. In fact, electoral behavior in India is very complex. On the one hand, it shows that people have the capacity to reject the party in power and express resentment on the exercise of power. On the other hand, they prefer caste, sub-caste, community and region rather than national groupings. In other words, when we examine a whole State or Country, the electoral verdict does broadly reflect public opinion of anger and frustration. But when we go to the constituency level, we find that caste or sub-caste, religion, money and muscle power have mainly become the determinants of political power. Local issues, caste, dissatisfaction with the general performance of the party in

power, role of charismatic leaders and local equations, all combined in many ways determine the voting behavior. At the same time most people have showed their ability to shift their attention and passions from one loyalty to another. So, they may vote in one election on caste basis but very soon in another election at another level on class or issue basis. One thing, thus, is clear that people have developed a stake in the democratic system.

However, it is a matter of concern that value system is declining and there is a growing apathy towards the system among the educated. In response to demands from hitherto deprived groups who have become conscious of their rights and power politically ambitious individuals and ruling classes have started using ethnic and caste loyalties and money and muscle power to remain in power.

While such decline in values is a matter of concern, it does not mean a collapse of the system or failure of democracy. In India democracy with all its mechanism — party system, periodic election, institutionalised procedure for transfer of power, system of rights, etc. is operating well. No doubt, certain aberrations have emerged in the system that need to be corrected. Since, politics is concerned with the promotion of happiness and public good, it is required that more and more democratic minded people intervene in politics. We, therefore, have to make collective efforts for restoration of the health and vitality of various institutions of democratic polity, including that of elections. At the same time, we have to keep in mind that democracy is not just the election; it is much more than that.

### EXERCISES

1. What do you understand by Universal Adult Franchise? Explain its importance in a democracy.
2. Explain the short term and long term factors which influence electoral participation and behaviour.
3. What patterns and trends have emerged in voter's behaviour in India over the last thirteen General Elections?
4. Write short notes on :
  - (i) Adult Franchise in India;
  - (ii) Party identification;
  - (iii) Use of Money and Muscle Power;
  - (iv) Male Domination.

## CHAPTER 2

# Election Commission and Election Procedure

YOU have already read that one of the basic concepts of democracy is free and fair elections conducted at periodic intervals. It means that elections are held in an atmosphere and in a way in which citizens are enabled to make a rational choice. An essential component of this is that elections are conducted efficiently and objectively by competent and honest administrators free from political bias. Lack of confidence in the verdict of the ballot box not only destroys the faith of the public in the democratic process but also discredits the electoral administration. The framers of the Constitution of India were quite aware of the necessity of an independent election machinery. This they provided in the form of Election Commission which has not only been insulated from the interference of the executive but of legislatures also.

### **THE ELECTION COMMISSION**

For superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections to the office

of President and Vice-President of India, the House of the People (Lok Sabha), the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and Legislative Assemblies in States and Legislative Councils in States (where these exist), the Constitution provides for an Election Commission. The Constitution provides that "the Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, the President may from time to time fix and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by parliament, be made by the President."

The above provision simply provides for the appointment of the Election Commissioners by the President, without prescribing any qualifications for eligibility to the post or the procedure of its filling. Pending enactment of law by the Parliament, these matters have been left to be determined by rules framed by the President. In the Parliamentary form of

government appointment by President amounts to entrusting the power of appointment to the government of the day. In the Constituent Assembly some members expressed the opinion that an appointment to the post of Chief Election Commissioner made exclusively on ministerial advice may make room for the exercise of political influence. The apprehensions of the seepage of political influence in the appointment of Chief Election Commissioner have so far been belied in practice. The President has, on the advice of the Prime Minister, so far appointed tried and trusted administrators of unquestionable integrity and not politicians or non-officials to this office.

### **INDEPENDENCE AND FUNCTIONING**

The independence of the Commission is ensured by an express provision in the Constitution that the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) shall not be removed from his office except in like manner, and on the like grounds, as a Judge of the Supreme Court and the conditions of service of the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment. The Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners are entitled to the same salary and other facilities, like rent free accommodation, as are provided to a judge of the Supreme Court. The term of office of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners is six years

from the date he assumes office or till the day he attains the age of 65 years whichever is earlier. The Election Commission is independent of the Executive.

There is an apprehension among some observers with regard to the personnel working for conduct of elections. For conduct of its functions the Election Commission has no separate staff of its own. It has to depend upon the staff of the Central and State Governments. By Article 324(6) of the Constitution, the President and Governors of States have been enjoined to make available to Commission such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of its functions.

The dependence of Commission on the Central/State administration in the discharge of its obligations sometimes creates problems in its quick and efficient functioning. However, the maintenance of a huge staff with the Commission for the conduct of periodic elections is likely to be too expensive. Despite limitations, so far, the Government officers, except with some aberrations in some areas, have conducted themselves with fairness and impartiality. For making the system further fault free, an amendment in Representation of the People's Act made in 1988, says that the officers and staff shall be deemed to be on deputation to the Commission when deployed in connection with revision of rolls and the conduct of elections. As such they are now

directly answerable to the Commission for any act of commission or omission while deployed for election duty.

The Constitution also makes provision for Regional Commissioners to assist the Election Commission in States. The President may appoint, after consultation with the Election Commission, such Regional Commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the Election Commission in the performance of the functions conferred on it.

In addition, in the preparation and revision of rolls and the conduct of election Commission is assisted by a Chief Electoral Officer who had no statutory recognition till 1956. He was given statutory recognition by an amendment of the Representation of the People's Act, 1951. The organisation and administrative structure of the office of Chief Electoral Officer varies from State to State depending upon the size of the State and the volume of the work involved. Needless to say that keeping in view the size and population as also diversity of India, to conduct free and fair election in an efficient manner is an enormous task.

### **MULTI MEMBER COMMISSION**

It has been mentioned above that the Constitution provides that the Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner, and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any. It means that the Commission can consist either only

of Chief Election commissioner or have other members too. Since its inception in 1950 and till October 1989, the Commission functioned as a single member body consisting of the Chief Election Commissioner. On 16 October, 1989 the President appointed two more Election Commissioners on the eve of the General Election to Lok Sabha held in November-December 1989. However, the said two Commissioners ceased to hold office on 1 January, 1990 when those two posts of Election Commissioners were abolished. Again on 1 October, 1993 the President appointed two more Election Commissioners. Simultaneously, law was also amended to provide that the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners will enjoy equal powers and will receive same salary, allowances and other perquisites. The law further provided that in case of difference of opinion amongst the Chief Election Commissioner and two other Election Commissioners, the matter will be decided by the Commission by majority. The validity of that law was challenged before the Supreme Court. The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court consisting of five judges, however, dismissed the petitions and fully upheld the provisions of the above law by a unanimous judgement on 14 July, 1995. At present the Election Commission consists of Chief Election Commissioner and two other election Commissioners. Can you name them?

## POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION

The Election Commission of India has been given wide powers and functions. These include the following main functions:

- (i) to prepare, revise, update and maintain the list of voters for election to the Parliament, State Legislatures, Local Bodies and to the Office of the President and the Vice-President of India;
- (ii) to conduct and supervise elections and bye-elections to the Parliament, State Legislature, and to the Office of the President and the Vice-President of India;
- (iii) to delimit constituencies for election to the Parliament and to the State Legislatures, and to allot the number of seats to each of them;
- (iv) to fix the election programme, including dates for nomination and scrutiny of candidates, and date of elections; make arrangements for setting up necessary number of polling booths, lay down procedure for the exercise of secret ballot, appoint adequate number of returning officers, and declare results after the proper counting and scrutiny of votes, countermand elections in a constituency where necessary.
- (v) to advise the President or the Governor of the concerned State, as the case may be, regarding all electoral matters, including questions relating to disqualification of members;
- (vi) to prepare guidelines for a code of conduct for political parties, candidates and voters;
- (vii) to fix the limit of election expenses and to examine the accounts of electoral expenditure submitted by the candidates;
- (viii) to determine criteria for recognising political parties, and then recognise them and decide their election symbols and allocate time to them for the use of radio and television in order to help them reach out to the people on election issues;
- (ix) to prepare a list of 'free symbols' for allotment to independent candidates;
- (x) to settle election disputes and petitions, referred to it by the President or the Governor of a State.

## THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

You have read in the last chapter that in India the plurality system or the first past the post system has been adopted for elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, and that of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote for elections to the offices of President, Vice-President and to the Council of States and Legislative Councils. You will surely like to know what these systems are. Given below is a brief description of these.



**Plurality System (First Past the Post)**

In this system country is divided into single member territorial constituencies, usually of equal size. Voters select a single candidate, usually marking against the candidates' name. A candidate who receives the highest number of votes, may be less than even half the votes polled, is declared the winner. This system is easy to operate and establishes a clear link between representatives and constituencies. It also allows governments to be formed that have a clear mandate from the electorate, of course, on the basis of plurality of support amongst the electorate. However, a number of shortcomings are pointed out in this system. The system wastes many votes, those cast for losing candidates. It undermines the legitimacy of government in so far as governments often enjoy only minority support. In this system some social groups like minorities may remain under-represented. In spite of these limitations this system is quite popular in a number of countries including the UK and India.

**The Majority System (Second Ballot and Alternative Vote Systems)**

The majority system requires that a person declared winner in a single member constituency wins by a clear majority that is getting more than 50 per cent votes. This can be obtained by two methods:

(i) *Second Ballot System:* In this system there are single candidate constituencies and single choice voting, as in the first past the post system. To win on the first ballot, a candidate needs an overall majority of the votes cast. If no candidate gains a first ballot majority, a second run off ballot is held between the leading two candidates. This system is popular in France

(ii) *Alternative Vote System:* In this system there are single member constituencies. There is preferential voting. Voters rank the candidates in order of preference i.e. 1 for their first preference, 2 for their second preference, and so on. Winning candidates must gain minimum 50 per cent of all the votes cast. Votes are counted according to the first preference. If no candidate secures 50 per cent in first preference, the candidate with least number of votes is eliminated and that candidates' votes are redistributed according to the second (or subsequent) preferences. This continues until one candidate has a majority. This method is used in Australia and some other countries and for elections of President and Vice-President in India.

**The Proportional Representation System**

The term proportional representation is used to designate various electoral devices based on the principle that parties should be represented in an Assembly or Parliament in direct proportion to their overall electoral

strength, their percentage of seats equalling their percentage of votes. It is claimed that under this system any party, interest or group would secure representation in proportion to the support, it has among the electors. This is achieved by two systems:

*(i) Single Transferable Vote System:* In this system there are multi member constituencies. Parties may put forward as many candidates as there are seats to fill in each constituency. Electors vote preferentially; as in the alternative vote system. Candidates are elected if they achieve a quota. This is the minimum number of votes needed to elect, the stipulated number of candidates, calculated according to the following formula as explained below:

$$\text{Quota} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Votes Polled}}{\text{Total Number of Seats to be filled up} + 1} + 1$$

For example, if 1,00,000 votes are cast in a constituency that elects four members, the quota is calculate like this :

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Quota} &= \frac{1,00,000}{4+1} + 1 \\ &= \frac{1,00,000}{5} + 1 \\ &= 20,000 + 1 = 20,001 \end{aligned}$$

The votes are counted according to first preference. If not all the seats are filled, the candidate securing least number of votes is eliminated and the votes are redistributed according to second preference, and so on, until all the seats have been filled. This system is used to elect members of Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils in India.

*(ii) Party List system:* In this system either the entire country is treated as a single constituency, or, it is divided into a number of large multimember constituencies. Parties compile lists of candidates in descending order of preference and the list is presented to voters. Electors vote for parties, not for candidates. Parties are allocated seats in direct proportion to the votes they gain in the election. They fill these seats from the party list. A minimum percentage (for example 5 per cent fixed in Germany) can be fixed to exclude small parties. This is the only potentially pure system of proportional representation, and is therefore, fair to all parties. However, its operation in big countries is very difficult.

Above mentioned are some of the prevalent systems in different countries. Adoption of a particular system by a country depends on various factors including historical evolution, size, type of voters, considerations of stability, nature of population, etc. In India, since framers of the Constitution in general followed the British model, they preferred the plurality or first past the post system for elections to both Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. To make the office of President a real representative of national opinion majority system with transferable vote was adopted. As the Rajya Sabha was meant to be a representative House of States and not of people or constituencies, system of proportional representation was favoured.

While in general, these systems have been working well, there are views that first past the post system has shortcomings which need to be looked into. It is pointed out that in India not only various parties and groups either remain unrepresented or under-represented in spite of significant support among voters as a whole but also parties getting just 30 per cent or so of the polled votes are able to emerge as majority parties and form government. We will discuss this issue in next chapter on electoral reforms.

### THE ELECTION LAWS

In India elections are held for House of People (Lok Sabha), Council of States (Rajya Sabha), State Legislative Assemblies (Vidhan Sabhas), State Legislative Councils (Vidhan Parishads) in the States, where these exist, Local Self Government bodies including Municipalities and Panchayati Raj bodies and offices of President and Vice-President. Election Commission is responsible for conduct of elections to Parliament, State Legislatures and elections to the offices of President and Vice-President. Plenary powers of superintendence, direction and control, the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections, vested in the Election Commission are supplemented further by Acts of Parliament. These are Presidential and Vice-Presidential Act, 1952, the

Representation of the Peoples Act, 1950, and Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951, the government of Union Territories Act 1963, supplemented by Registration of Electors Rules 1960, and conduct of Election rules 1961.

The Election Commission, also, in exercise of its legislative powers, has issued the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, besides a large number of instructions for the guidance of electoral machinery and the electorate.

Representation of the People Act, 1950 and 1951, have made elaborate provisions for the creations of election machinery at the State, district and constituency level for the preparation and revision of rolls and conduct of elections. The Representation of the People Act, 1950 basically deals with the preparation of electoral rolls whereas, the Act of 1951, provides legal sanction for actual conduct of elections making specific provisions to maintain peace and order during election to ensure dignity or fairness of electioneering and to enforce neutrality of civil service. The Election Symbols Order is concerned with the registration, recognition of political parties, allotment of symbols and settlement of disputes among them. Elections to Municipalities and Panchayati Raj Bodies are conducted by State Election Commissions. Laws and rules for the same are formulated by various states.

## CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

As already mentioned elections to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies are held on the basis of plurality or *First Past the Post System*. The Constitution of India prescribes the membership strength of the Lok Sabha and various State Legislative Assemblies respectively and lay down that the members of the Lok Sabha and those of the various Legislative Assemblies would be elected by direct election from territorial constituencies. Accordingly, number of seats and constituencies is determined by the Constitution and laws enacted under these provisions provide the tasks of preparation and revision of electoral rolls and conduct of actual elections to be performed by the Election Commission. Determination and allocation of seats and marking of territories is called Delimitation of Constituencies.

## DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES

The Constitution provides for the number of seats for Lok Sabha, which at present has been prescribed not more than 500 and 30 from States and not more than 20 members from Union Territories. The seats are allotted to each State in accordance with the population. Each State or Union Territory is divided into that number of constituencies in such manner that the proportion between the population of each constituency and the number of seats allotted to it is, so far as practicable, the same throughout the

State. The Constitution makes the similar provision for allocation of seats and demarcation of constituencies with respect to Legislative Assemblies of the States. This process of allocation of number of seats and their demarcation into territories is known as process of *Delimitation of Constituencies*. The Constitution also provides that the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha to the States and the division of each State into territorial constituencies shall be re-adjusted after the completion of each census so that the population seat ratio is maintained within the State and throughout the Union.

For the first General Elections to Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies in 1951-52 the Election Commission divided the entire country into viable territorial divisions of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies. At that time Constitution had fixed the number of seats to Lok Sabha as not more than 500. Thereafter, the task of delimitation, was assigned to an independent Delimitation Commission. Accordingly, separate Delimitation Commissions were set up under specific statutes after the relevant population figures of decennial census in 1951, 1961 and 1971. The last commission was set up in 1972, which completed its work in 1975. The Constitution 42nd Amendment (1976) had put a ban on any further delimitation of constituencies till 2000 and the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies had remained the

same till then. This was done to check the growth of population. It was feared that some States, to get more seats on the basis of large population might not take the task of family planning seriously. 91st Amendment of the Constitution passed in 2002 has extended this freeze of seats up to 2026. The year 2026 has been chosen, because the population planners have projected that by that year the population of India would stabilise and the country could hope to have zero growth rate of population thereafter. Accordingly, next allocation of seats will be carried out on the basis of the population of the country after 2026. Hence, the number of seats in the Lok Sabha would not change till then. This amendment, however, has made provisions of setting up of a Delimitation Commission to readjust the constituencies. This is primarily due to change in population patterns and migrations etc., constituencies have become quite unbalanced. For, example, in some of the constituencies number of voters has reached more than 25 lac, whereas in some others it is less than one lac. Another proposal before the Delimitation Commission is for rotation of reserved seats. As you know Constitution provides for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The constituencies reserved for Scheduled Casts and Scheduled Tribes have

remained unchanged since 1971. It is felt that reserved constituencies should keep on rotating to give wider option to both SCs/STs and general category candidates. It is hoped that before next General Elections constituencies will be redrawn and we will have some balance in them.

### SYSTEM IN OPERATION

It has already been explained that two major tasks in electoral process are: (i) preparation and revision of electoral rolls; and (ii) conduct of elections. The work of preparation of electoral roll is done by a Statutory Officer designated as Electoral Registration Officer under the supervision and control of Election Commission. The Electoral Officer for the Assembly constituency is designated by the Commission in consultation with the Government of the State concerned. The Electoral Officer is assisted by one or more Assistant Electoral Registration Officers. They are assisted by some officers at tehsil level. These officers attend to the task of revision of the rolls in addition to their administrative duties. The revisions are undertaken as and when felt necessary. Any citizen who attains the age of 18 years, or whose name for some reason is not there in the electoral roll can apply for inclusion of her/his name any time in the prescribed form for this purpose. The updating of the Electoral Roll

remains closed during an election campaign after the nominations of candidates.

### CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

As you know, elections for the Lok Sabha and every State Legislative Assembly have to take place every five years, unless called earlier. The President can dissolve Lok Sabha and call for General Elections before five years. So can Governors in States for Vidhan Sabha. When the new elections are called, the Election Commission puts into effect the machinery for holding an election. The Constitution states that there cannot be more than 6 months gap between the two sessions of Lok Sabha/State Assembly. So elections have to be conducted keeping this in view.

### RETURNING OFFICER

Election work in every constituency is supervised by an officer designated as Returning Officer who is nominated by the Commission in consultation with the State Government concerned. An officer can be nominated as Returning Officer for more than one constituency. The Returning Officer is assisted by one or more Assistant Returning Officers. The Assistant Returning Officer is empowered to perform all the functions of the Returning Officer under the supervision of the latter except the scrutiny of nomination papers. Even this function of scrutiny

can be performed by the Assistant Returning Officer, if the Returning Officer, is unavoidably prevented from performing her/his duty.

### WHO CAN CONTEST ELECTION?

An Indian citizen who is registered as a voter and is above 25 years of age is allowed to contest elections to the Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly. For the Rajya Sabha the age limit is 30 years. Candidate for the Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Sabha should be a resident of the State from which she/he is contesting election. A person who has been convicted for an offence under electoral laws or some criminal offences cannot contest election for a period of 6 years from the date of conviction.

Every candidate desirous of contesting election has to make a deposit of Rs 10,000 for Lok Sabha election and Rs 5,000 for Rajya Sabha or Vidhan Sabha elections, except for candidates from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who pay half of these amount. The deposit is returned if the candidate receives more than one-sixth of the total number of valid votes polled in the constituency. Nominations must be supported at least by one registered elector of the constituency in the case of a candidate sponsored by a registered party and by ten registered electors from the constituency in the case of other candidates. As already mentioned in reserved constituencies, the candidate

can only be from either one of the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes as the case may be.

### POLLING

After the process of nomination of candidates is complete, a list of contesting candidates is prepared by the Returning Officer and ballot papers containing names of candidates and their symbols. Voting is held on the days announced by the Election Commission. Voting is by secret ballot. Election Commission tries to ensure that there is a polling station within 2 km of every voter, and no polling station should have to deal with more than 1,200 voters. Some electors, including members of the armed forces or government of India on duty can vote by post also.

After the polling is over, the votes are counted under the supervision of Returning Officers and Observers appointed by the Election Commission. After the counting of votes is over the Returning Officer declares the names of the candidates who have received the highest number of votes as elected.

### ELECTION PETITION

If any elector or candidate feels that there has been malpractice during the election, she/he can file an election petition. Election petitions are tried by the High Court of the State involved, and if upheld, election of a candidate can be declared void, new elections

might be ordered, results can be countermanded or other appropriate decision delivered. Appeals can be made in the Supreme Court.

Candidates thus elected constitute the Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assemblies as the case may be. The anti-defection law, passed in 1985, prevents MPs or MLAs elected as candidates from one party forming or joining a new party, unless they comprise more than one-third of the original party in the legislature. If a member leaves her/his party or joins other party she/he ceases to be the member of the legislature.

India is a parliamentary democracy. The main process to run the democracy is election. To be meaningful, elections have to be regular, free and fair. The Constitution of India on the one hand, recognises the principle of universal adult suffrage, i.e. any citizen over the age of 18 can vote; and on the other, makes the Election Commission, independent of Executive and Legislature to conduct and supervise elections. Elections in India are events involving political mobilisation and organisational complexity of an amazing scale; yet the record of conducting free, fair and peaceful elections has so far been remarkable. However, in spite of reasonably high credibility of election process, the present system has developed some defects which need to be corrected through reforms. This we will discuss in the next chapter.

**EXERCISES**

1. How is independence of Election Commission of India ensured?
2. Describe the composition, powers and functions of the Election Commission of India.
3. Examine the advantages and disadvantages of the plurality and proportional representation systems of elections.
4. Describe the procedure followed for conduct of elections in India.
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Multi Member Commission;
  - (ii) Party List System;
  - (iii) Delimitation of Constituencies;
  - (iv) Returning Officer;
  - (v) Election Petitions.

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**CHAPTER 3****Election Reforms**

IN the last two chapters you have studied that election is a corner stone of any democratic system. It gives people an opportunity to elect their own government which can preserve and protect their rights and liberty, fulfil their aspirations and create an environment in which they can develop their overall personality. However, it is essential that elections are conducted in a free and fair manner, peacefully and with dignity. As a representative parliamentary democracy, India has a well established system of elections. The Constitution of India has vested in the Election Commission, an independent constitutional body, the powers of superintendence, direction and control of the entire process of elections. Over the last five decades, thirteen General Elections to the Lok Sabha and nearly three hundred General Elections to State Legislative Assemblies have not only proved that democracy has taken deep roots but have also earned world wide appreciation about their fairness.

While conduct and outcome of elections in general have been hailed as a unique democratic experience during

all these years there also have emerged shortcomings in the system. These shortcomings are: difficulties in conduct of free and fair elections, apprehensions about their credibility in the future and various aberrations that have crept in both the system and machinery of election. It is, therefore, now widely recognised that in order to preserve and strengthen the democratic setup the electoral system needs to be kept under careful watch and need to be reformed. At present, the question of reforming our electoral system is engaging all concerned politicians, media, citizens, political observers, and above all those connected with the conduct of elections. Let us first of all look what shortcomings, problems and aberrations the system is facing.

**SHORTCOMINGS, DEFECTS AND ABERRATIONS IN THE SYSTEM****Non-Representative**

One shortcoming that is pointed out in the present system is that plural or first past the post system does not provide a correspondence between the number of votes polled and number of seats

won. Election results, most of the time, have shown that there has been an imbalance between the percentage of votes polled and the number of seats won. It has been pointed out that in almost all Lok Sabhas, the ruling party or ruling coalition had not secured even 50 per cent of the votes polled. Any party securing about 30-35 per cent of votes forms the government. It means that the government, in fact, is formed with 18-21 per cent of voter support. In earlier years even though opposition parties between themselves, represented a major section of public opinion, the composition of legislatures remained a single party dominated one.

Small parties in particular remain under-represented. For the same reason various social groups, for example minorities, do not get representation proportionate to their population. Another aspect of this is that since, it is the individual who has to win, more stress is laid on aspects like caste, etc., in the selection of candidates by the parties. Merit is largely a causality in the selection of candidates.

### **Multiplicity of Parties and Candidates**

There is no law governing political parties as such. Any party even and with concentration in limited geographic area in plural system can have chance of winning some seats. As a result one of the problem country is facing is steady and haphazard growth of political parties. It is estimated that more than 700 parties are operating in

the country. The multiplicity of parties has been not only creating confusion among the electorate, but also administrative problems during elections because of large number of candidates. Added to this is, entry of large number of independent candidates in the fray because of limited checks and restrictions on nominations. Such unprincipled, personality-oriented proliferation of parties and of independents contribute to post-electoral opportunistic coalitions and unstable governments.

### **Escalating Costs and Money Powers**

Elections in India are a very costly affair for both who contest and who conduct. In view of large size of constituencies, large number of candidates contesting elections, behavior of political parties and candidates, and such other factors, the State has to spend enormous money to conduct elections in a peaceful and orderly manner.

In the thirteenth General Elections, government had to spend more than Rs 850 crore only on Parliamentary elections. With unstable governments, elections to Lok Sabha is no more limited to once in five years. Similarly, a huge expenditure is incurred on Assembly elections in States.

More serious question is cost of elections for the candidates. Even if we do not take into account the misuse of money power, a candidate or a party to campaign in a constituency, spread over a large geographical area and

having more than 10 lac voters, has to spend enormous money just to reach the voters. Added to that is the phenomena of black money available with a large section of population. It was openly said during the last General Election that Rs 50 lac to one crore had to be spent by a candidate standing for Parliamentary election. There is a law placing a maximum limit on expenditure. But it has become meaningless. The huge expenditure incurred by candidates and political parties have no relationship to the ceiling prescribed under the law. The hard reality is that huge unaccounted funds may easily be used for political activity, party organisation and election campaigning. Such a money is given in the hope of high returns. No body can pay hard earned, tax-paid money for political purposes. The candidates and political parties look to big money bags for their funds to contest elections. This in course of time triggers a chain reaction, leading to corruption at various levels. It, therefore, becomes difficult for men of integrity and commitment to public service to contest elections. A careful analysis shows that heredity and family connections are the commonest cause for entry into politics. This is closely followed by those who have large inherited or acquired wealth and who believe that investment in politics is a good business. Money spent on elections is sought to be recovered through misuse of government — machinery, bribes, scams, etc. The vicious role played by money power in deciding elections, thus, is one of the most critical problems facing the election system.

### **Violence and Muscle Power**

Since winning of election has become an end in itself, in addition to money power, muscle power has also become an important factor. Muscle power i.e. engaging criminals, violence and coercion, is used to force the voters to vote for particular candidates, or not allowing the voters to vote, and for capturing the booth and casting bogus votes. Reports of booth capturing, rigging and gun battles between rival gangs working on behalf of the candidates are now common.

### **Criminalisation of Politics**

The most significant outcome of the use of muscle power in election has been that many local muscle men, and criminals, whose services were earlier sought for extortion or vote-gathering, are now directly entering the fray and are elected in the process. Former Election Commissioner G.V.G. Krishnamurthy in 1997, released a sample profile of criminalisation of politics as shown by the 1996 Lok Sabha elections. He found that nearly 1,500 of the 13,952 candidates for the Lok Sabha had a criminal record, which included cases of murder, dacoity, rape, theft and extortion. He also revealed that 40 such candidates had won the elections. On the basis of information received from district administrations the country, Krishnamurthy claimed that nearly 700 of the 4,072 members of the legislatures of 25 States and two Union Territories were involved in criminal cases and their trial was

pending. Speaking on the occasion of golden jubilee celebrations of the Election Commission on 17 January, 2001, President K.R. Narayanan quoting Election Commission, stated that between 500 and 800 elected representatives had criminal antecedents.

Here, it may be pointed out that according to section 8A of the Representation of the People Act 1951, a person who has been convicted in certain offences, she/he cannot be a candidate. But there is no bar on those who are not convicted at the time of election. We thus, come across persons against whom cases have been registered, but at the time of contesting elections, they had not been convicted. Political clout for such elements obviously jeopardises the smooth functioning of the administration and the safety of life and property of the common people.

#### **Incitement to Caste and Communal Prejudices**

Another aberration that has emerged in our election system is increasing use of caste, communal and other such factors. Of course appealing to caste and communal prejudices at the time of elections is nothing new and not limited to elections. However, in recent years these have emerged as the most viable rallying points. Almost all parties, while selecting candidates, first of all take into consideration caste and community factors outweighing all other considerations. Section 123(3)(A)

of the Representation of the People Act debars candidates from seeking votes on the ground of religion. But in practice not only candidates appeal in the name of religion openly but also political parties have been formed on caste and religious identities. In this situation, the vote, instead of being an unifying, cleansing and equalising tool, becomes a divisive force. We will study later more about the role of caste and religion in politics. Here, it is sufficient to say that exploiting caste and communal sentiments is against democratic norms.

#### **NEED FOR REFORMS**

In short, it can be said that the trust reposed in the people by the framers of the Constitution by granting them universal adult suffrage has been generally justified by the voters. But, in the recent past there have emerged some disturbing factors in the system. Electoral processes have been considerably polluted by the use of money and muscle power, violence, multiplicity of candidates in the election arena, want of electoral ethics on the part of the participants and their supporters and insufficient representation of various sections of society like minorities and women. Observers and all those who are concerned with the future of democracy are of the firm opinion that in order to consolidate the gains of democracy, restore the gravity of process and arrest the growing trend of peoples' withdrawal from electoral process, we

need electoral reforms urgently. In fact, the need for electoral reforms has been the subject of wide ranging debate right from the First General Elections. Practically, every report of the Election Commission has contained reform proposals. Some reforms have been introduced also. These, however, have been found quite insufficient. It is being felt that if electoral reforms are to be meaningful, they should be all encompassing covering the full spectrum. Ad hoc or piecemeal reforms are not the right way of resolving the problem. Before, discussing the various proposals and suggestions for reforms, let us have a look at the history of electoral reforms and the changes made so far.

### **HISTORY OF ELECTORAL REFORMS**

Most of the earlier suggestions for reforms, mainly related to changes in electoral procedure, were found necessary after the experience of each general election. Such recommendations were made by the Election Commission through its reports on general elections, brought out after the completion of each general election. From the time of Fourth General Election in 1967, serious deterioration in the standard electoral norms became visible. Since then we see on the one hand growing maturity of the electorate, growth of viable political parties, greater consciousness among candidates and citizens about their rights and a just change in social and economic order; and on the other

hand there is deterioration in the value system, decline of political institutions and emergence of a new brand of politicians resulting in disturbing factors and aberrations as discussed above. Against this background the issue of electoral reforms received an important place on national agenda.

In 1970, the Election Commission sent comprehensive proposals to the Ministry of Law on electoral reforms, along with a draft bill to give effect to those proposals. Thereafter, the Central Government prepared a Bill to amend the Representation of the People's Acts, 1950 and 1951. It was introduced in the Lok Sabha in December, 1973. When the House was dissolved in January 1977, the Bill lapsed. It is noteworthy that this bill did not incorporate many of the important amendments suggested by the Commission.

In 1974, Jaya Prakash Narayan had launched a movement which later on came to be known as "A movement for Total Revolution". One of the main planks of this movement was electoral reform. On behalf of Citizens for Democracy, Jaya Prakash Narayan set up a committee under the Chairmanship of V.M. Tarkunde, a former judge of Bombay High Court. This committee after holding discussions with representatives of a number of organisations in February 1975 produced a comprehensive set of recommendations. Thereafter political parties, the media, concerned citizens, academicians and above all the Election Commission had taken up the issue

continuously. In November 1983, at the meeting of representatives of political parties with the Election Commission, consensus was arrived at on some matters. Important of these were the following:

- (i) Lowering of the age for candidates contesting elections.
- (ii) Restriction on contesting election from more than one constituency.
- (iii) Increase in requirement of minimum number of votes polled to save security deposit.
- (iv) Compulsory registration of parties and maintenance of accounts.
- (v) Rotation of reserved seats.
- (vi) State funding of elections.
- (vii) Change of present electoral system to majoritarian system or list system.
- (viii) Empowerin Election Commission to countermand election on report from election observer.
- (ix) Empowering Election Commission to withhold the candidature of a person guilty of corrupt practices.
- (x) Mode of appointment of Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners.
- (xi) Statutory code of conduct.

These proposals, however, remained only on paper. In December 1988, considering the recommendations of the Election Commission, Parliament amended the law to prescribe penalty for persons accused of booth capturing. Further, the Commission was empowered to countermand the election in the entire constituency, if it was satisfied that in view of the large number of polling stations involved in

booth capturing, the result of the election was likely to be affected. In 1988 the age of voting was reduced to 18 years from 21.

### 1996 Reforms

In 1989 the National Front government took initiatives to bring certain reforms. To achieve a consensus for that, it appointed an All Party Committee in 1990 under the Chairmanship of the then Minister of Law and Justice Shri Dinesh Goswami. The committee in May 1990 presented an almost unanimous report recommending important reforms. But no follow-up action could be taken up as the National Front Government itself collapsed. Since then, consultations had continued among political parties and Election Commission had been making its own suggestions. In 1996 some important changes were made in the Representation of the People's Act. These include (i) Person convicted for insulting the National Flag, the National Anthem or the Constitution of India stands debarred from contesting elections for six years from the date of such conviction as in the case of other offences; (ii) To check the multiplicity of non-serious candidates the amount of security deposit has been increased from Rs 500 to Rs 10,000 for general candidates and from Rs 250 to Rs 5,000 for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates. For elections to State Assemblies this has been increased to Rs 5,000 from Rs 250 and Rs 2,500 from Rs 125 for general and SCs/STs candidates

respectively. It has also been provided that the nomination of a candidate in a Parliamentary or Assembly constituency should be proposed by 10 electors of the constituency, if the candidate has not been set by a recognised National or State Party. Minimum interval between the last date for withdrawal and date of poll has been reduced to 14 days instead of 20 days;

(iii) A candidate cannot contest election from more than two Parliamentary or Assembly Constituencies;

(iv) Previously, the election in the constituency was countermanded on the death of a candidate; now the election will not be countermanded. If the deceased candidate, however, was setup by a recognised National or State Party, the party concerned will be given an option to nominate another candidate;

(v) Going to a polling booth or near a polling booth with any kind of arms is now a cognizable offence punishable with imprisonment up to two years or with fine or with both;

(vi) All registered electors who are employed in any business, trade, industrial undertaking or any other establishment will be entitled to a paid holiday on the day of poll;

(vii) No liquor or other intoxicants shall be sold, given or distributed at any shop, eating place, hotel or any other place within a polling area during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of poll; and

(viii) By-elections to any House of Parliament or a State Legislature will now be held within six months of occurrence of the vacancy except in case where the

remaining term of House is less than one year.

Another change was made in 1997 in the law for Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections. According to this, number of proposers and seconders for contesting election to the office of the President has been increased to fifty each in place of ten; number of electors as proposers and seconders for contesting Vice-Presidential election has been increased to 20 each in place of 5. The amount of security deposit has been increased to Rs 15,000 in place of Rs 2,500 for both these offices.

By another amendment in electoral law, provision has been made for voting by certain class of persons through postal ballot. The provision has been made primarily to facilitate exercise of right of franchise by migrants from Kashmir.

### SUGGESTIONS

From the above description of history of electoral reforms, it comes out that various reports of committees on Electoral Reforms, particularly the Goswami Committee Report of 1990 and the Tarkunde Committee Report of 1975 have so far not led to substantial changes in electoral system and law. It seems that political parties are indifferent to electoral reforms. They hold periodic meetings to discuss the issue, come up with some suggestions but end up with bringing in Parliament some minor or ad hoc changes. In fact, in some cases parties in the name of electoral reforms have tried to

neutralise the steps taken by the Election Commission or Judiciary to bring in some desired changes. The latest example in this regard is consensus among all parties in their July 2002 meeting to water down the directives given by Supreme Court and followed by the Election Commission to debar criminals from contesting elections and candidates to provide information about their assets, qualifications, etc. Nevertheless, it is now widely recognised that in order to preserve and strengthen the democratic set up a comprehensive agenda of reforms is necessary. Electoral reforms include reforms in the system, structure and processes. These are required to: (i) check criminalisation of politics; (ii) curb in the use of money power in elections; (iii) regulate the functioning of political parties; (iv) provide reasonable representation to various sections of society, including women, in Parliament and State Legislatures; (v) ensure voter participation and voter awareness; and (vi) make the election machinery effective and credible. To achieve these goals various suggestions have been made by the Tarkunde Committee, the Goswami Committee, the Election Commission, and by various seminars, political parties and political observers. Some of the important suggestions are as follows:

### **Restructuring of Electoral System**

As has been mentioned above, there is a view that under the existing electoral system political parties do not get representation, in terms of seats in

proportion to their electoral support. Also various sections of society remain under-represented. There is a view that in order to enable political parties to get representation in proportion to votes polled by them, the existing system of representation be substituted by a form of proportional representation, like list system. Several scholars have argued in favour of it on the grounds that it will promote fair elections and will enable parties to nominate honest and capable candidates. Such a list system will certainly reduce the role of money in elections and minimise electoral malpractices. Most parties are in favour of this system since, it will give party leadership a decisive power.

The counter view to this suggestion is that the list system has its own disadvantages. This system, it is argued: (i) leads to multiplicity of political parties and fragmentation of even the established political parties; (ii) undue increase in the power of party bosses; (iii) multi member large sized constituencies; (iv) no majority party and consequently emergence of coalition governments; (v) disappearance of direct relation between individual candidate and the voters. Another argument is that the list system will further accentuate divisions in society. Every caste or group will have its own party to represent its interests. Further it is pointed out that this system is too complex, and the voters in India, a large percentage of whom is still illiterate, might find it difficult to correctly indicate their choice on the ballot paper. This



would be more so because of proliferation of political parties in the country.

In view of these problems a suggestion has been made that, as in Germany, we may have direct elections to 50 per cent of the seats from territorial constituencies, while the remaining 50 per cent seats may be filled in by list system. It has also been suggested that the discrepancy between the electoral support and legislative seats can partly be corrected by introduction of majority system, i.e. by the stipulation that if no candidate in a given constituency obtains 50 per cent of the valid votes, there should be an immediate repolling between the top two. The final winner will represent at least 50 per cent of the active electorate. This has the additional advantage that larger social coalitions shall replace the narrow ones and contribute to the process of social and political integration. Repolling will also have the added advantage of reducing the incidence of booth capturing because the candidates will realise their inability to influence the final outcome which requires a minimum of 50 per cent of the votes polled.

There are those who still think that the First Past the Post System is the best as it is simple, maintains direct relation between voter and the legislator and helps in providing stability. The only thing required is a movement towards a two party system as in such system the winner system will get, if not, at least near to 50 per cent.

Needless to say, each system has its plus and minus points. What is being

suggested is that some way out needs to be found in which there is some coloration between votes polled and seats won as also justice ensured to various sections of society by securing their participation in decision making.

### **Curbing the Role of Money Power and State Funding**

It has already been mentioned that the vicious role played by money power in deciding elections is one of the most critical problems facing the election system. The result is that contesting elections has become a costly affair, forcing common people to stay away from the field. To improve the situation three main proposals have been made.

First, is with regard to control over political parties. For this, it is suggested that the expenditure incurred by political parties should be brought within the ceiling of election expenses. Only the expenditure of the parties on political education, without reference to any particular constituency, should be exempted. Political parties must function according to norms specified by the Election Commission. They should maintain detailed accounts in which each item of receipt of money by way of subscription, donations, subsidy, etc., and each item of expenditure should be recorded. The accounts must be got audited by agencies specified by the commission and made public. The Election Commission should be empowered to examine the election returns on merit to satisfy itself that they are accurate and correct in all respects.

Second, suggestion is that the ceiling on election expenses should be realistic and not just a ritual. The ceiling should be reviewed from time to time in relation to size of constituencies, number of voters, inflation and other factors and be fixed accordingly. It should not remain a mere eye wash, but be controlled as mentioned above. Related to this aspect is the need to make contributions and donations to political parties legal. Observers point out that, it is an accepted fact that in democratic set up political parties have to spend considerable sums of money, and that large sums are required for elections. If there is a ban on companies and business on donation to political parties, the possibility of depending on illegal contributions is obvious. It is therefore, necessary that efforts should be made to create an atmosphere where there is more transparency in financial dealings rather than taking extreme measures which would only drive these activities underground and away from the public gaze. Legalisation of donations and contributions, as such, is suggested strongly.

Third, suggestion with regard to putting curb on money power is that of State funding. This practice of State funding for political parties is prevalent in some countries like Germany, France, Israel, Canada, Japan, USA, etc. In this system political parties polling a minimum percentage of votes are entitled to subsidy by the State. In India various committees, Election Commission as also all party meetings

have recommended that reasonable grants in aid should be given by the government to recognised parties and suitable criteria should be evolved for recognition of parties for this purpose. In this regard some suggest that if not monetary assistance, parties and candidates can be given material assistance in the form of free petrol or diesel for vehicles, paper for printing of election literature, supply of copies of electoral rolls free of charge, identity slips for distribution to voters, postal stamps of a specific amount, refreshment packets to polling agents on the day of election, etc.

It is suggested that while State funding of political parties is no magic wand with which corruption can be washed away, but to the extent the State would meet the requirement of political parties for funds, their need to raise money by dubious means would be reduced. Also if scheme of election grants is introduced, then stringent curbs can also be imposed on parties including compulsory auditing, publication of accounts, putting statutory limit on identifiable expenditure like number of posters, advertisements in newspapers, etc. Governmental funding can also be so designed that it helps serious candidates and discourages frivolous ones. Another benefit of State funding is creating somewhat level playing field for political parties where on the basis of fixed criteria they will have equal funds to fight elections.

### **Regulating the Functioning of Political Parties**

Political parties are an established part of modern mass democracy. In India also the conduct of election is largely dependent on the behavior of political parties. Unfortunately, situation today is that political parties make strong demands for the conduct of free and fair elections, but choose to ignore the application of the same principle when it comes to the functioning of their own party organs. It has been revealed on various occasions that the political parties do not follow their own constitutions. They hold no party elections and continue to function for years on an ad hoc basis. Sometimes there has been tyranny of the minority on the majority because of undemocratic functioning. A few persons occupying a vantage position in the apex body, quite often strangle the democratic functioning and aspirations of the members of the party at the grass roots. It goes without saying that undemocratic political parties cannot nurture, sustain or strengthen a democratic society. Therefore, one of the most critical need of the time is to reform political parties and make them open, democratic and accountable.

The necessary reforms suggested in the functioning of political parties are: Basic democratic principles of elected representatives from lower tier electing leadership at higher levels; open membership rolls; fair and free elections; no absolute power to central

party over regional and local units; effective check on office bearers; no recourse to expulsion or removal of potential rivals; and, no nominated office holders at any level.

At present, it is not expected that party leaders themselves will initiate a process of reforms in parties. It is therefore, suggested that this has to be brought in by law. The law apart from making it obligatory for parties to have internal democracy and work in an accountable manner should empower the Election Commission to make regulations for:

- (i) Compulsory registration of political parties;
- (ii) Compulsory maintenance, auditing and publication of accounts;
- (iii) Submission of reports to the Commission; and
- (iv) Mandatory publication of membership rolls, election of office bearers at every level by secret ballot, and restrictions on expulsion of members.

### **Curbing Criminalisation of Politics**

It has been mentioned above that one issue that has engaged a large section of the country today is the criminal elements entering the electoral field and succeeding in winning elections.

At present Section 8 of the Representation of People's Act 1951, provides for disqualification of persons convicted by a Court of Law from contesting elections. In case of certain offences, disqualification arises only if conviction is accompanied by sentence

of imprisonment for prescribed period. This period in general is 2 years or more. This obviously is quite liberal a restriction, particularly in view of the fact that in India cases take years to be settled, evidence against influential people is difficult to get them convicted and courts while awarding punishment generally take a lenient view. Therefore, as already mentioned, today we have in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies' persons accused of committing heinous crimes, but not convicted yet.

In view of this, Election Commission from time to time has been recommending amending of the law. It has suggested that law should make it mandatory for a person convicted by a court of law and sentenced to imprisonment for six months or more to be debarred from contesting polls for a period of the sentence imposed and an additional six years. The Commission has also suggested that any person who is accused of any offence punishable with imprisonment for five years or more should be disqualified, even when her/his trial is pending, provided that the competent court of law has taken cognizance of the offence and framed the charges against her/him.

Not seeing an amendment coming soon, the Election Commission with a view to create public opinion and bring transparency about criminals entering the fray, in August 1997 issued an order. This order made it mandatory for every candidate to file affidavit about her/his convictions in cases

covered by law. The Commission also clarified that the conviction by Trial Court itself is sufficient to attract disqualification and even those who are released on bail during the pendency of their appeals against their conviction are disqualified for contesting elections. The Election Commission's position was further strengthened by a judgement of the Supreme Court delivered on 2 May, 2002 asking the government to amend the rules to make it obligatory for candidates for elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies, to give information about their assets and liabilities, qualifications and criminal antecedents if any. The Election Commission by an order of 14 May, 2002 implemented Supreme Court's directives. Political Parties, however, have not felt comfortable with this and favoured disqualifications only in case of conviction and that too for heinous offences. With regard to orders of Election Commission about filing affidavit political parties so far are ambiguous. How they would react to it, will be known during the general election only.

In addition to above efforts and suggestions to check entry of criminals in politics, Election Commission has taken some more steps to control the use of muscle power. This include ordering fresh poll in case of destruction of ballot papers, and ballot boxes in polling booths and coercion, intimidation and impersonation at polling stations; withholding the result, pending investigation by the Commission on complaints of booth

**Coalition:** These are grouping of rival political units in the face of a common opponent. Coalition usually occur in modern parliaments when no single political party can muster a majority of votes. Two or more parties, who have enough elected members between them to form a majority, may then be able to agree on a common programme that does not require too many drastic compromises with their individual policies, and can proceed to form a government.

**Cultural Pluralism:** Multiplicity of cultural identities coexisting within a society.

**Egalitarian Society:** A society based on the principles of liberty, equality and justice in which all have a certain minimum equality in social, political and economic spheres.

**Feudalism:** The economic, political and social system in which land was held by vassals in exchange for military and other services to overlords.

**G-15:** A group of 15 developing countries for consultation and cooperation was an initiative taken at the Non Aligned Summit at Belgrade in September 1989. The task of the group include (i) to identify new specific and concrete ideas or schemes to foster South-South Cooperation, commit their governments to them and mobilise wider support; and (ii) to hold a review of the world economic situation and the state of international relations affecting developing countries with a view to developing common perceptions on them and suggest common strategies including initiatives to be proposed in North-South fora.

**Imperialism:** Systems of political control of one country over another. A bigger power establishes its rule over another country through the route of colonialism or through conquest.

**Liberal Democracy:** A form of democratic rule that balances the principle of limited government against the ideal of popular consent. Its 'liberal' features are reflected in a network of internal and external checks on government that are designed to guarantee liberty and afford citizens, protection against the state. Its 'democratic' character is based on a system of regular and competitive elections, conducted on the basis of universal suffrage and political equality.

**Multinationals:** Companies having subsidiary operations in several countries across the globe.

**Nation Building:** It is a term to cover the comprehensive process by which people constitute and stabilise themselves as a nation. It refers to the construction of institutions, structures, processes which give shape and form to a nation as sovereign entity.

**Neo-Colonialism:** The continued and indirect influence, or in few cases control, by the ex-colonial powers over their former colonies through unequal trade, interference

in governance, multinational corporations etc. It is also used interchangeably with imperialism to suggest that even after the end of formal colonialism, the European countries still have many informal channels of control over the non-European world.

**North-South Dialogue:** By 'North' is meant the advanced industrialised countries of North America, Western Europe and Japan — all of which are in the Northern hemisphere, but it also includes Australia and New Zealand from south of the equator. By 'South' is meant the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, most of them having become recently independent, and almost all marked by low per capita income, poverty, social backwardness and disease. By 'North' in brief is meant the 'rich nations' and by South 'the poor nations'. Therefore, by North-South dialogue is meant the talks and negotiations between the advanced industrialised countries and the half-industrial to pre-industrial developing countries of the world, for a more equitable, just and balanced world economy.

**Nuclear Disarmament:** The talks for nuclear disarmament have taken place in the Disarmament Commission (DC) of the UN General Assembly, among the nuclear powers, especially the USA and the former Soviet Union over the years. From 1969 to 1979 the famous Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) were held between the two. Followed by Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) initiated in 1982. Gorbachev and Reagan held five summits between 1986 and 1988, discussing nuclear disarmament. In 1988, the US and the former Soviet Union signed the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) disarmament agreement which was the first major breakthrough in nuclear disarmament.

**Panchsheel:** In 1954, the Prime Ministers of India and China, Jawaharlal Nehru and Chou-en-lai enunciated five principles of peaceful coexistence while signing the Treaty on Tibet. These five Principles, known as *Panchsheel*, have become important formula of International relations. These are:

- (i) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
- (ii) Mutual non-aggression;
- (iii) Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
- (iv) Equality and mutual benefit and;
- (v) Peaceful coexistence.

**Plural Society:** A society containing members of many ethnic, language, religious and cultural groups. A society marked by diversities, a compound of diverse elements. It is a heterogenous society.

**Polarisation:** Alignment of forces (here political) along distinct ideological lines.

**Poverty Line:** A way of defining the minimum level of existence in a society below which it would be impossible to satisfy the bare minimum needs to survive.

capturing and recommending actions against officers for neglect of duties. Certain electoral offences, like carrying arms near election booths, have been made cognizable. However, much needs to be done in the direction of cleaning the political process of crime, mafia and violence.

### **Representation of Women**

Another deficiency of the system is that of inadequate representation of women in legislatures. In recent years, this issue has become important and there has emerged a demand for assured representation. 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution has provided for 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipalities. A move is afoot to amend the Constitution to provide such reservation in Parliament and State legislatures. However, there are some differences among political parties with regard to the accommodation of SCs/STs and OBCs.

In Election Commission's view, while it is necessary to substantially increase the representation of women in Parliament and State Assemblies, the issue needs to be looked at from a wider perspective. The objective must remain, to have a much greater presence of women, without in any way diminishing the vibrancy of Indian political system, and the resultant effectiveness of Parliamentary institutions. The aim is to achieve a genuinely active participation of women in the political process, and their

adequate representation in decision making bodies at all levels of our system. Therefore, the need is to create, such conditions as may give them increased opportunities of organic and harmonious growth in the Indian polity.

The Commission has, therefore, put forward a suggestion that instead of following the reservation rule, with the possibility of further internal reservation within reservation, it may be more desirable to insist on all recognised political parties, giving adequate space to women in the political process. This can be easily achieved by a simple legal provision, which will require all recognised political parties, to set up a specified percentage of women candidates, in all State and Parliamentary elections, that they may take part in. While the political parties will get the requisite flexibility, to choose the constituencies and the women candidates, that may be most appropriate in their judgment, women political workers will also have to quickly come forward for effective work in the Indian political arena. The current representation of women in Parliament is about 8 per cent only. This proposal envisages that the parties will so fix a percentage for women candidates, that the accepted success rate is enough to ensure a sizeable increase in the presence of women in the Parliament and State Assemblies. If this idea is taken up, the controversy of further internal reservation also will become unnecessary. It will be open to political parties, to give as many tickets as they please out of the percentage

fixed to candidates from the less fortunate sections. The Commission has observed that this mechanism of ensuring a minimum percentage of women candidates has apparently worked well in the Northern European countries. The suggestion has the merit of not requiring Constitutional amendment, eliminating current controversies, and going forward with a simple amendment in the Representation of People's Act. It will be for the political parties to decide the percentage to be fixed.

### **Election Machinery and Management of Elections**

Apart from correcting the aberrations that have come to light or emerged in the system it is also equally important that independence and credibility of the election machinery to conduct free and fair elections may not only be maintained but also be consolidated. For that purpose, suggestions have been made to assure the independence of the Commission and empower it further to function as a meaningful body. Election Commission itself has urged to amend the Constitution to limit the strength of the Commission to three members including the Chief Election Commissioner. It is pointed out that any further increase in the size of the existing three member body would make it unwieldy and hamper expeditious decision making for free and fair elections. It has also been suggested that the two Election Commissioners should be provided

with the same immunity and protections as was available to the Chief Election Commissioner under the Constitution. In addition the Commission has asked for an independent secretariat on the lines of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariat. It has been suggested that the administrative expenditure of the Commission and its secretariat should be charged from the consolidated fund of India, similar to the lines of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). It is pointed out that a fine tuned Election Commission, supported by adequate and appropriate legislative and administrative measures alone can tackle the problems the system is facing.

In addition to strengthening of the Election Commission, the other measures suggested include regular and efficient preparation of Electoral rolls so that all eligible citizens are enrolled; issue of identity cards to voters to check impersonation and rigging, use of electronic voting machines to check bogus voting and achieve efficiency; compulsory voting to bring voters out of cynicism, rotation of reserved seats to provide opportunities to both general and SCs/STs candidates to contest elections from other constituencies, etc. There are various proposals on issues of procedures and management. The purpose as a whole is to make elections a process of electing people's representatives in a genuine democratic, transparent and meaningful way.



## ELECTION REFORMS

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The health of a democracy depends on the choice of representatives and leaders, which in turn is directly linked to the way elections are conducted. We have seen that the Constitution of India has not only given to its citizens universal suffrage but also provided for an independent statutory body to conduct and supervise elections in a reasonably creditable manner. Though parties in power are prone to abusing authority for electoral gains, there has never been any serious state sponsored rigging in most of India. However, conduct of elections all these years has also brought to light the actual and

potential deficiencies, flaws and loopholes in the existing system as also the aberrations that have crept in. Need for reforms now is felt at all levels of opinion. Various bodies, experts, and Election Commission have exhaustively analysed, identified and prescribed various reforms. However, at political level there is as yet lack of consensus and sense of expediency. Nevertheless pressure is on. What is important to understand, however, is that ultimately it is public awareness and intervention that brings the results. Therefore, what is needed is a rejuvenated public participation in political process.

## EXERCISES

1. Describe the main shortcomings of the present election system in India.
2. Why electoral reforms are necessary in India?
3. Explain the steps taken, so far, in respect of election reforms.
4. Examine the major suggestions for electoral reforms.
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Restructuring of electoral system;
  - (ii) Criminalisation of politics;
  - (iii) State funding of elections;
  - (iv) Representation of women;
  - (v) Regulating Political Parties.

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UNIT II

PARTY SYSTEM, PUBLIC OPINION AND  
INTEREST GROUPS

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## CHAPTER 4

# Political Parties and Party System

IN the present day political systems, democratic or otherwise, political parties are considered as indispensable part of political process. The only parts of the world in which they do not exist are those where they are suppressed by dictatorship or military rule. In representative democracies they are the major tools of the functioning of the system. At the same time, they are also often crucial for the success of non-democratic systems, as for instance in Communist regimes or in Fascist and Nazi regimes. Of course, the nature of party system and their role in the two, i.e. democratic and non-democratic regimes, are different. Before we discuss the nature and role of party system it will be proper to have a proper understanding of the definition and meaning of political parties.

### **POLITICAL PARTIES**

In general terms, a political party may be defined as an organised group of people sharing common policy preferences and programmes, for the purpose of acquiring and retaining

government power by electoral or other means. A political party, therefore, possesses features like an organisation, definite views on political issues, a well-formulated line of action, a will and desire to acquire political power and the desire to implement the proclaimed policies. In this sense with the aim of acquiring and retaining political power the party as an organisation is different from other groups, social or even political.

The capture of political power can be achieved within existing political structures either through elections in democracies, or by revolutions or coups. As is generally understood the word 'party' is used by groups seeking political power. In this sense we can say that four characteristics define parties and distinguish them from other groups:

- (i) Parties aim to exercise government power by winning or capturing political office.
- (ii) Parties are organised bodies with a formal membership. This distinguishes them from broader and more diffused political movements.

- (iii) Parties focus on broad issues, addressing each of the major areas of the government policy.
- (iv) The parties are united by shared political preferences and a general ideological identity, to varying degrees.

From the above, it is clear that though, in general, parties are known for contesting elections, revolutionary parties are not organised or intended to fight elections. The aim of all however, is to seek power, though by different means. The task, of capturing and retaining political power with a desire to achieve common goals, involves various related functions.

### FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Since parties are primary organisations to attain and exercise power, they are an integral part of the political system. One of the most important functions of political parties is that of unifying, simplifying and stabilising the political process. To attain political power, parties have to unite various segments or groups including religions, caste, class and ethnic groups. Thus, in most political systems parties can bring together sectional interests, overcome geographical distances and provide coherence sometimes to divisive social structures. They seek to broaden the range of interests they represent and harmonise these interests with each other. The major exception to this is the behaviour of sectional or ethnic parties that might lose support from their main base if they were to be more inclusive.

Perhaps the most important function of political parties, particularly in democracies is representation. In this, political parties place before citizens different programmes and policies, field candidates in elections, and formulate and implement their policies when called to form government. The parties also provide link between the citizens and the government, between the electorate and the representative institutions. Parties present different choices to electorate and articulate alternative goals for the society. In fact, parties have emerged as one of the most important means through which societies set collective goals.

Linked with the function of representation is that of providing political leaders. Parties provide a training ground for politicians, equip them with skills, knowledge and experience and bring them in public life as leaders. In political systems where political parties are absent or weak, political leaders and elites are generally recruited from traditional elites, such as hereditary ruling families, or through religious or military organisations. Parties create political opportunity and help political system by providing a wider choice of leaders.

Another function that parties perform is to educate, instruct and activate the electorate. In language of political science this is also called function of *interest articulation and aggregation*. In the process of developing collective goals parties often develop as vehicles through which

business, labour, religious, ethnic or other groups advance or defend their interests. The fact is that national parties articulate the demands of various groups, forces them to aggregate these interests by drawing them together into a coherent whole.

Parties also mobilise citizens to participate in politics. This function is known as socialisation and mobilisation. These activities may be restricted to election periods. These may also extend beyond elections and parties may continue to consolidate and increase their support through various ways like organising rallies, meetings and discussions. It may be mentioned here that in one party system this role is primarily concerned with propagation of the official ideology. In democratic regimes while parties mobilise people for their own support, this also helps encouraging people to play an active role in democratic game, thereby strengthening the democratic systems themselves.

Finally, as a logical consequence of the task of capturing power political parties have very important function of forming government. In Parliamentary democracies this role is so important that government is known by the name of the Party i.e. Congress government, NDA government etc. In parliamentary democracies where it is necessary for the government to have support of majority of legislators, it is only parties that can give a degree of stability and coherence. If a single party wins majority in the election, members of the government are drawn from that party

and are therefore united by common programme. Even governments that are formed by a coalition of parties are more likely to foster unity and agreement than ones that consist of separate individuals. Additionally, in the process of seeking power, parties formulate programmes of government with a view to attracting popular support.

It may be mentioned here that the above description of political parties is general in nature. Importance of this would also depend on the type and nature of government, social, economic and cultural environment of the society and prevailing political culture. These factors along with historical traditions set what is known as the type of party system as also establishment and development of types of parties.

### **PARTY SYSTEMS AND TYPES OF PARTIES**

As mentioned above depending on the historical roots, type of government or regime and socio-economic environment in any country, there emerge different number and type of parties. There is no general theory or principle to classify party systems or types of parties. In general there is a practice to classify party systems on the basis of number of parties in a country and on the relative strength of the parties. The nature of a party is generally determined by the ideological or programmatic preferences and organisational structures. On the basis of number and relative strength of parties, the party systems are generally

divided into (i) One party system; (ii) Dominant party system; (iii) Two party system; and (iv) Multi party system.

### **One party system**

By one party system is meant those systems in which a single party enjoys a monopoly of power through the exclusion of all other parties. This is done either through constitution or by political means. In many countries, particularly the communist countries, the constitution itself allows existence of only one party. In certain countries though there is no legal restriction on formation of parties, the rulers in power do not allow parties other than their own party to function by means of coercion and suppression or using other legal and extra legal means. There may also be only one party because of conditions like anti-colonial national movement or domination by a very popular and charismatic leader.

### **Dominant Party System**

By dominant party system is meant a party system where more than one party exist and freely compete but one party gets much higher support than any other party. Dominant party thus forms the government and remain in power for years without a fear of losing power. The opposition parties are weak and divided. A dominant party system as such is competitive in the sense that a number of parties compete for power in elections, but is dominated by a single major party that consequently enjoys prolonged periods in power. For

example in India the Congress party enjoyed unbroken spell of power for about 30 years i.e. from 1947 to 1977. After remaining in opposition for less than three years it again emerged as the dominant party in 1980. It lost elections again in 1989. Therefore, it can be said that dominant party system may not be a continuous or permanent one.

Another feature of dominant party system is that there is competition between factions within dominant party itself. Some times even the criticism against government may come from internal factions. But in general opposition to government both from factions and opposition parties remain weak and ineffective. Dominant party then may behave as one party system. This of course is not healthy for the growth of democracy. Japan, India, South Africa and some other countries provide examples of periods of dominant party systems. In general the dominant systems are on the decline.

### **Two Party system**

A two party system is one in which there is plurality of parties but two parties of broadly comparable size receive major electoral support. In short, two party system has following characteristics.

- Although a number of parties may exist, only two parties enjoy sufficient electoral and legislative strength to have a realistic prospect of winning government power.
- The party getting the support of the majority is able to form the government alone and the other party provides main opposition.



POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEM

- Power alternates between these two parties; both are able to form government at one time or the other. In this, opposition is strong as it is called the government in the waiting. At one time two party system was considered the most desirable for parliamentary democracies as it provides both a stable government as well as a strong opposition. But of late it is being felt that the system restricts the ideological choices. Also the two equally matched parties in order to show each other down may start behaving irresponsible by presenting too populist manifestos and formulate policies without consideration of economic health of the country. However, many observers still feel that two party system is the best way of reconciling responsiveness with order and representative government with effective government. The UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, etc. are the countries cited as examples of two party system. However, even in these countries the classical two party system is not there. Many a times a third or a fourth party becomes significant forcing the formation of a coalition government.

**Multi Party System**

A multi party system is that in which more than two parties compete for power reducing the chances of single party winning the majority. There is no definite number of major political parties in the field. In fact in such systems, some times minor parties are

able to play an important role in the formation of the government, keeping the single largest party out of government. Multi party systems in parliamentary democracies are blamed for producing weak and unstable government with confused accountability. On the other hand supporters of multi party system say that it is more representative and accountable. In coalition governments have to work keeping in view the interests of various groups and sections rather than the main support base of one major party. The system also creates internal checks and balances within the government. Multi party system had been prevalent in Italy, Germany, France and Scandinavian countries of the developed world. Some developing countries like India have also moved to this system after initial years of dominant party system. In fact in most countries both dominant system and two party system are on the decline and are being replaced by multiparty systems.

**PARTY SYSTEM IN INDIA**

As in other representative democracies in India also political parties are an established part of political process. However, unlike in the Western democracies where parties came into existence as a result of introduction of representative election system, India's party system originated in the late nineteenth century as a response to the British colonial rule and challenge. During this period the party system on

the one hand represented an assertion of national solidarity for national liberation and on the other a vision for new India.

### **POLITICAL PARTIES BEFORE INDEPENDENCE**

The beginning of the Indian Party System can be traced to the formation of the Indian National Congress as a political platform in 1885. To begin with Congress was a platform to express the grievances of emerging middle class. Soon, it became a nation-wide movement first to demand political reforms in the colonial administration and then a movement for national freedom. In that process Congress became an all embracing party accommodating various social, communal and economic interests with primacy for national freedom. Moreover as a consequence of British policy of divide and rule and partly concerned with apprehensions about the status of communities and regions, there also came up communal and caste based parties like Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League, Akali Dal, Dravid Kanjahagam, etc. In addition there also were formed parties with an ideological vision for future India. Most important of these was the Communist Party. Thus, on the eve of independence and before the adoption of parliamentary democracy in India there already were political parties of different shades comprising of well defined and distinct socio-cultural regions, variety of religions, cultural and linguistic groups and

economic disparities. It was in this background that framers of the Constitution adopted a parliamentary system of democracy and federalism in India and hoped that a proper party system would develop to run that political system.

### **PARTY SYSTEM IN INDEPENDENT INDIA**

The framers of the Constitution adopted for India a Parliamentary System of government. Political parties, obviously, were to be an essential instrument for working of this system. However, in the Constitution of India no mention of parties or their functions was made. Various provisions of the Constitution, of course, provided opportunities for parties to be established, develop and function as in any representative democracy. Only legal provision that came up to regulate political parties in a limited way was Election Commission's powers to register political parties for the purpose of allotment and reservation of symbols. Later a mention of parties came in the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution in the context of defections. Thus, party system in India is undefined and unregulated except for extremely limited purposes of registration by the Election Commission and under the provisions of anti-defection law. Nevertheless, right from the time of independence along with the already existing political parties there have been emerging a number of parties of different sizes with different ideologies

unlike the one party dominance phase, in which the organisational structure of the party which sought to represent different interests and identities within the society was important, the party had become dependent on the personality of the leader.

### **MULTI PARTY SYSTEM AND COALITION ERA**

The Parliamentary elections held in December 1989 clearly initiated a multi party system at the centre. The states component of the system, in aggregate terms had already become a multi partisan one by 1967 when nearly half of the states had come to be ruled by non-Congress parties. 1989 elections, according to observers, transformed the scene at the centre in two unprecedented ways. First, it brought into 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. The outcome of the 1991, 1996, 1998 and 1999 polls have further strengthened this situation and showed a clear trend of decline of Congress hegemony and emergence of multi party system and a coalitionist phase.

But it does not mean that this multi party character is there sure to stay or

a polarisation process is on. Polarisation means consolidation of the appeal by political parties with sharply defined ideologies. The new system, at least for the time being, has thrown up a dynamism in which major parties or party like formations — the Congress and its allies, the BJP and its allies — seem to be almost equally poised for competition. The Left and regional parties may play a balancing role. In this multipolarity it also seems that Indian politics has entered a coalition phase. Some observers see it as dangerous for the future of parliamentary democracy in India as it causes instability. But in fact it is nothing unusual. In a country so vast, with so much of diversity, both the multi party system and coalition governments are natural. Even in developed Western democracies with much less diversity like France, Italy, Germany and others there had been coalitions. In a way coalition governments tend to be more accountable due to continuous threat to their existence. Therefore, it is not the party system or single party or coalition governments responsible for success or failure of democracy. It depends on various other factors which we will discuss in subsequent chapters.

### **TYPES OF PARTIES: NATIONAL AND STATE**

From the above it emerges that because of its peculiar social structure, level of political development and institutional framework India has developed her own

type of multi party system. Various parties, however, are not of equal size or equal spread. On the basis of strength and areas of functioning the Election Commission of India registers parties as national parties and state parties and unrecognised parties.

According to the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) order, 1968, a political party shall be treated as a recognised political party in a State if, and only if either of the conditions specified in clause (A) or the conditions specified in clause (B) are fulfilled. These are: (A) that such party (i) has been engaged in political activity for a continuous period of five years; and (ii) has at the general election to the House of people in that State or to the Legislative Assembly returned either one member to the House of the People for every twenty-five members of that House or any fraction of that number elected from that State or at least one member to the Legislative Assembly of that State for every thirty members of the Assembly or any fraction of that number; (B) That the total number of votes polled by all the contesting candidates setup by such party at the general election in the State to the House of the People or to the Legislative Assembly is not less than four per cent of the total number of valid votes polled by all the contesting candidates at such general election in the State.

A Party fulfilling the conditions either of (A) or (B) is recognised as a state party. A political party recognised as state party at least in four states is recognised as a national party. Parties

which are not recognised as state parties because of lack of strength but are otherwise registered with the Commission are called unrecognised registered parties. An exclusive symbol is reserved for a national party throughout India. In the case of a state party a symbol is reserved for it in the State or States in which it is so recognised. It is obvious that there is no permanent list of recognised parties. It is revised after every general election by the Election Commission in the light of the criterion laid down. Let us now have a look at one of the important roles of political parties in a democratic system i.e. the role of opposition.

### **ROLE OF OPPOSITION PARTIES**

In the beginning of this chapter you have read that the primary goal of a political party is to seek power, but in addition to that as a part of the task of seeking power in democracies, political parties also perform other functions. In this process a party which does not acquire power during election, apart from performing the functions of governance, continues to perform all other functions as a political party including the role of opposition. As opposition the party or parties, are expected to present themselves as an alternative government both by challenging the governments policies and measures between elections and by offering themselves as potential governing parties at the election. For this purpose the opposition keeps the government in check, provides to the

people alternative policies and programmes, and keep them aware of the shortcomings in the performance of the government: its failures, the deviations from promises, misuse of power. In other words the opposition in addition to provide alternatives, caters to the need of providing checks and balances to the ruling party by criticising it on its excesses, lapses and acts of omission and commission. To perform such a role it is important that opposition party/parties is/are strong, viable and responsible both in quantity and quality. By quantity is meant that the opposition should have enough support that a small change in voters preference can bring it to power. By quality is meant that people should have faith in the capacity and credibility of the opposition.

In view of such an important role, in many parliamentary democracies, opposition party is given an official recognition. In Britain for instance, the opposition party has been officially recognised. There is as such Her/His majesty's government and Her/His majesty's opposition. The leader of the opposition is provided the same salary and privileges as that of a cabinet minister. His/her most special privilege and responsibility, however, is that related to the possibility of being called at any time to constitute an alternative government. Therefore, she/he has at all times to keep a shadow cabinet ready so that at short notice the shadow may be converted into a reality and can take over the task of the government. This can be either if the government of

the day is defeated on the floor of the House or in general elections. That is why it is said that today's opposition is tomorrow's government and vice-versa. This system of government and opposition best functions in a two party system where two parties are almost equal in strength and can replace each other with a little change in vote percentage. In multi party systems, in many cases, the opposition parties are more opposed to each other than to the party in power. It does not, however, mean that in a multi party system opposition has no role or is not relevant. In a way the role of keeping check on ruling party in such a case becomes more important, because the ruling party who is not much worried of defeat because of a divided opposition may tend to become irresponsible or corrupt. Also it is not always that a multi party system is a one party dominant system. Therefore, both the government and the opposition can be alliances or group of parties thereby functioning as regular government and opposition. In any case, opposition is a very important factor in a democracy and needs to be strong. At the same time in different situations and types of party systems the nature and role of opposition can be different. Nevertheless, whatever the situation is, both the ruling party and the opposition are expected to play their respective roles with responsibility, honesty and with dignity.

### OPPOSITION IN INDIA

In the early years of the Republic, in spite of their weak and fragmented

position in the Parliament, the opposition parties played a very important role. The leaders of these parties actively participated in debates, raised important national issues and took the government to task for its failures. Those leaders were respected and known for their integrity and commitment to the task of nation and constitution building. Nehru not only tolerated but encouraged them. He believed that there are two or more sides to every question and called upon the opposition spokesman to present the other side of the picture whenever an important issue arose. The question hour in particular was used very effectively to keep the government on its toes.

As has been mentioned in the beginning, neither the Constitution nor any law in India, spoke about political parties. Thus, political system in India gave opportunities to political parties, to grow and participate in the system without much conditions. In the early years, there was a situation of one party dominant. Though there was no legal provision for a recognised opposition party, there was a provision for recognition as a parliamentary party, if a party had obtained 50 seats. It was only in 1969 that for the first time Congress (O) was recognised as a parliamentary party apart from Congress (R) and its leader Dr Ram Subhag Singh had the honour of being the first person to be recognised as the leader of the opposition. Interestingly, this opposition came from within Congress itself as a result of split in the

party. It was only in 1977, during Janata Party's government, that by an act of Parliament, the leader of the opposition was given a statutory recognition and his salary and privileges were fixed as that of a cabinet minister.

With the elimination of the national level leadership and political power becoming an instrument of vested interests and subsequent decline of institutions, interaction between government and opposition has been on the decline. The 1975-77 emergency and the 1977 election results had aroused high hopes about evolution of a healthy party system in India. In that election for the first time the opposition emerged as an alternative ruling party. Indira Gandhi accepted the defeat. It was expected of the opposition to provide an issue-oriented politics and to define the issues along socially just and democratic lines. But, this did not happen.

For a healthy democracy both the ruling party and the opposition are important. Opposition also has to play a positive and constructive role. It is important for both opposition and government to remember that they have to change their roles. If people start losing complete faith in political parties and consequently in democracy itself then it will be too easy for any authoritarian ruler or group to take charge of the system with the approval of the masses. That will not only be the end of democracy but also of political parties. Events in some neighbouring countries are before us. Let us therefore be on our guard before it is too late.

**EXERCISES**

1. What is meant by Political Parties? What major functions parties perform?
2. Explain different party systems.
3. Examine the merits and demerits of One Party Dominance.
4. Explain the reasons for emergence of One Party dominance in India.
5. How political parties in India are recognised as National and State Parties.
6. Explain the emerging trends in party system in India.
7. Examine the nature and role of Opposition in India.
8. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Two Party System;
  - (ii) Hegemonic Dominance;
  - (iii) Political parties in India before independence;
  - (iv) Role of opposition in democracies.

## CHAPTER 5

# National and State Parties

IN the last chapter we have read that in India there are seven national parties and several state parties and unrecognised registered and unregistered parties. These parties have been formed on the basis of different political programmes. Some parties seek support from particular social groups more than others either because of the nature of their programmes or mobilisation. For the students of Political Science it is essential to have some knowledge about the ideologies or programmes of these parties and their support basis. In this chapter we will read about these aspects of national parties and have a general discussion on the nature and role of regional parties.

### INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Indian National Congress is the oldest political party not only of India but in the whole of the developing world of Afro-Asian countries. It was founded on 27 December, 1885 at Bombay. To begin with, it was an association of the small westernised, university educated middle class members. For the first two decades it was primarily concerned

with demands for political reforms within British colonial rule. At that time its leadership was quite moderate that believed in constitutional and legal means for its activities. Around 1907, there emerged a militant wing in the party that raised the demand for *Swaraj* and started using more assertive methods of mobilisation and protest. For a time the Congress remained divided into moderate and extremist wings. Soon it became an all comprehensive movement for national liberation. By 1920 with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi it had become a mass movement. As a national movement the Congress functioned as an umbrella organisation admitting in its ranks peoples of all shades and opinions. Thus, ideologically, it had rightists, leftists and centrists trends in it. Because of this nature and role of party, Gandhiji suggested that after independence Congress should be dissolved. Others, however felt, that after leading the struggle for independence, the Congress should lead independent India in its task of nation building and establishment of democracy.



After independence Congress became the ruling party. There were many factors in its favour to grow as a dominant party. These were: (i) an all India organisation with national goals and established and respected leadership; (ii) a centrist ideology of secularism, socialism and democracy that attracted various sections of population; (iii) a wide spread support base that included various interests, classes, regions, groups and communities. With these benefits the Congress became a dominant party.

Up to 1967 the Congress was able to form government both in the Centre and almost in all the States. Though the Congress was a dominant and all embracing party, there were factions and groups within the party based on ideological and personality differences. Under the dominating leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru these factions could not come out openly. From 1962 onwards with the decline of powerful leadership and lack of popular support due to dissatisfaction from its performance, factionalism became quite open and important. Factionalism and groupism finally led to the division of Congress in November 1969 into two parties Congress (R) led by Indira Gandhi and Congress (O) led by Morarji Desai, K. Kamaraj, Nijalingappa. Indira Gandhi with her background of Nehru family and presenting herself as a progressive leader led her faction to massive victory in 1971-72 elections bringing Congress (R) back as a dominant party. In 1977 Congress (O) got itself merged into

newly formed Janata Party. In the face of defeat in 1977 elections the Congress (R) itself got divided into two parties in 1978. Now there was Congress (I) i.e. Congress led by Indira Gandhi and Congress (S) led by Swaran singh, later by Dev Raj Urs and there after by Sharad Pawar. The elections in 1980 once again gave Indira Gandhi's Congress the legitimacy of dominant party. This position remained so up to 1989, when once again leaders like V.P. Singh left the Congress to join hands with the opposition parties.

In 1994 there occurred another division in the Congress and leaders like Arjun Singh and N.D. Tiwari left to form the Indira Congress. The Congress at that time was led by Rajiv Gandhi. While these people later came back to the Congress another group led by Sharad Pawar and P. A. Sangma left the party in 1999 to form another party called National Congress. Indian National Congress led by Sonia Gandhi still has a significant support base all over India, though it is no more a dominant party.

In terms of ideology and programme, Congress has projected itself as a secular, democratic, and modernising party. For economic development it has expressed itself in favour of land reforms, enlargement of public sector and economic planning within the frame work of mixed economy. From 1955 onwards it declared its goal as attainment of a socialistic pattern of society. But the party's social following and efforts to win elections by accommodating all

interests made Congress to compromise on its ideology. Thus, it has remained more a pragmatic party rather than ideologically committed. Since 1991, it has clearly moved towards liberal economic system from its earlier commitment to socialism and public sector. Hence, Congress is the initiator of what is popularly known as Economic Reforms and Structural Adjustments. The Congress also supported efforts towards social reforms. Like most other parties it opposes discrimination based on caste, religion, region, sex, etc. It showed sufficient sensitivity to the cause of minorities particularly in its initial years in independent India. The Congress Party's foreign policy, specially under the leadership of Nehru brought India considerable prominence as a founder and leader of Non-Aligned movement.

As already mentioned, before independence, Congress was more a movement than a party. After independence it was transformed into a party to contest elections. In view of its background and power, a number of people and groups began to join Congress without necessary commitment to its programmes. This made Congress more a pragmatic party than a programmatic one. These and other such factors brought into Congress wide spread factionalism, sycophancy and centralisation of power. As a result, organisationally, Congress became a personalised, and centrally controlled party. It is no more a party of consensus, with a clear cut programme for socio-economic

development and reforms. Yet, it remains committed to values of secularism and democracy. It still is the party with largest social support spread in almost all States and regions of India. In that sense in terms of its orientation, areas of operation and support base Congress continues to be the most significant national party.

### THE JANATA PARTY

After about 30 years of Congress domination in March 1977 for the first time a conglomeration of five parties, i.e. Congress (O), Bhartiya Lok Dal, Jan Sangh, Socialist Party and Congress for Democracy along with some dissidents in Congress contesting jointly, defeated the Congress in Lok Sabha elections. Proclamation of national emergency in 1975 and suppression of democratic rights and arrest of various leaders of opposition political parties made it imperative to unite for their survival.

Having won the elections in alliance and feeling the necessity for consolidation of non-Congress unity these parties decided to merge themselves in a single party. Consequently on 1 May, 1977 was born the Janata Party with the merger of Congress (O) Bhartiya Lok Dal, Jan Sangh, Socialist Party, Congress for Democracy and the former Congressmen who had left the Congress at the time of proclamation of emergency.

Being a combination of various parties, Janata party's programme was bound to be mixed one and pragmatic to satisfy all its constituents. At the

same time it was a fact that in 1977 elections support against Congress had come largely from North India and more so from rural areas. Therefore, tilt of Janata party's programme was towards farming classes. However, each Constituent party was keen to consolidate its own social base. Thus, in spite of merger various constituents in the Janata Party continued to work as independent partners in a coalition. The differences between various segments extended to a wide range of political and economic issues. The Janata Party failed to evolve any mechanism to regulate and harmonise the conflicting interests of various lobbies and groups. This ultimately led to open division and in less than three years in July 1979 the party got divided into two. Most of the members of erstwhile Bhartiya Lok Dal and Socialist Party came out of Janata Party on the issue of dual membership and formed a new party named as Lok Dal. Issue of dual membership meant whether a member of Janata Party can be a member of another political organisation. This was raised particularly in the context of erstwhile Jan Sangh members continuing to be members of Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS) which they claimed was a socio-cultural organisation and not a political one. In some, there were differences galore. As a consequent of the split the Janata Party government fell. With the support of Congress, Lok Dal formed a new government. But this coalition also could not work for more than six months and finally in 1980

fresh elections were held for the Lok Sabha.

People of India, obviously felt betrayed by the Janata Party and therefore, in 1980 mid term polls voted against both the Janata Party and the Lok Dal. This brought Congress (I) back to power. Soon after the elections there came another split. Most of the erstwhile Jan Sangh members along with some others left the Party to form Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP).

### JANATA DAL

Having lost two general elections in 1980 and 1984, some leaders among non-Congress parties once again began efforts for opposition unity. As a result Janta Dal was born on 11 October, 1988, with the merger of Janata Party, Lok Dal and Jan Morcha. In 1989 elections Janata Dal became a part of National Front which has a coalition of seven parties. Earlier some congressmen including V.P. Singh had left the Congress on the issue of corruption. They also became a part of the National Front. After November 1989 election, the National Front with the outside support of BJP and CPM formed the government.

Soon it became clear that both the formation of Janata Dal and National Front were negative considerations of defeating the Congress without any positive commitment to an ideology or programme. Soon after coming to power there were factional pulls and pressures both in Janata Dal and National Front. In November 1990, a

sizeable chunk of members came out of Janata Dal and formed Samajwadi Janata Party. In August 1992 Ajit Singh with his supporters left Janata Dal to form Janata Dal (A). On 21 June, 1994, another group of members came out of Janata Dal and formed Samta Party. Thus, by November 1995 Janata Dal stood much reduced. It, however, continued to be a national party as also a ruling party in two States -- Bihar and Karnataka.

In 1996 elections, no party gained majority. Bhartiya Janata Party emerged as the single largest party but could not get the support of others. Hence, it failed to remain in power beyond 13 days. This situation again gave opportunity to Janata Dal to lead a coalition government with the support of the Congress. The government thus formed was known as United Front government led by H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral respectively. But, the United Front Government, also could not survive beyond a year.

Even before the fall of United Front government, once again in 1997 there occurred another split in Janata Dal and Rashtriya Janata Dal was formed. The process did not end here. In 1998 it got split once again when Biju Janata Dal was formed. Needless to say each split has weakened the Janata Dal considerably. As a whole various splinters like Rashtriya Janata Dal and Samajwadi party have become regional parties. The two factions that is Janata Dal (S) and Janata Dal (U) have been able to retain the status of national parties.

Almost all splits in Janata Dal had been primarily on personality basis rather than on any ideological differences. Social base of various splinter parties, that is Janata Dal, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Samajwadi Janata Party, etc. is the same as of other backward classes and Muslims. All of them stand committed to a socialist perspective, devolution and decentralisation of power, rural reconstruction, secularism and justice to lower and backward castes. None of them, however, has been able to create a functional structure or broaden its support base. All factions of Janata Dal rely on regional caste based support and are dominated by single individuals. Each of these Janata factions has a significant support in some States and regions; like Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, etc. All efforts to unite them are proving failures due to personality clashes.

### **BHARTIYA JANATA PARTY**

Bhartiya Janata Party was founded in April 1980 as a result of second split in Janata Party. As already mentioned it was mostly the members of erstwhile Bhartiya Jan Sangh who constituted the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). Bhartiya Jan Sangh was founded on 21 October, 1951, under the presidentship of Dr Shyama Prasad Mukerjee. The objective of founding the Jan Sangh was rebuilding of India as a modern, democratic society in accordance with religious precepts and four fundamentals of "one country, one nation, one culture and rule of law."

From 1951 to 1977 Bhartiya Jan Sangh had been a national party but primarily concentrated in urban areas of North India. In 1974 the party stood in support of Jaya Parkash Narain movement which was primarily an anti-Congress, anti-corruption reform movement. The party also actively opposed the promulgation of internal emergency in 1975. Ultimately joining hands with other major non-Congress parties, Bhartiya Jan Sangh also dissolved itself and became a part of Janata Party formed in April-May 1977. As already mentioned within Janata Party there started differences on various issues from the beginning. Janata Party objected to the practice of former Jan Sangh members continuing to remain as members of the RSS. This led to some socialist members coming out of Janata Party to form Lok Dal; and finally, after Janata Party's defeat in 1980, most of the erstwhile Jan Sangh left members the Janata Party to form Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP thus, inherited two different legacies, one that of the erstwhile Jan Sangh and second of the Janata Party.

In view of the dual legacies and in changed circumstances, BJP tried to project itself different from Bhartiya Jan Sangh. So while it permitted dual membership with RSS, the party proclaimed that its ideology was Gandhian Socialism. In concrete terms BJP programme was vague. It laid equal stress on the development of agriculture and industry, reduction of taxes, recognition of citizens fundamental right to work, introduction

of an employment guarantee scheme and pension for the aged, etc. In due course Gandhian Socialism was transformed into liberalised *Swadeshi*. Of course in election manifestos and public speeches BJP leaders, like Congress, promised some thing to every one. But BJP's policies, as a senior partner in National Democratic Alliance government, clearly reflects its commitment for liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation.

In social field also the BJP promises justice to all sections. It has accepted the principle of reservation on caste basis and 33 per cent reservation of seats for woman in Parliament and State Legislatures. The most important aspect of BJP ideology, however, is cultural nationalism. Some feel that in view of its electoral compulsions, BJP has shed its ideological homogeneity and sharpness. Nevertheless, BJP remains committed to the idea of one nation and one culture. It criticises the politics of minoritism allegedly followed by Congress governments. It also does not hide its criticism of what it calls pseudo-secularism.

In terms of electoral support the BJP, like its predecessor the Bhartiya Jan Sangh, has a strong electoral support base in the Hindi-speaking regions, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Since 1989, it has been trying to extend its base in South India also. It has been particularly successful in Karnataka. In terms of social base, BJP's traditional votes have been coming from upper castes, the small and medium traders and shopkeepers in urban and rural

areas and a section of the Indian middle class. Lately BJP has also made a dent in other backward castes.

Since its formation in 1980, the BJP has been increasing its vote percentage. In December 1984, Parliamentary elections party could win only two seats securing 7.72 per cent votes. In 1989, Lok Sabha polls, BJP share of vote rose to 11.59 per cent and 88 seats. According to observers BJP's sudden rise, particularly in number of seats was because of three reasons: (i) general anti-Congress wave particularly in North India; (ii) rise of communal politics in the country; and (iii) seat adjustments with other parties. In 1991 Lok Sabha elections, BJP's strength in Lok Sabha increased to 122 with a vote percentage of 20.9. Having won 161 seats in 1996 Lok Sabha elections BJP emerged as the single largest party. Thereafter in 1998, it won 180 seats with 25.5 per cent votes and in 1999, 182 seats with 23 per cent votes. In 1999 elections it contested as an alliance partner in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

The BJP as such has emerged a significant national party almost comparable to Indian National Congress. But its support base as yet is limited to certain areas rather than spread all over India. Also there is ambiguity within the party on its ideological stand particularly on religious and cultural aspects. In terms of economic programmes, like Congress, it has become a centrist and a pragmatic party.

## THE COMMUNIST PARTIES

The two National Parties representing a clear leftist ideology are Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India Marxist [CPI(M)]. Their origin, as with other communist parties is based on the tenets of Marxism; with the aim of establishing socialism. In 1964, because of ideological differences the CPI got divided and the group that came out formed the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded in 1925 by those who got attracted towards Marxism and were already engaged in revolutionary activities. Of course at that time they were facing repression from the British colonial administration. They also had close links with the Communist Party of Great Britain and international revolutionary movement.

In the late twenties and early thirties the main arena of Communist activity was provided by the Trade unions, in which definite success was scored. The second sphere where the CPI could extend its mass following was provided by the worker and peasant parties. As the labour movement gained ground so the activity of these parties also intensified. During the 1930s the party adopted a tactic of the United Front from above in cooperation with the nationalist movement. The Communists joined the Congress and soon secured leadership in its socialist organisation — the Congress Socialist Party. They were, however, expelled

from the Congress in 1939, on the issue of double membership. The final break with the Congress came with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. At that time the CPI supported the British in Second World War as a war against Fascism and Nazism whereas Congress was preparing to launch the Quit India Movement.

After independence there emerged two factions within CPI on the basis of the assessment of the political system of independent India. One group felt that independence of India was not real. It was a transfer of power in the framework of modified imperialistic system. Therefore, there was need for struggle under the leadership of CPI and alliance with workers and peasants. It was called a tactic of the united front from below. This was the line given by the Soviet Union, the then leader of the International Communist Movement. The other group was of the view that the transfer of power was real. Therefore, Nehru government needed to be supported as a part of alliance with nationalist forces. Soon the Soviet position changed and the CPI was advised to abandon the adventurist tactics and instead work for the creation of a broad anti-feudal, and anti-imperialist front along with the nationalist bourgeoisie. This gave the direction, to what is called, movement towards "Constitutional Communism."

By Constitutional Communism is meant to gain power by communists through elections rather than through their traditional approach of snatching power through revolution. Thus, from

the very first general elections the CPI began contesting elections in the multi party system. It got encouraged from the fact that compared to other opposition parties it received better support in the then situation of one party dominant system. A historic landmark was reached in 1957 when in the second general elections the Communist party won an absolute majority in Kerala and formed the government. This made clear the chances of assuming power by peaceful means. But the central government in 1959 dismissed the Communist Kerala government in spite of party-enjoying majority support. This gave chance to radical elements to suggest that in the given system socialist reforms were not so easy. By this time there also had started emerging conflict between India and Communist China which finally resulted in India-China War in 1962. The two factions in the CPI had different interpretations about this war. While the pro-Soviet group was clearly opposed to China the other group though not necessarily pro-China blamed both China and India for the conflict. Combination of all these factors finally led to the split in party in 1964 when the more radical group came out of CPI and formed CPI(M) claiming itself to be the real Communist Party of India.

### THE CPI

After the 1964 split, the CPI had no difficulty in following the Soviet line. The

main thrust of this line was that the CPI accepted to deal with what it regarded as progressive nationalist section in the Congress, the major vehicle of bourgeois nationalism.

It was in this context that the CPI started assessing the Nehru government and later supported Indira Gandhi and her supporters. It remained an ally of the Congress till 1977. Since then CPI started developing an anti-Congress line. On the issue of communalism the CPI has become more critical of BJP. Since 1989, the CPI has been contesting elections as an ally of anti-Congress and anti-BJP left and democratic front. But in its efforts to achieve the goal of national democracy the CPI had gone to the extent of joining the coalition government at Centre in 1996.

In its programmes party favours communal harmony, secularism, prevention of misuse of religious places for disruptive activities. The CPI expresses its commitment to work for evolving a new and equitable international economic order, curbing monopoly houses and trans-national giants, control over foreign trade; protection of small scale industries, cottage industries and artisans, strengthening the public distribution system, government take-over of wholesale trade in food grains; need based minimum wage to factory workers and others in the unorganised sector; introducing social security measures and preventing lock-out of factories; effective workers participation in management of units in the public sector, crop insurance scheme; and

cancellation of loans taken by small peasants, radical land reforms, including fair wages to agricultural workers.

In foreign policy CPI favours continuation of policy of non-alignment and anti-imperialism and improvement of friendship with neighbouring countries. The growing escalation of US imperialism is viewed as a decisive impetus towards strengthening the policy of non-alignment.

### **CPI(M)**

The CPI(M)'s position was that the CPI was a revisionist party which had deviated from Leninism and has renounced Marxism.

The CPI(M) wanted to establish a people's democracy. To attain this end it worked to develop People's Democratic Front. This Front was to be led by the working class. The chief allies of the working class would be agricultural labourers and the poor peasants in the countryside. The middle peasants would be firm allies and even the rich peasants can be allies up to a point. The urban and other sections of the petty bourgeoisie could also be regarded as allies. The enemies of this anti-feudal, anti-imperialist revolution are the monopolists, the big bourgeoisie, and the imperialists.

The CPI(M), at the same time did not reject the Parliamentary path. It was in view of this that in 1982 the CPI(M) decided to work for a Broad "anti-authoritarian" front including even the Bhartiya Janata Party. However, it reiterated at the same time that it will spend its energies to build "left and democratic unity."



Since 1992 there are certain visible changes in Party's strategic programmatic emphasis, but there is no major change in the stand of the party on the basic ideological questions. While the anti-Congress edge of the CPI(M) policy has not been diluted, it has sharpened its attack on the BJP.

The party election manifestos on economic issues emphasise the need for India to become self-dependent economically and to escape from the clutches of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to CPI(M) not only India is losing control over its economy because of these but also India's domestic and foreign policies are moulded by them. It is critical of liberalisation of economy, increasing inequalities and unemployment. It favours implementation of land reforms, minimum wages, creation of jobs; and to achieve all it. Suggests, demolition of capitalist path of development. It advocates nationalisation of textile and jute industries and government take over of big factories, protection of unorganised workers, adequate wages for farm labourers and the right to work.

In view of some policies of CPI(M) as ruling party, particularly in West Bengal, the critics have called the economic stand of the party as paradoxical and hypocritical. Paradoxical because the party has introduced economic liberalisation in West Bengal in contravention of its political philosophy; hypocritical because it has attempted to justify this policy while retaining in theory its standard ideology.

The two communist parties have now moved together to build and develop a "left unity". Both the parties note a perceptible change in the international situation and threats of neo-colonialism. Since 1984, both the parties have been contesting elections as part of Left Front, as also United Front. The CPI(M) dominates that front and CPI occupies the number two position. Their main emphasis at present is that what India needs urgently is national secular democratic unity. The new US economic offensive and the forces threatening national integration are the main targets of their attack.

As far as State Assemblies are concerned the two Communist parties have done well in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. In all these three States, the two parties either singularly or jointly or in alliance with other parties have been able to form government. In 1957 for the first time in the world a Communist party formed government after winning elections in a multi party democratic system when CPI won an absolute majority in Kerala. In West Bengal, the Left Front led by CPI(M) is in power continuously for more than two decades.

As far as social base and membership is concerned there is hardly any difference between the two Communist parties. They depend on the support of working class, the middle class and agricultural labour and small peasants. Both are essentially middle class parties, unable to draw much new members from the younger generation.

The CPI(M) proximity to power, particularly in West Bengal has made it more acceptable to peasants. Its following is intensive and concentrated and therefore, translates more into voting strength. The CPI's following is diffused and scattered. Spatially, the CPI(M) has a small following in the Hindi heartland where the CPI is better placed. Concentrated electoral strength has made CPI(M) popular in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala.

### **BAHUKAN SAMAJ PARTY**

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is the youngest among the national parties. Founded on 14 April, 1984, the party is an expression of the dalit resurgence. It has been emerging slowly in certain parts of the country both as a result of opportunities provided by a democratic system and failure of other national parties to provide social justice to the *dalits*.

The BSP had its origin in All India Backward (SCs, STs, OBCs) and Minorities Communities Employees Federation founded in 1978 by Kanshi Ram a scientist in the Explosive Research Development Laboratory. After knitting his net work among the government employees across the length and breadth of the country, particularly in the Northern States he launched yet another organisation DS-4 (the Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharash Samiti) in 1981. Finally, on 14 April, 1984, BSP was launched. The

assumption was that people belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Castes and minorities form 85 per cent of countries population and constitute the "Bahujan"; but a minority of upper castes rule the country.

The BSP ideology, therefore, is clear and sharp to mobilise *dalits* and oppressed assuming that a volcanic outburst of the oppressed class could not be stopped for long and was bound to happen one day. The Party's prime objective is to build a cadre devoted to educating *dalits* about their rights.

In the beginning, the party was an isolationist one declaring to have no alliance with any other party. Its aim was to initiate some socio-cultural movement among the *dalits*. Later on its strategy has undergone some changes and it had allied and shared power in Uttar Pradesh with BJP in 1995, 1997 and 2002, and had a pre-election alliance with Congress in 1996. The party had also entered into an alliance with the Samajwadi Janata Party. Observers explain BSP's change of strategy on the basis of realisation that it was not capable of garnering sufficient support from the backward castes, which have no love lost for the *dalits*. In fact the backward *dalit* antagonism in rural India does not allow the party to broaden its base. The class interests of backward sections, especially after land reforms and green revolution, tend to clash with the *dalits*, many of whom

continue to be landless in rural India. The antagonism between the upper caste and the *dalits* is no longer as sharp as it is between the backwards and the *dalits*, in view of the changed land ownership patterns in the last two or three decades.

In less than a decade, BSP, at least in Hindi-speaking States had become a political force to the extent that it can influence the electoral fortunes of the major political parties like the Congress, BJP and Janata Dal. Thereafter, BSP has been making continuing gains particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh. The party, however, faces various and serious hurdles in its efforts. While the claim of a Bahujan Samaj points to a desire to unite under *dalit* leadership a wider section of society, but its core appeal remains to *dalits* who comprise just over sixteen per cent of India's voters. Further, the success of BSP in North India has not been equalled in other parts of the country. In South India, in particular, there are other *dalit* formations that have created their own space. The BSP's dream of ruling the country, therefore, may remain utopia, except in the case of a coalition. But it had made it clear that in near future, at least, *dalit* power will surely play a role in Indian politics.

### STATE PARTIES

As already mentioned in addition to national parties there are regional or

state parties. Some of these are recognised state parties on the basis of their strength prescribed by the Election Commission. At the same time there are many unrecognised state parties because of lack of necessary voters support. Generally, speaking regional parties are those which generally and exclusively operate within a limited geographical area of a State, or which represent narrow social interests. But in India we have several types of regional parties. Broadly speaking these can be divided into four categories.

First category is of those parties which are classical, regional ethnicity or cultural based. These parties are by choice regional interested to acquire power in one or two States in the name of that cultural, linguistic or ethnic groups. Examples of these are All India Anna Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (DMK), Shiv Sena, Asom Gana Parishad, National Conference, Indian Union Muslim League, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Manipur People's Party, Shiromani Akali Dal, Sikkim Democratic Front, Telugu Desam, etc.

Second category is of those parties which have been formed by split in national parties. Most such parties were formed after 1967 by the leaders coming out of Congress. Later some such parties have also come into existence from splits in Janata and other parties. Examples of such parties are Biju Janata Dal, Janata

Party, Kerala Congress, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Samajwadi Janata Party, Trinamool Congress etc.

The third category is of those parties which on the basis of ideology and programme have a secular national perspective and also try to operate at all India level, but lack a national base. As such on the basis of voter support these are recognised only as state parties. Such parties include All India Forward Block, Indian National Lok Dal, Nationalist Congress Party, Republican Party of India, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Samajwadi Party, etc.

Fourth category is of those parties which in fact can be called personalised parties. Such parties are formed by individual leaders, many of them coming out of national or state parties on the basis of their personal support or charisma in specific areas. These parties generally, do not survive long. They either get finished with the personality of the leader or get merged with some national or regional party for some share in power. Some such parties are Himachal Vikas Congress, Haryana Vikas party, Lok Shakti etc.

In addition to state or regional parties there are also unrecognised registered parties which are registered with the Election Commission, but due to the lack of sufficient electoral support are not recognised for the purposes of reservation of election symbols. Such parties also can be categorised into above four. Some

example of such parties are Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, Akhil Bhartiya Jan Sangh, All India Muslim Forum, Ambedkar Samaj Party, Anna Telugu Desam Party, Bahujan Kranti Dal, Bahujan Samaj Party (Ambedkar), Gandhivadi Rashtriya Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal (Mann), Tamil Desiyak Kutch, MGR Anna DMK, Kannada Chalavali Vatal Paksha, etc.

During last three decades some of the States, regional parties have become quite important. In fact in several States in India, the largest non-Congress political parties are specific to a single State and have little or no strength outside their home state. The most important such parties are the AIADMK and the DMK in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, the Akali Dal in Punjab, the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, and the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam. In fact, in all these States, the non-Congress state parties have won majorities at one time or the other in legislative assembly elections held between 1977 and 1999 and formed governments thereafter. These single state parties are distinguished by their adoption of a regional nationalist perspective, by their political desire for greater regional autonomy of States in the Indian Union, for their focus on issues specific to their States or for their base within a religious minority.

One result of the growing influence of regional parties has been that at

times no single national party gets majority in the Lok Sabha. In all the general elections to Lok Sabha from 1989 to 1999 this has been the situation. This has led not only to formation of coalition governments but also regional parties influencing the process of governmental formation and participating in it. This has both positive and negative effects. In positive terms regional parties provide a check on centralisation of power, strengthening of federalism, fulfillment of regional and cultural aspirations of various sections of population thereby helping in national integration, a share in power to marginalised and deprived groups. In negative terms they cause instability of government, lack of unity and coherence for a national government, encouragement to regional and sectorial forces, added role of caste and religion in politics.

Both these positive and negative effects of regional parties are a natural process in a democratic system. In a country of vast diversities, regional imbalances, concentration of linguistic and ethnic groups in certain regions, along with failure of planning to create a national economy and balanced development growth, development of regional parties is natural. In some countries with federal systems, national parties themselves allow their state or regional wings autonomy enough to represent regional aspirations. In India centrally controlled national

parties do not provide such flexibility. This provides another reason for proliferation of regional parties. As a whole regional parties are significant participants in parliamentary and federal democratic system of India. Most of them have no separatist or secessionist agenda. As already mentioned not all regional parties are cultural or regional based parties. Some are definitely class and ideology based. But in terms of support base and role in politics it is the parties representing specific regional or socio-cultural interests that have emerged important. The more successful regional parties have been AIADMK and DMK in Tamil Nadu, Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab, Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, Kerala Congress and Muslim League in Kerala. All these parties have formed governments in their respective States several times either by themselves or in coalition with others. Some of them have stronger roots among masses, compared to some national parties. It is because of this that with the decline of one party dominance, in several States actual and potential opposition and alternative to Congress has been provided by regional parties. They also now share power at the Central government as partners of one or the other alliance or front. This processes seems to be the pattern at least for the near future.

**EXERCISES**

1. Give the names and symbols of any three National Parties in India.
2. Briefly state the policies and programmes of Indian National Congress.
3. Explain the policies and programmes of Bhartiya Janata Party.
4. Bring out the significance of Bahujan Samaj Party in Indian politics.
5. Write Short notes on the following:
  - (i) Role of State/Regional Parties;
  - (ii) Janata Dal;
  - (iii) CPI and CPI(M)

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**CHAPTER 6****Formation of Public Opinion**

**I**N the last two chapters you have read about two types of organised groups that is political parties and interest groups that are engaged in controlling and influencing decision making power of the government either by capturing the governmental machinery or by putting pressure from outside. But ultimately in any system governmental policies are made, at least in theory, for the public as a whole. Particularly in a democracy the very survival of any government finally rests on the approval or rejection by the people at elections. Therefore, governments are always keen to know the feelings of public as a whole and try to respond to them in one way or the other. In other words, governments are less interested in personal opinions of one or some, what they are interested is in public opinion about them. Therefore, in any political system, more so in democracy, public opinion plays a very significant role in its process, decision making, accountability and working.

**PUBLIC OPINION : DEFINITION**

The term public opinion, as is clear, is a compound of two words — public and

opinion. A public is a collectivity of people with a common interest. Collectivity denotes a complete absence of organisation. The only link among those in a collectivity is their common interest. They are not a group. The common interests may be attributed to the public by an outsider. For example, a government may feel public is interested in stability. It is not necessary that they constitute entire people or even a majority at a particular time. The public thus is not a fixed body of individuals. Of course it is a collectivity of people. A public, in that sense can also be an artificial creation. Opinion is a verbally expressed attitude, that is an expression which reflects individual's or collectives' attitudes towards a matter of interest or importance. By putting together, we can say 'public opinion is the verbally expressed attitude of a collectivity of people with a common interest'.

The term public opinion is commonly used to denote the aggregate of the views men hold regarding matters that affect or interest the community. Thus understood, it is a congeries of all sorts of discrepant notions, beliefs, fancies, prejudices, aspirations. It is

confused, incoherent, amorphous, varying from day to day and week to week. But in the midst of this diversity and confusion, every question as it rises into importance is subjected to a process of consolidation and clarification until it takes a definite shape.

### FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

As already mentioned, public opinion is not something made for all times to come. It is formulated on matters of concern or importance. However, there is no automatic process or an organised way of its formation. In a society whenever an issue emerges conscious and articulated sections of the society start expressing their views and reactions on the subject. In the process, there may emerge various views. Some of these get discarded, some modified and some receive larger attention. Finally, one view or other emerges, which is generally considered as public opinion.

Individual's opinion is also formulated on the basis of information or discussion one gets in one's immediate environment like family, neighbourhood, school, college, peer groups, interest groups, clubs and associations. This is what is known in Political Science the process of socialisation. An individual's upbringing and interactions in various institutes helps articulating her/his short term and long term attitudes and orientations. These may take the shape of opinions or beliefs depending on the intensity and matter.

Political parties also play an important role in the formation of public opinion. Parties organise meetings, protests, strikes etc. on various issues. They mobilise support in favour of or against a policy, thereby throwing up debates on the issues. Speeches of party leaders inside and outside Parliament and State Legislatures also influence public opinion. They bring out leaflets and pamphlets to inform the public. Since, political parties are interested in capturing political power, they focus attention on all the major problems faced by citizens, the society and the State. In particular opposition parties remain very active in creating public opinion against the government. For the party in power, it is easy to use governmental machinery to create public opinion in its favour. But compulsions of taking unpopular decisions and difficulties in fulfilling the promises made during elections, the government mostly has to face adverse public opinion.

In addition to and along with political parties most active in creating public opinion are interest groups. As the very concern of interest group is to influence policy making, they try to mould public opinion to protect their own interests as societal or national interests, thereby giving government to formulate policies in the name of public interest. Interest groups, therefore use media, organise seminars and meetings to make articulated sections speak the language they want.

In the present day situation, opinions in many cases are also formed on the basis of information from the



mass media. Today, the individual is flooded with information from internet, radio, televisions, newspapers and magazines. This information shapes and reshapes public opinion.

Here, it may be made clear that both the articulation of views by experts or concerned intelligent sections of population or crystallised by the information and analysis provided by the media are not necessarily interest or value free. In fact critics point out selectivity in choice of information, data or analysis according to biases, prejudices, beliefs, values and ideologies. That is why it is said that public opinion is subject to possibilities of manipulation also. Many times, under the influence of media or experts, public favours or disfavours a policy without realising that it may be against public interest in general. Nevertheless, since public opinion is not permanent, there are possibilities of changes in that, particularly in democratic countries, because of availability of information from different sources and freedom of expression of views by all. It is in view of this that governments remain concerned about public opinion.

### **GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC OPINION**

In general, government's function on the basis of mandate received in election. This means that a government is only justified in introducing policies for which it has an electoral mandate. As you have read in chapters on elections and parties, while parties do publish election manifestoes, election campaigns tend to be fought on general

issues rather than on detailed policy items. In the fast developing and changing times the government has to deal with unexpected events and crisis that develop between elections. Also party in power does not remain concerned only with the past election it is very much concerned with the future election also and for that it has to build its image. In view of all these it is very difficult for a government to ignore the public opinion. Infact some observers suggest that public opinion is one of the three essential elements for the successful working of democratic system, the other two being universal adult franchise and representative institutions. Universal adult franchise lays the foundation of democratic participation, representative institutions provide for democratic recruitment and public opinion ensures democratic communication.

Since, public opinion is considered as an expression of the citizens in general, it is very difficult for the government to reject it outright. At the same time, it is also a fact that most of the times public opinion is a reflection of populism and emotional outbursts rather than rational thinking or analysis. Therefore, it remains very difficult to succumb to public opinion all the times. For example, except in cases of extreme emergencies like war, how will public opinion favour taxation; but governments have to impose taxes. Similarly, in view of long term national interests and to fulfil international commitments and for efficiency in

governance, governments often have to take unpopular decisions.

Importance of public opinion even in these types of situation is that government under pressure tries to remain responsible and does its best to convince the public about the necessity of such policies or decisions. In the age of globalisation, it is not only domestic public opinion that governments are worried about, but also of international public opinion. International public opinion articulated through Non-Governmental Organisations and trans-national movements like for promotion and protection of human rights, environment, against nuclear proliferation, discrimination based on race or descent, prevention of child labour, promotion of gender justice, etc. make governments answerable in international community and put their credibility on stake. Therefore, governments remain conscious of such international public opinion also. We have in India examples of government explaining its conduct on issues of human rights violations, communal violence and caste oppression to international NGOs like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others.

Some times the governments use their powers to manipulate public opinion. In India, when government had monopolistic control over radio and television, it was often used to create a favourable public opinion. However, in the present age of revolution in communication, arrival of cable TV networks, internet and rising awareness

among citizens in general for their rights including right to information, government's ability to mould public opinion has become quite restricted. Also having been become partner in the process of globalisation, governments are also under pressure to give free access to foreign media which is not easily manipulatable. As such governments are under severe pressures of public opinion both internal and external and have to take note of the same in formulating their policies and making decisions.

### **AGENCIES OF PUBLIC OPINION**

We have read that for governments it is very important to take note of public opinion. In fact parties in opposition are also concerned about it. Both the party in power and in opposition therefore are keen to mould public opinion in their favour. At the same time they also try to know in some authentic way what public thinks on a particular issue or what are its expectations. While it may be said that public opinion can be known by sensing the public mood or from the conversations at various levels, these not necessarily reflect the crystallised views at large. For it the government and parties have to rely on various agencies. Important among these are the following:

#### **Press and Electronic Media**

Most easy and acceptable means to have a feel of public opinion is press and media. We have already said that press and media play an important role in the

formation of public opinion. Media reports social and political activities including their strengths and weaknesses. Views of leaders, concerned citizens and activists are published in news items and articles. Editorials are written on issues, events of concern and also on governmental policies. People write letters to editors expressing their views and opinions on issues and policies. Electronic media shows in motion, movements, activities, debates and interviews bringing to light prevailing opinion and views. Media has also been criticised for selective reporting or choosing data and events that confirms to their own biases, prejudices, beliefs, values and interests to influence the government in the name of public opinion. For example, a TV channel may interview more people speaking in favour of a view which may be its own favourite than of those who are opposed to it. It is also said that in countries like India media is largely controlled by big business houses and industrialists. At present with increasing competition within the media, there are more possibilities of various views getting exposure and space, thereby creating awareness amongst the people both urban and rural.

### **Party Platform**

Another method used by political parties is to get feed backs from their cadres and workers. Every political party has a number of party workers spread over in various strata of society. They provide feedback from voters to

their leaders during party meetings. This may be termed as linkage between parties and voters. While this method is supposed to be very important and useful in India it has become retrograde. Most political parties have become centrally controlled and personality oriented. In this situation, workers instead of passing true public opinion to leadership may give them false picture of their popularity, charisma and support.

### **Opinion Polls**

Opinion polls provide a significant and popular method to gather public opinion. These were earlier used by business houses to assess consumer choices about their products. These are now being used to gather information about public attitude and opinion on variety of political matters including their opinion on issues of local or national importance, their preference for political parties and leaders in elections to be held, their views on governmental policies or specific events. These opinion polls are generally conducted by professional agencies selecting representative samples of population. Researchers and academics also conduct such surveys to study electoral behaviour, political attitudes and political culture. Opinion polls help political parties formulate their electoral strategies, adjust their programmes and make necessary alliances during elections. These may provide government with feedback of peoples level of satisfaction

or dissatisfaction from its policies as also convey their expectations and aspirations.

While in general, opinion polls have been a useful instrument to find public opinion, they have always not been correct. In countries like India there are various problems in conducting objective and correct surveys. These include large size of population, illiteracy, lack of awareness and apprehensions among people about the purpose of surveys and therefore, the tendency not to give correct information. Also some critics point out that opinion polls are being used more to create public opinion than to gather and report it. Political parties in particular quite often criticise opinion polls of deliberately favouring one or other political party. In spite of all criticisms the opinion polls and surveys are becoming very popular and are being used by all, including governments, political parties, media and researchers as a useful method to understand and analyse public opinion.

### LIMITATIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION

Even though public opinion is a very effective means of communication between government and citizens, it is also a tool for continuous check on government, yet it has a limited use. The use and role of public opinion rests on certain assumptions. These can be described as:

- (i) the public is interested in the affairs of the government;

- (ii) the public is informed, rather well informed;
- (iii) the public deliberates and reaches rational conclusions;
- (iv) the rationally formulated opinions tend to be held uniformly throughout the society;
- (v) the public, having reached a conclusion, would make its will known at the polls and elsewhere;
- (vi) the public will or at least general will be enacted into law;
- (vii) the continued surveillance and constant criticism would ensure the maintenance of an enlightened public opinion, and consequently, a public policy based upon the principles of social morality and justice.

In a country like India where majority of the population is living in rural area, with widespread illiteracy and poverty, society remaining fragmented on caste and community basis and under the influence of traditional elite, the above mentioned factors become a difficult proposition. Public opinion sometimes becomes more a means to legitimise interests of ruling class than a reflection of genuine public aspirations. With the spread of education, opening of media, linkages being established between rural and urban areas and political awareness reaching marginalised sections of the society, public opinion is likely to play more significant role in Indian democratic process.

**EXERCISES**

1. Define Public Opinion. What is its significance in a democracy?
2. Explain the various agencies of Public Opinion.
3. How does electronic media influences the formation of Public Opinion?
4. Examine the significance of Opinion Polls.
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Government and Public Opinion;
  - (ii) Limitations of Public Opinion.

## CHAPTER 7

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# Interest Groups and Pressure Groups

**I**N the last chapter you have read that in modern day political process is the political parties which are engaged in the contest for political decision-making power. They seek this power to formulate and implement the policies in accordance with their ideologies or programmes, primarily to protect the interests of groups they represent. Even when they are not in power, political parties keep on making efforts to influence the policy making in accordance with their preference. Nevertheless, ultimate aim of political parties remains to acquire power. In addition to political parties there are other groups or associations those try to influence the decision making or policy formulation by the government in accordance with their specific interests. These groups themselves do not enter into elections for acquiring power but are engaged only in putting pressure on the government in particular, and political process in general, remaining outside the government. Such groups are called pressure or interest groups.

### **MEANING AND DEFINITION**

Interest groups can be defined as voluntary organisations formed to defend a particular interest in a society or to promote a cause, or political position, without participating in actual contest for power. In general, use of interest groups is made with regard to groups which are organised to promote, advance or defend some common interest of an occupational group like lawyers, traders, teachers, farmers, doctors, etc. There has also emerged such terms — as lobbies and lobbyists. This in fact refers to the practice, especially in the USA, to influence and pressurise the policy makers. This practice called lobbying, again is a method used by interest groups. Thus, in general, organisations of specific interests to influence policy making are primarily interest groups. Because of tactics used by them they are also called pressure groups. However, in terms of their purpose, nature, tactics and role both the pressure groups and interests groups are often used interchangeably.

From the above definition of interest groups and pressure groups certain characteristics of such groups become clear. The first thing to note down is that these groups are organised groups, thus, they can be distinguished from acts of participation by individuals. And accordingly, each group works for collective interests of its members. Secondly, pressure groups, while organised on the basis of common interests are primarily concerned with influencing the decision making by putting pressure from outside. Thus, where political parties aspire to become the government, groups seek just to influence it. They do not aspire to form governments, but to change its direction and policy in a particular manner. The interest and pressure groups, do not fight elections. They may however, help some parties protecting their interests. These groups differ from political parties in that they seek to exert influence from outside, rather than to win or exercise government power. Further, these pressure groups have a limited issue focus, in that they are usually concerned with a specific cause or the interests of a particular group. In general, while political parties are the formal, open and recognised part of the political system, the interest and pressure groups are informal, closed unrecognised part. Interest groups are also distinguished from social movements by their greater degree of formal organisation. Today, in almost all countries, particularly in liberal democracies, a large number of interest groups reflect a wide range of issues

and concerns. In India, we have a number of interest and pressure groups of various kinds which are playing an important role in our democracy.

### INTEREST GROUPS

Interest and pressure groups in India are not a new political phenomena. They have been in existence from colonial period. In fact the Indian National Congress in its origin itself was a pressure group making a number of specific demands on the British administration such as increase in number of Indians recruited to the administrative services, more quota for Indian students in England, etc. In due course there also emerged trade unions, farmers associations, business associations, youth organisations and groups of castes and religions demanding protection of their specific interests. They were also used to mobilise support for the national movement. Today, they are a growing force in Indian politics. Of course, the issues with which groups are concerned and many of the tactics that they use in pursuit of their aims, have been changing, but the broad principles of pressure group politics are the same. Since independence, when government activity has spread into the spheres of social welfare, industry, and economic planning, the State has been inevitably drawn into closer direct contact with more people, and more groups of people, thus, giving a greater impetus to the activities of organised groups. Political system also provides

considerable freedom to different segments of society to make demands on the systems. There are also cases when a pressure group that emerges tends to produce a counter pressure group thereby increasing their number. The communication revolution leading to the growth of mass media and efficiency and respectability of public relations also means that pressure groups have greater facilities for influencing public opinion. So more and more interests tend to form organised groups. Thus, the variety of groups in India today is immense. These groups can be placed into four broad categories i.e. Social or Identity Based Groups, Associational or Professional Groups, Institutional Groups, and Ad hoc Groups.

### **SOCIAL OR IDENTITY BASED GROUPS**

During colonial period to counter the onslaught of English education and Western value system, to demand proper share in the new professional and government jobs, and to protect social and cultural interests in the emerging politics of numbers in the young democratic institutions, there came up a number of groups based on community interests (religion, caste, language, ethnicity, region, etc.). In some cases British administration itself encouraged formation of such groups to counter some of the demands of national movement. After independence, in the context of democratic process and competition for scarce resources, such groups have

increased significantly. The chief characteristic of social or identity groups is that they are embedded in the social fabric. In a sense their membership is based on birth rather than professional or class basis. These groups can further be divided into two. One which are primarily concerned with community service and the other which use communal or social mobilisation in political and economic competition. In the first type we can mention DAV Educational Institutions, Rama Krishna Mission, Chief Khalsa Dewan, Singh Sabhas, Muslim Educational Trusts like Vakkam Maulavi Foundation, Al-Ameen Education Trust, Anglo-Indian Christian Association, Jain Seva Sangh and many more of these type which are engaged in the educational, social and economic upliftment of their communities. For that purpose they seek financial, technical and other types of help from government and put pressure for that without prejudice to other communities or encouraging communal or social conflicts. In recent years a large number of caste and sub-caste associations have also come up. Though most of such associations are loosely organised, they are becoming very important basis of interest articulation. Some of the groups originally formed as ethnic or caste associations have also got transformed into political parties. Anti-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu in due course of time became Dravida Kazhagam(DK) and later Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The Scheduled Caste Federation later expanded into the Republican



Party of India. You have already read that the origin of present day Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) was from All India Backward and Minorities Communities Employees Federation.

Other type of identity groups are those which are engaged in assertion of special status, superiority or preference for their communities vis-à-vis other communities. Jamat-I-Islami among the Muslims, Rashtriya Swayamasevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) among Hindus, All India Sikh Students Federation among Sikhs, etc. are such groups. These groups are engaged not only in the welfare of their communities but also in transfer of political process according to their value systems. There are also various Language Associations promoting the development of languages.

### **ASSOCIATIONAL OR PROFESSIONAL GROUPS**

Associational or Professional groups are the ones that are formed by people who come together to pursue shared professional interests. They are sometimes also called protective or functional groups. Trade unions, business associations, trade associations, professional bodies, etc., are prime examples of this type of groups. Their unique character is derived from the fact that they represent a section of society like workers, employers, consumers, etc. It can also be said that these groups are based on modern economic and vocational

interests. The largest and more important of these are trade and business groups, trade unions and farmers and peasant organisations.

### **BUSINESS GROUPS**

Business and industry in any society is the most articulated and active section in terms of protection of interests and influencing policy. In India they started organising themselves during colonial period itself. At that time while they were in favour of keeping themselves aloof from confrontation politics of the Congress led national movement, nevertheless, they in many ways supported the constructive activity of the Congress and cause of freedom. In independent India, business and industry had to work in the context of development policies and planning. They had both opportunities to grow and apprehensions of restrictions because of licence and control regimes envisaged in the then adopted mixed economy strategy. Therefore, they felt a strong need to organise to put pressure on the government in their favour. As a result various types of business and commercial associations, emerged at regional and national level. Important among them are Chambers of Commerce and Industries and their federations like Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). The FICCI today is the main spokesman of Indian capitalism and big industry in particular.

Through these bodies, the big business have sustained access to the executive and bureaucracy for lobbying while the policy is being made and implemented. Ownership and operational control of the means of production give them tremendous lever to influence the governmental policies. With their strong organisation and enormous money power they have gained an important share in preparing and implementing decisions on matters of financial and industrial policies. As a result, despite the official ideology of the state for a socialist pattern of society, the big business groups through its insistent pressure has been able to make itself a legitimate and powerful sector. With liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, role of business has increased further. They can now better handle unfavourable policies by cultivating personal contacts, paying bribes, using press and electronic media and employing professional lobbyists.

## TRADE UNIONS

The labour, almost all over the world has emerged as an important organised class. A significant role in this regard has been played by the emergence of Marxist and socialist ideologies and parties. While in some countries development of workers organisation has taken long time in India, the trade union movement has developed with an astonishing speed. During Colonial period both the Communist Party and the Congress helped organisation of workers in a significant way as natural

opponents of colonial oppression. Not only trade unions were established in factories and regions, but efforts were made to organise them at national level also. In 1920 All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was established under Congress influence. In 1929 this fell in the hands of the Communists.

After independence, policy of rapid industrialisation, establishment and growth of a very large public sector, employing millions of persons, socialist rhetoric of the government and decision by Communist parties to participate in election, all provided conditions conducive for the growth of Trade Union movement. Various political parties also started sponsoring their own trade union federations or centres, like Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), etc.

The trade union movement in India over the last five decade or so has definitely come to occupy its own place in Indian social process. Consequently, the working class has been able to exert significant pressure at the policy formulation level and their strength is well recognised by the political parties and the government. Although poorly financed and under outside leadership, they can be extremely vocal in their demands and militant in their methods. Also because of the concentration of industries in certain regions, they can provide significant vote-strengths for the parties. The organised working class, therefore, has been able to obtain

quite a few successes in bettering their economic and social conditions. The trade unions by their activities have also helped in creating social and political awareness among workers.

Trade unions are still the best organised groups in the society. However, the process of globalisation is posing a serious challenge for the working class. Trade unions therefore, have to rejuvenate themselves in their new role in emerging new economic system.

### FARMERS AND PEASANT GROUPS

It is well known that majority of India's population lives in villages and Indian economy remains basically an agricultural economy. At the time of independence, it was essential to improve the agricultural production on the one hand and introduce land reforms on the other. Various policies and programmes starting with the abolition of *Zamindari* system, limited land reforms, green revolution, mobilisation of different sections of rural population in electoral politics have aroused awareness and consciousness among rural people as also created new groups with different interests. These in turn have resulted in the emergence of organised groups and movements for protection and consolidation of interests. Many observers call these groups under a common terminology of "Kisan Groups" or Agricultural movements. In fact, there are no common *kisan* interests. These are different for different categories. In a broader sense, we

can divide Kisan Groups into two the farmers associations and peasant groups.

### FARMERS ASSOCIATIONS

Farmers agitations have been in the news for the past several years. Since the late 1970s, farmers have been organising themselves in associations and gaining prominence by focusing attention on higher prices for agricultural products, lowering electricity rates, easier terms of credit for agricultural investment, subsidies for fertilisers, etc. Important among these are the Bhartiya Kisan Union in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab, the Shetkari Sangathan in Maharashtra, and the Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangh. At the centre of these is the discontentment of rich and middle level farmers.

The roots of these farmers' movements can be traced to the expansion of the Green Revolution in agricultural strategies and the assertion of political power by rich peasants through mass mobilisation of the peasantry under their leadership. These movements, in general, reflect new levels of politicisation among the middle level farmers, clamouring for greater concessions and share in political parties. For quite some time, these movements projected a non-political image of theirs by staying away from political parties and constitute a pressure group from outside. However, of late they have realised that direct exercise of power may be more effective than indirect influence. So they have also

started participating in or allying with parties. The success of these movements have prompted political parties to give greater attention to agricultural issues in their political programme.

### PEASANTS MOVEMENT

A large part of India's population engaged in agriculture consists of small farmers, share croppers and labourers. After independence, it was assumed that because of their number, in democracy the rural poor will have political salience and will increasingly be able to place demands on the political and economic systems of the Republic. However, this did not happen. The nature of the State, colonial bureaucracy and lack of confidence by political parties in fact distorted the aims and objectives of the developmental strategies in favour of rich, upper classes and urban areas.

Various political parties and association have been mobilising these peasants by educating them of their exploitation and assuring their amelioration. Thus, there started emerging organisation of agricultural labourers and small farmers. They have come up as Kisan Sabhas and various agricultural unions. The basic purpose of these is to strive to improve the economic condition of all those who earn their livelihood by toiling in agricultural fields and related work. The peasant movement, however, is not very well organised. It remains fragmented.

Nevertheless, consciousness and awareness among the rural poor and

peasants is increasing. They have started realising the power of their vote and united action. But the battle for these groups is hard and long. Particularly in view of recent economic reforms, arrival of multinational companies and the process of globalisation, the peasants and rural people have hard tasks ahead. Much will depend how political parties steer Indian democracy.

### CAUSE GROUPS

The main purpose of this groups is to advance a general social objective like preservation of environment, protection of human rights and civil liberties, abolition of capital punishment, introduction of electoral reforms, prevention of violence against women, etc. These groups are also known as public interest groups to emphasise that they promote collective social interest, rather than selective group interest. These groups may or may not be well organised. Their success depends more on public and media support than by lobbying. You must have heard about groups opposing construction of big dams, removal of *jhuggis*, opposing child labour, bonded labour, anti-dowry etc. Such groups are becoming quite popular.

### INSTITUTIONAL GROUPS

Institutional groups are those groups which are within the government and attempt to exert influence or pressure through the machinery of government itself. Bureaucracies and the military

are the clearest examples of institutional groups. Within groups we hear of IAS, IPS, IFS lobbies, etc. Similarly within military often there are reports of pressure from Army, Air force and Navy, etc. for some preferences on certain matters. Such groups are particularly important in non-democratic regimes where autonomous groups are generally suppressed. But they remain active in democratic regimes also as a part of competition between elites. In India also they are quite active though their activities are not much public. They try to influence the policies with regard to allocation of resources in the areas of their preferences, for importance to be given to their role, etc. They indirectly also help other groups by supporting their cause.

### AD HOC GROUPS

Finally, there are groups which come into existence to pressurise the government for a specific objective at a time. Therefore, they remain active or even organised only till that objective is achieved. Examples of these include groups organised to get a railway service in a city, getting a book or an activity banned, opening of a school, college or hospital, etc. Such groups can be very active for a short period. Some of these may survive and extend their activities as cause groups.

### HOW GROUPS ACT

The methods by which pressure groups seek to influence the process of government are many. A group generally, does not confine to a single strategy or try to influence through just

one channel of influence. At the same time, methods vary from country to country according to the nature of political system and type of society. Similarly, the nature of the group and the resources at its disposal are crucial determinants of its political strategy. The resources include public support for the group's goals, the size of its membership, its financial strength and organisational capacities, personal or institutional links with governmental bodies and personnel and political parties, etc.

The various groups in India operate within the federal and parliamentary nature of the polity. The interest groups also approach the authorities informally at the legislative as well as party level. The methods they use for the purpose include sending of memoranda, personal deputations, organising social gathering with those in position of authority, lobbying with the MPs and MLAs. Interest group pressure is sometimes exerted through political parties. Relationship between political parties and trade unions is a typical example of this. Similarly, some youth groups are also openly associated with parties like National Students Union of India (NSUI) with Congress and Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) with Bhartiya Janata Party.

In order to gain governmental attention and redress, some groups often resort to mass demonstrations, hartals, strikes and civil disobedience. This is particularly true of the interest groups of the students, teachers,

government servants and various trade unions. Of late even small and medium peasants have organised themselves into kisan rallies, *rasta roko* and other types of stirs. This gets public attention and does make the government respond to such actions.

A very important mechanism for pressure groups is the use of media — both press and electronic. In the present day world, media has become a very significant means for creating and articulating public opinion. People get much influenced by the news and views expressed in newspapers or television. Many a times, people start feeling as if the issue is of their own interest, though it may be against. The best example of this is the influence advertisements are having on our consumption pattern and felt needs. If advertisements can influence people so much the opinions of experts considered to be objective and neutral are likely to change people's thinking much more. Pressure groups therefore, try to influence the experts, news makers and producers to give more coverage to their activities and more importantly to present their case as if it is in public interest in general. Moneyed people have started their own newspapers; they are putting enormous money in private radio and TV channels. All these are playing an important role in influencing decision making.

The influence that an interest or pressure group can exercise depends on several factors. An important factor is groups own organisational strength and discipline. Among other factors are

groups capacity to elicit people's support, its access to decision making bodies, availability of resources, etc.

### ROLE OF PRESSURE GROUPS

From the above discussion it emerges that there are various organised groups that make use of pressure for getting their claims accepted by the decision makers. Though they have been slow to develop, these groups in India are a form of linkage and means of communication between the masses and the elite. They provide scope for expanding participation. While the interest groups make demands upon society for the benefit of its members, they also increase the political consciousness and participation of their membership. Interest groups can also be reservoirs of political leadership. Most importantly interest groups are a vehicle for social integration. Bringing individuals for the expression of common interests, they may bridge the gap not only between the mass and the elite but between the various traditional divisions within the society as a whole.

As a whole pressure groups occupy a significant position in the Indian political system. They play an important role in the functional performance of various political structures. With economic liberalisation and globalisation, the role of pressure groups has further increased. Recent experience shows how the big business and big farmers are exerting their influence both on government and

political parties. However, all the pressure groups are not able to exercise their influence. Such weak pressure groups remain an instrument in the socially and economically powerful hands.

### EXERCISES

1. What do you understand by a Pressure Group? Describe the main characteristics of Pressure Groups.
2. Explain the meaning of social or identity based groups giving examples of some such groups in India.
3. Describe the development and role of Trade unions in India.
4. What do you understand by Farmers and Peasants Groups? Describe their role in India.
5. How do Pressure Groups work to achieve their goals?
6. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Distinction between Political Parties and Pressure Groups;
  - (ii) Emergence of Pressure Groups in India;
  - (iii) Business Groups;
  - (iv) Institutional Groups;
  - (v) Role of Pressure Groups.

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**UNIT III**

**DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY**

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**CHAPTER 8****Socio-Economic Development  
and Planning in India**

YOU are well aware, that during about 200 years of British colonial rule, India suffered much set back in economic, social and industrial development. The traditional Indian agriculture based economy including cottage industry and handicraft was destroyed in favour of British machine made goods. Whatever little industry was allowed to come up was primarily to serve the British interests. This too was largely dominated by British capital or by a small section of Indian monopolies. In fact whatever economic development was taking place in the spheres of trade, industry and banking it was concentrated in a few hands, which led to the establishment of monopolies and trusts. In agriculture, British introduced *Zamindari* system and commercialisation. Thus, the land also came to be concentrated in a few hands reducing a large number of cultivators as share croppers or landless labourers. The new land revenue system, excessive land revenue, low productivity, etc. forced the farmers to take recourse to borrowing of money from money

lenders. Whatever land the cultivators and small farmers had also in many cases passed into the hands of money lenders.

Though in the initial years, under pressure from social reformers, British administration introduced certain social reforms but it was not part of their agenda. In fact soon they stopped interfering in Indian social affairs and not only allowed some of the aberrations to continue but in some cases encouraged their accentuation. British interest in development of education in India was limited to producing a class of English language knowing clerks (*Babus*) for their administration. Thus, education in India at all levels was totally neglected. The poorer sections, marginalised groups and women had negligible access to education. As a policy of divide and rule, they encouraged fragmentation of Indian society on religious, caste and tribal basis. Thus, at the time of independence, India inherited a social structure that had remained almost stagnant, an economy which had been shattered. This was at a time of tremendous scientific and technological

advancement across the world. People of India, therefore were looking for rapid socio-economic development and transformation. In this chapter, we will discuss what this development meant, what were the goals and expectations from it and what strategy and mechanism was adopted to achieve this. But it is important for us to have a glimpse of the state of Indian economy and society at the time of independence.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF INDIA ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE**

At the time of independence, India had a population of about 30.5 crore, of which more than 82 per cent lived in villages. Understandably, the Indian economy was agriculture based economy. More than 72 per cent of India's work force was dependent on agriculture. Mining, factory establishments and various types of cottage, village and small enterprises engaged about 11 per cent of work force. The organised industry employed only about 2 per cent, a figure lower than the number of administrative workers. This type of economic structure obviously meant very low productivity and high incidence of poverty. The national income of India in 1950-51 was estimated to be Rs 8,853 crore which meant annual average per capita income of Rs 265. Comparable per capita income in Britain, United States, Japan, France and Australia were Rs 3,598, Rs 8,840, Rs 870, Rs 3,280 and Rs 4,340 respectively. It clearly shows that in

terms of per capita income, India was among the poorest countries of the world. Not only this, the distribution of income tended to be too unequal meaning thereby a large section of population was very poor.

India in various respects was economically dependent on the advanced countries. Its exports consisted chiefly of primary products and went mainly to markets in the advanced countries, especially Britain, whereas the imports consisted chiefly of goods that were obtained from the advanced countries. It also showed a marked deficit in the balance of trade. Furthermore, there remained a substantial degree of foreign ownership or control of domestic resources. Finally, the country was characterised by a pronounced economic dualism. A modern, foreign oriented, largely capitalist sector could be found in a few major urban centres and around important sources of raw material, while the rest of the country remained dominated by a more traditional, wholly indigenous, largely pre-capitalist sector.

Within the ambit of an overall backwardness, Indian economy was characterised by widespread regional imbalances. As the colonial rulers did not bother about the balanced economic development, inter-state and inter-district disparities were quite sharp. There were differences in the levels of per capita income and consumption, literacy, medical and health facilities, population growth, infrastructure development, employment opportunities and so on.

Independent India thus, inherited a backward economy in which prevailed extreme poverty and deprivation, characterised by stagnant agriculture, an uneven and weak industrial sector, low capital resources and regional imbalances.

### **SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

The major social heritage of India was its ethnic and cultural diversity and hierarchical social order. No doubt the British undertook some social reform measures periodically, but on the whole their policy was not to interfere in India's social life. In fact they were interested in keeping Indian society divided. Not only this policy of division set the stage for partition of India at the time of independence, but it also meant that independent India itself was to be comprised of a great number of different regions and have relatively little sense of a national identity. It was particularly so because within this plurality social interactions of race, religion, caste, community, language and region were based on archaic considerations.

As for the languages, there were about one thousand languages including the dialects. Even Hindi, the most widely used of India's languages was spoken by not more than about thirty per cent of the Indians. A vast majority of Indians followed one or the other variety of Hindi; there was also a substantial number of Muslims, who accounted for more than ten per cent of the population even after the partition of the country. In terms of

number, only Indonesia and Pakistan had more Muslim inhabitants than India. The Muslims and other small communities such as the Sikhs, the Jains, the Parsees, the Buddhists, the Christians, etc. constituted more than one fifth of the total population of India.

Widespread illiteracy was yet another factor which prevented the people from coming out of their traditional loyalties and developing a modern and secular outlook. Along with other factors, lack of education hampered social mobility and dissolution of prevailing prejudices and cultural barriers. In such a situation, development of national outlook and ethos was extremely difficult.

As already mentioned society was divided on caste basis. There were nearly 4 crore people who were considered untouchables and were later described as Scheduled Castes. About one crore belonged to Scheduled Tribes category. In terms of access to productive resources, land, employment, social services, etc. these groups were in a disadvantaged position. In addition, they faced social discrimination and suppression.

At the time of independence the socio-economic condition of India presented a very grim picture. British colonial exploitation had not only hampered and held back development but had also crippled social and economic situation in many ways. With the arrival of independence people were looking for change in all this. All this meant that India had to achieve a rapid rate of development.

## GOALS OF DEVELOPMENT

From the above, it becomes clear that at the time of independence people of India in general, were looking towards an era of change. The poverty and backwardness of India was not because of lack of resources or potential for development, it was because of deliberate colonial policies whose primary aim was to use India's resource for their own development. At the same, it was a period when technological revolution, developments in communication and science had made rapid progress possible. Added to all this was the commitment of our leadership. During National Freedom Struggle, they not only providing a strong critique of colonial policies but also provided alternative policies for economic growth and social transformation. As such it was not only political freedom that the people of India were looking forward to, it was also for the establishment of a new order of society. Development as such, was the expectation of the people, need of the time and the commitment of our leadership.

It needs to be clarified that many a times by development it is understood growth in per capita income or production. Higher growth rates and production, of course are important but this growth at the same time has to be seen in relation to fulfilment of wants and needs of wider sections of people in a dignified manner. Thus, development has to be judged by the

improvement it makes in the quality of life of people— both material and spiritual, creation of a harmonious equality based society and self-reliant proud nation. Quality of life depends on many things — health, hygiene, nutrition, life-expectancy, education, housing and general living conditions. In general, development means a society based on the ideas of self-reliance, equality, equity and justice. To achieve, such a society the goals of development for India at independence were:

- (i) Rapid rate of growth to increase national income;
- (ii) Reduction of income inequalities among different sections, classes and regions;
- (iii) Removal of concentration of wealth and resources in fewer hands and use them for the wider benefit of society;
- (iv) Removal of poverty;
- (v) Increase in employment;
- (vi) Provision of basic minimum needs for a dignified human living including health, education and housing;
- (vii) Conservation of ecology and protection of environment;
- (viii) Making of national economy a self-reliant and independent of foreign control and aid;
- (ix) Remove the traditional constraints on various oppressed sections of society like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward classes and women etc.

From the above it becomes clear that central concern for development was to achieve "growth with social justice." The Preamble of the Indian Constitution and part on Directive Principles of State Policy had already described these goals as the ideals of new State. Later these were also defined as terms like Socialist pattern of society. In December 1954, the Lok Sabha affirmed that "the objective of our economic policy should be a socialistic pattern of society." In January 1955, Jawahar Lal Nehru personally moved a resolution at the Avadi session of Congress which committed the party to the principle that "planning should take place with a view to the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society where the principal means of production are under social ownership or control." In 1976 by putting the word "Socialist" in the Preamble of the Constitution, socialism was made a constitutional goal. Though, the term socialist was never defined but in general understanding it implied redistribution of wealth. Thus, the common understanding was that poverty and inequality were to be fought by increased production and the redistribution of wealth. Issue, however, was how to achieve these goals. For that we adopted the strategy of planning.

#### **PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT**

To attain the above mentioned goals of development India adopted a mixed

economy model of development and planning as a strategy. Mixed economy in a way was a new method used by Indian planners. Prevailing models were capitalist and socialist models. The capitalist model means private ownership of means of production and economic processes to be determined by market forces. Socialist model means public or state ownership of means of production and economic activities to be guided by State in accordance with social needs. Both these models have positive and negative points of their own. Indian planners wanted to take good points from both the systems. Therefore, emerged the model of mixed economy which means prevalence of public, private and joint sectors side by side with in one system.

#### **MIXED ECONOMY**

In the mixed economy system, State owned means of production were to be used to promote social welfare. Private owned means of production were to serve private interests but within the norms laid down by the State. The underlying purpose of mixed economy was to attain rapid economic development and ensure that no exploitative and restrictive tendencies emerge in the economy. This was clearly mentioned in the cabinet resolution of 15 March, 1950 which established the Planning Commission in India. The principles were mentioned as: (i) that the citizens men and women, equally have the right to an adequate means of

livelihood; (ii) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the country are so distributed as best to subserve the common good; and (iii) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment. As a whole it can be said that India adopted a mixed economy model with a major role for the State for protection of the weaker sections of the society, control of distribution of essential commodities, promotion of infrastructural facilities, prevention of private monopolies, creation of egalitarian and just society, reduction of inequality of income and reduction of imbalances between regions. The methods and instruments to implement this process of development in mixed economy model were:

- (i) Political democracy;
- (ii) Planning and governmental regulation and control of economy;
- (iii) Significant place and role for public sector;
- (iv) Licensing, subsidies, progressive taxing, assistance to private sector, labour welfare, price control, land reforms, etc.

In general, it was to be a planned economic development to be implemented through the institution of Planning Commission. Let us have a look what is meant by planning so that we will be better able to understand the nature, role, success and failures of planning and Planning Commission.

## PLANNING IN INDIA

Planning means formulation of a strategy for the future. In other words, it is programming for action for a particular period for achieving certain specific goals. In economic terms it implies the assessment of one's resources at present and their allocation among different uses to meet some specific targets in the future. In very simple terms planning is a process of devising a course of action — what is to be done, when to be done and how to be done?

In India significance of planning was recognised even before Independence. Indian leaders were very much influenced by the planning experiment started in Soviet Union since 1928. Various individuals and groups brought to the fore the importance of planning and made concrete proposals for that. In 1938 Indian National Congress established a National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Even the government established a Planning and Development Board in 1944. As alternatives, various groups formulated and presented plans for the consideration of nation. These included the Bombay Plan formulated by a group of industrialists, Gandhian Plan drafted by one of Mahatma Gandhi's disciples Shriman Narayana, People's Plan produced by M.N. Roy, etc. After independence, to achieve the goals of development as discussed above, planning was considered the



most effective way. For this was established a Planning Commission on 15 March, 1950.

### PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning Commission was established as a multi member body with Prime Minister as its chairman and a full time Vice-Chairman. The Vice-Chairman is given the status of a Cabinet Minister. There is no fixed number of members. In general, Planning Commission consists of eight to ten members. These members are given the status equal to that of minister of State. In addition, Planning Commission also has an elaborate organisational structure consisting of advisors, and support staff. The order establishing the Planning Commission has defined its specific functions as follows:

(i) *Assessment of Resources:* The Commission makes an assessment of all material, capital and human resources of the country including technical personnel, and investigate the possibilities of augmenting such of those resources as are found to be deficient in relation to the nation's requirements.

(ii) *Plan Formulation:* The Commission is expected to formulate plans for the most effective and balanced utilisation of the country's resources.

(iii) *Defining Stages of Implementation:* The Planning Commission has to define, on determination of priorities, the stages in which the plan

should be carried out and propose the allocation of resources for due completion of each stage.

(iv) *Indication of Requisites:* Another function of the Commission is to indicate the factors which are tending to retard economic development, and determine the conditions which, in view of the current social and political situation, should be established for the successful execution of the plan.

(v) *Determination of Machinery for Execution:* The Commission has to determine the nature of the machinery which will be necessary for securing successful implementation of each stage of the plan in all its aspects.

(vi) *Plan Appraisal:* An important function of the Commission is to appraise, from time to time, the progress achieved in the execution of each of the Plan and recommend the adjustment of the policy and measures that such appraisal may show to be necessary.

(vii) *To Render Advice:* Finally the Planning Commission has been asked to make such interim or ancillary recommendations as appear to be appropriate either for facilitating the discharge of duties assigned to it, or in consideration of the prevailing economic conditions, current policies, measures and development programmes or on examination of such specific problems as may be referred to it by Central and State governments.

## THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS

In view of the prescribed goals of development the Planning Commission in India began with formulating Five-Year Plans. The plans are formulated on the basis of guidelines provided by the National Development Council. A draft of the final plan is considered by the Union Cabinet and then submitted for the approval of the National Development Council. After the approval of NDC and the cabinet it is presented before Parliament. After the plan is formulated, it is divided into annual plans for convenient implementation and allocation of resources. The plan is implemented by the State and Union governments. Planning Commission itself is not involved in implementation. It however, monitors and evaluates the progress of implementation. The First Five-Year Plan formulated by the commission commenced on 1 April, 1951. Since then Ninth Five-Year Plans and six annual plans have been formulated and completed:

- (i) First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) ;
- (ii) Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61) ;
- (iii) Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66) ;
- (iv) Annual Plans (1966-69) ;
- (v) Fourth Five-Year Plan (1969-74) ;
- (vi) Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-79) ;
- (vii) Annual Plan (1979-80) ;
- (viii) Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85) ;
- (ix) Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90) ;
- (x) Annual Plans (1990-92) ;
- (xi) Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-97) ;
- (xii) Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) ;

From the above it emerges that during the years 1966-69, 1979-80, and 1990-92 there were no Five-Year Plans. Though, it is said that there were annual plans but the fact is that there were only stop-gap arrangements. These are the years that represent changes of government, instability or lack of clarity about developmental goals and strategies. Therefore, either the five year plans were not formulated or were subject to review and changes by the succeeding governments. Many observers call these years as years of plan holidays.

During the Ninth Five-Year Plan, within the broader objective of raising the standard of living of the people and to open out to them opportunities for a richer and more varied life, there have been continuities and shifts in goals, priorities, strategies and perceptions. Successive plans consistently placed emphasis on the attainment of the objectives of self-reliance, social justice, industrialisation, modernisation and economic growth. But all plans did not place equal emphasis on the same objectives. However, till the time of Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90), planners had been caught in the dilemma and choice between rapid economic growth and distributive justice. Also in the situation of a democratic order of gaining votes and support of various sections of the society there was absence of political will to attack vested interests when required. In addition, the bureaucracy not only was not oriented and trained

for development administration, but itself belonged to the propertied class and those sections of the society which was not in favour of change. As a result, the primary concern of development in India became economic growth. Even the public sector became an instrument to serve the interests of middle class and upper-middle class consumers. State, under pressure from vested and powerful interests kept on providing subsidies for richer sections of the society instead of collecting taxes from them for social transformation. Unable to mobilise resources the State became dependent on aid and loans both from within the and outside the country. Consequences of all these were:

- (i) A large fiscal deficit because of government expenditure outpacing income and revenues.
- (ii) A huge foreign debt, with a high debt-service ratio bringing country under debt-trap causing serious repayment problems and undermining the country's credit rating.
- (iii) An inefficient economy in which on the one hand processes of controls and licenses which had been introduced to guide economic development into desired directions had become means of corruption and hindrance in the growth; and on the other hand the public sector, established to create infrastructure, labour welfare and provision of essential goods for masses, had become huge loss making inefficient and bureaucratic controlled units in

the service of politicians, private sector and civil servants.

Thus, by the middle of 1980s India, like many other developing countries was in a serious economic situation. At this very time, the Western developed world once again was working to establish its control over the world economy by integrating the whole world into a global capitalist economic order. Collapse of Soviet Union and other East European socialist countries helped in paving the way for this. Developed world thus, started making use of international economic institutions like International Monetary Fund and World Bank to pressurise the under-debt, and slowly developing countries for changing their economies in line with the process of what came to be known as globalisation.

### **NEW ECONOMIC POLICY AND GLOBALISATION**

Having failed to achieve the goals either of a rapid-rate of growth or satisfactory redistributive justice the government from the beginning of 1980s started tilting towards giving preference to growth. It was felt that state controls, public sector and restrictions on private sector introduced in the name of planned development and social justice have prove a hindrance in the path of growth. Thus, there began the process of liberalisation of economy. By middle of 1980s the strategy for development had become two-fold. First was to de-emphasise the role of the government in economic

development by ruthlessly slashing the public sector outlays and opening up the economy for private enterprise. Second was to tighten the control of the planners over what was left of the government rule, particularly in areas of taxation and credit related policies.

The changes in the policy packages towards New Economic policy started from early 1980s remained limited and unsystematic. It was from 1991 onwards that a clear well defined new economic and development policy was set in. All governments since then have been carrying the economic reform process forward. The new economic policy is based on the ideals of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation.

In this context there came removal of industrial licensing on most products, disinvestments of government holding in public sector, reduction in the number of products reserved for small sectors, liberalisation and reduction of tariffs on imports, and removal of restrictions and encouragement to foreign private capital. All this mean freedom to private sector to produce whatever it wants, decline in the status and role of public sector, arrival of foreign goods and investment in Indian markets and withdrawal of state or reduction in its role in various social service sectors, including housing, health and education.

The new economic policy has both positive and negative points. No doubt it has given impetus to production and growth by giving initiative to private sector. There is competition in the

market and consumers have a wide range of choice. Country's *balance of payment* situation seems to have stabilised. Benefits of technological developments and information technology revolution are reaching India fast. Critics, however, point that these gains are very limited and benefit only a small section of the society. Related to this is criticism of consumerism: The multinational companies to sell their goods, with vast resources in their hands are using media and advertisements to create demands for goods and products which are non-essential. Another consequence of this is change in value systems. Everything Western, including values, are considered superior.

It is also pointed out that economic reform have neglected the agriculture sector as also generation of employment which are very essential in a country like India. On the other hand it has failed to reduce the revenue deficit. Similarly, foreign borrowing is increasing and will show its impact in due course of time. There is a redistribution of income in favour of the better of classes and deterioration in living standards of masses. Asset owners stand to gain, wage and salaried workers to lose. The process of development and planning itself therefore has become different.

### **NEW ECONOMIC POLICY AND PLANNING**

New Economic Policy means change in the perspective of role of State in

economy and development. It, however, does not mean rejection of the need for determination of goals of development and providing necessary path and guidance for that. Also in a democracy State remains under tremendous pressure of voters and therefore, cannot completely neglect their demands and aspirations. Hence, even in the new economic environment, economic planning continues to be an important factor determining the strategies for public investment, besides providing guidelines for channelising private sector investment in desired directions.

In this context process of long-term planning continues in India. However, from Eighth Plan onwards, there is change in the concept of economic planning. Now onwards, it is stated that, "the role of planning will largely be indicative." In other words, plan will not be used to direct investable resources according to the priorities fixed by the government, irrespective of the signals given by market forces. The Preamble to the Plan Document on the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) states that the objective of the plan is to focus on growth with social justice and equity. The participation of public and private sectors and all tiers of government in this process is, therefore, vital. The Approach paper to Tenth Plan (2002-2007) approved by National Development Council in September 2001 indicates that in future the role of government and the public sector will be confined to social sector while infrastructure development and industrial development will be left to the

private sector. The Planning would seek to better the quality of life on all fronts by the end of Eleventh Five-Year Plan. This, of course will need serious efforts and renewed energies. Unfortunately, the experience so far has not been that much encouraging.

### DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING – AN ASSESSMENT

From the above discussion it brings out that Planning was adopted to transfer the poor, backward and under developed social order into a prosperous independent developed modern society based on the ideas of balanced growth, justice, equity and equality. For that purpose, so far we had completed Nine Five Year Plans. All of them have consistently placed emphasis on the attainment of the objectives of self-reliance, social justice, industrialisation, modernisation and economic growth. Further in the age of globalisation and liberalisation emphasis has shifted in favour of providing incentives and facilities to the private sector and attracting foreign investment within the framework of achieving growth with social justice.

Once we review the results of last over 50 years of planned development we can on the positive side say that India has many achievements to its credit. The overall volume of industrial production had increased more than four fold by the mid seventies. New branches of the mining and processing industries, including metallurgy and heavy engineering have been created in

the state and private sectors. A stagnant and dependent economy has been modernised and made more self-reliant. There has been a steady increase in agricultural output, particularly of food-grains, making us virtually self-sufficient. There has been a good measure of growth in the field of banking, insurance, commerce and transport. Judging by the enrolment of students at the elementary and secondary levels, one may conclude that opportunities for education have also expanded in a significant degree. It is also important to note that the average life expectancy in India rose from 32 years in the forties to above 60 years in nineties. India is the most technically advanced country in the Third World. It had put satellites in the space; exploded nuclear devices and mined the sea-bed. Indian defence has also made significant progress. A wide variety of technical, managerial and operative skills have been developed. In agriculture and rural development a large number of new programmes have been started.

In spite of all these achievements, basic problems of India — namely poverty, unemployment, distributive justice and self-reliance remains unsolved. The successive five-year plans have failed to bring about a thorough transformation of the economic structure of the country. Infact the inequalities of wealth and income distribution are increasing. A large section of population still lives below the line of poverty in a state of hunger and inhuman conditions of life.

It is, therefore, important to understand that a model of development without taking into account the basic needs of millions of our countrymen cannot be conducive for survival of democracy. Mere growth rate measured in conventional terms is not and must not be confused with socio-economic development. Development has to be understood as a social process reflecting the will of a community to take a common action and a means through which it can progress. The intended objective of development planning should be the improvement in the quality of life of all the people and remove poverty, ignorance, discrimination, disease and unemployment. No effective development can take place or planning can succeed without people's participation. People have to be not just the goals but also the means of development strategy. Therefore, there is need to make the development process human-centred, one that the people could initiate and develop at different levels. In terms of machinery one strategy for this is decentralisation of planning. Some steps towards this have been taken by acceptance of the idea of multi level planning through Panchayati Raj Institutions and a District Development Agencies. About these we will discuss in the next chapter. But that itself is not the answer. What is required is an alternative model and strategy of development and political will to implement that.

**EXERCISES**

1. What do you mean by Planning? What is its importance for development?
2. Describe the socio-economic conditions of India at the time of independence.
3. Describe the composition and functions of Planning Commission.
4. How many Five-Year Plans have been completed so far?
5. Examine the New Economic Policy in India.
6. Give a brief assessment of planning and development in India.
7. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Mixed Economy;
  - (ii) Globalisation;
  - (iii) Goals of development for India.

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**CHAPTER 9****Multi Level Planning and Role of District Development Agencies**

IN the last chapter you have read that the idea of planning in India was not only for a comprehensive development but it also was based on the principles of democracy, with considerable scope for participation of the people and their representatives in its formulation and evaluation. In view of this, it was decided to involve various institutions in plan formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These included the National Development Council (NDC), Planning Commission, State Planning Boards, District Planning Cells, Planning Cells in Central and State Ministries and Parliament. The idea thus was to have a multi level planning. It was to formulate plans by District Planning Cells at District level, integrate them into state plans to be formulated by State Planning Boards, in turn to be integrated into national plan to be formulated by Planning Commission.

**CENTRALISATION**

Though in the initial years of planning the concept and methodology of Multi

Level Planning was formulated but in practice it was different. Indian planning was conceptualised at two levels only - National and State. In fact, as some critics point out, the Planning Commission had even encroached upon the autonomy of the States under the federal system. Planning Commission began to modify or even reject the State's proposals for development programmes for which central financial assistance was sought and which could be granted only on the recommendations of the Planning Commission.

The central planning system has been unable to provide for equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth among regions and groups. The decision makers at the centre would not be able to understand the needs of heterogeneous regions and groups. In central planning and management there is over-concentration of power, authority and resources at the centre. Red tape and highly structured, procedures are its inevitable characteristics. In a vast country like India, with considerable degree of



diversity between regions, planning by a sole central planning agency can even be counter productive.

### **NEED FOR DECENTRALISATION**

It has been widely recognised that an effective and meaningful national development is not possible without giving adequate importance to parties who have stake in development. In other words national development should be a national endeavour involving a large number of parties at different levels. Various levels of government are therefore, necessarily involved in the formulation and implementation of plans. This is what is known as decentralised planning. Broadly speaking decentralisation in planning means the involvement of the people at various stages of plan formulation and implementation. Decentralisation, is an essential way for the success of development particularly in a country like India with wide spread diversities, imbalances and differences in necessities. Thus, the planning has to be done at the central level, at the state level and at levels below the state that is district, block and even village. This requires establishment of a suitable planning machinery at various levels.

### **EXPERIMENTS IN DECENTRALISATION AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION**

In India there has been a realisation of the importance and necessity of people's participation and decentralisation. In fact, in the Constitution of India itself

the subject planning is mentioned in the Concurrent List and not in the Union List. It means that the responsibility for undertaking planned development through systematic formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans is a responsibility of both the Centre and the States. Also the ideas of decentralised planning, planning from below, people's participation in planning, multi level planning etc., have been mentioned time and again in the Five-Year Plans. For the coordination between the Union and States a National Development Council was established. The Community Development Programme and establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions were the most comprehensive attempts at putting the idea of grass roots planning into action. In general, these attempts failed. However, from time to time failures of centralised planning and need for decentralisation kept on being emphasised.

### **NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

The National Development Council is one of the key organisations to symbolise the federal approach to planning in India. It is a product of the Planning Commission's recommendations. In the draft outline of the First Five-Year Plan, the Commission recommended the need for a body comprising the Central and State governments to enable the plans to have a national character. According to the National Development Council, set

up in August 1952, the function of the Council are:

- (i) to prescribe guidelines for the formulation of the national plan;
- (ii) to consider the national plan as formulated by the Planning Commission;
- (iii) to assess resources required for implementing the plan and to suggest ways and means for raising them;
- (iv) to consider important questions of social and economic policy affecting development;
- (v) to review the working of the plan from time to time and to recommend such measures as are necessary for achieving the aims and targets articulated in the national plan.

The National Development Council is chaired by Prime Minister and is comprised of all Union Cabinet Ministers, Chief Ministers of States, Chief Executives of the Union Territories and members of the Planning Commission. The Council is required to meet at least twice a year. In its meetings it generally, reviews the approach papers to the Five-Year Plans, Draft Five-Year Plans and Five-Year Plans.

There are differences of opinion with regard to role played by NDC in national planning. Some feel that it has functioned as a useful link among the Union Government, Planning Commission and the State governments. It has contributed in providing a rational perspective to planning. The other view is that the NDC has not been able to act as an

effective instrument for developing consensus and commitment to the national policies. The Sarkaria Commission which was appointed to review Centre-State relations has recommended that the NDC should be made more effective, so that it emerges as the supreme institution at the political level for the Centre - State planning relations. It has also recommended to give it a constitutional status and rename and reconstitute it as National Economic and Development Council.

### STATE PLANNING BOARDS

A number of subjects involved in developmental activities like agriculture, irrigation, power, cooperation, social service, etc., are in the State list. As such both planning at State level and coordination between the Central and the State governments in the sphere of development are essential. In the initial years while at the Central level the Planning Commission was constituted to formulate plans at the Central level, no such institution was created by the State. Almost all States had a planning department as a part of government, which was felt to be inadequate. The Planning Commission itself pointed out this problem in 1962 and suggested for the establishment of State Planning Boards.

On the basis of the above suggestions some States constituted State Planning Boards. But these were not given clearly defined functions. Therefore, they were not much

successful. The Administrative Reforms Commission, appointed in 1967, in its recommendations suggested to entrust the State Planning Boards with the tasks of macro-level economic planning, assessing state resources, determining priorities and facilitating district planning. In 1972 Planning Commission issued guidelines for strengthening the State planning machinery by including a number of technical experts in it. Thus, in 1970s several States set up Planning Boards with a view to complement and supplement the already existing planning machinery. It was hoped that the States with the help of the planning boards, would be in a better position not only for mobilising resources and apprising the plans on a more scientific lines but they would also be enhancing their capabilities for bargaining with the Planning Commission.

There is no uniform structure of State Planning Boards. These differ from State to State. As Sarkaria Commission in its report observed that although State Planning Boards had been created in all States except one, they have not been involved in real planning work. The State Planning departments continued to discharge this responsibility. The Planning Boards in general did not command due status and authority in the State governments. As far as Centre is concerned, grants to States are released on the recommendations of the Planning Commission which generally, does not show much concern for State formulated plans. Thus, as a whole

functions and role of State Planning Boards continue to be ambiguous and limited. They have played only a limited advisory role. Planning process has continued to be centrally controlled only with minor shifts towards decentralisation.

### DISTRICT PLANNING AGENCIES

Development planning has to be people oriented. Accordingly, an understanding of the needs of people at grass roots level and fulfillment of their needs are the most essential aspects of planning. Mahatma Gandhi strongly advocated decentralisation and empowerment of people at grass root level. Decentralised Planning enables a better perception of the needs of all areas, makes better decision making possible, gives people a greater voice in decisions concerning their development and welfare, serves to achieve better coordination and integration amongst programmes. Framers of the Constitution included this idea in Part IV on Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution enumerates that the State shall take steps to organise village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. In the 1950s the Community Development Programme and the establishment of the Panchayati Raj Institutions were the first and significant steps towards putting the idea of grass root planning into action. However, both these attempts failed for various reasons.

## PANCHAYATI RAJ

The government of India in 1957 appointed Balwant Raj Mehta committee to study the problems of development at the village level. The Committee recommended for the introduction of democratic institutions to take care of all aspects of development work. Accordingly, a three tier structure of Panchayati Raj institutions with elected Panchayats at the village level, an executive body called the Panchayat Samiti at the block level and an advisory body called Zila Parishad at the district level were setup.

While the goal behind Panchayati Raj Institutions was very important, the spirit with which these were organised in various states lacked real enthusiasm. As a result apart from other failures the planning under the Panchayati Raj Institutions was not much of a success. They were really never given a chance to actively engage in local planning. They failed because of lack of experience, skill and help in planning; domination by the bureaucracy; inadequate devolution of financial powers and complete subordination to State governments.

## DISTRICT PLANNING AND DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

While planning in India has generally, remained confined to the Centre and State levels, unsatisfactory results of this have kept the pressure for decentralisation. Along with

Community Development Programme and Panchayati Raj Institutions and later with their failure, significant suggestions have been made to evolve the idea of District Planning and establishment of District Development Agencies. The Administrative Reforms Commission in its report in 1969 had recommended that there should be a District Planning Committee consisting of the representatives of the Zila Parishad, Municipal bodies in the district, professional talent in the district with appropriate association of the district officers. The Planning Commission also issued guidelines for decentralised planning and for establishment of District Planning Agency involving government, local self-government bodies and progressive farmers and entrepreneurs. A suitable planning machinery at the district level, however, remained missing. Ashok Mehta Committee in its report in 1978 pointed out that Panchayati Raj Institutions have been rarely given an opportunity to take up planning or implementation work on a sizeable scale. In its suggestions the committee proposed that the district should be the first point of decentralisation below the State. The block, which is the unit of planning in most of the States, was not to be the basic Unit of devolution by merely an executive committee of the Zila Parishad.

In 1978; a working group was appointed to study block level planning. The committee found that planning machinery at the district level was either non-existent or extremely

deficient. The committee suggested for strengthening of District Planning Cells. On the basis of these recommendations, the Planning Commission once again in 1982 issued guidelines for strengthening of planning at the district level. The scheme suggested for inclusion of technical personnel with knowledge and skills required for scientific district planning. To transform the district planning idea from a concept to a reality the Planning Commission also set up a working group on District Planning under the chairmanship of C.H. Hanumanta Rao. The working group in its report submitted in 1984 said: decentralisation (through district planning) enables a better perception of the needs of the local areas, makes better informed decision making possible, gives people a better voice in decisions concerning their development and welfare, serves to achieve better coordination and integration among programmes, enables felt needs of the people to be taken into account, ensures effective participation of the people, serves to build up a measure of self-reliance by mobilising resources of the community in hand or money, making development of local resources and growth potentials of local area for improved productivity and increasing production feasible.

The working group accordingly laid down the functions of district planning agencies. These were (i) crystallisation of local needs and objectives; (ii) taking stock of the natural and human development; (iii) listing and mapping

of amenities; (iv) formulation of district plans; (v) formulation of policies, programmes and priorities; (vi) coordinated implementation; and (vii) monitoring and review of district plan and programmes. To fulfil these tasks the working group suggested for broad based district planning agencies comprising of representatives from the Zila Parishad, Panchayat Samitis, Municipalities, MLAs and MPs from the district, representatives of workers, entrepreneurs and banks, etc.

On the recommendations of Hanumanta Rao group and with the motivation and assistance of the Planning Commission, District Planning Cells have been created in a number of States. The primary job of a District Planning Cell is preparing a resource paper for the district with the help of other district level departments. In many cases these cells have been entrusted with the task of formulating district annual plans. But generally, District Planning Cells have remained mere a formality then actually functioning in a real meaningful way. The basic reason is contradiction between planning and authority. In the absence of any financial powers it becomes impossible for the district level bodies to set targets, decide on priorities, mobilise resources and decide on allocations. Also in most of the cases District Planning bodies have not been provided with adequate trained and competent planning personnel. However, as has been said, there is a realisation at least at conceptual level that it is very important that

development and planning is initiated at district level. An encouraging step towards this has finally been taken by giving constitutional recognition to district level planning by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments.

### CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEES

A major initiative in strengthening and rejuvenating local-self governments finally came in 1992 with the adoption of 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution. Through these amendments for the first time institutions below the State level, Panchayats, Municipalities and Corporations have been given constitutional status. Certain functions of these bodies have also been made mandatory within this frame work. The 74th amendment also makes provision for the constitution of a planning committee at the district level to consolidate plans prepared by the Panchayats and the Municipalities and prepare a development plan for the district as a whole. The State legislature has been empowered to make provisions with respect to the composition of the District Planning Committees (DPC).

The 74th amendment also prescribes that while preparing the draft development plan DPC will keep in view matters of common interest between Panchayats and Municipalities including spatial planning, sharing of water and other

physical and natural resources; the integrated development of infrastructure and environmental conservation and the extent and type of available financial and non-financial resources.

The district has been accepted as advantage point for development and planning for several reasons. As already mentioned a number of committees and studies have favoured this. The major reasons, as given by several experts, have been summed up as:

- (i) A district is relatively closer to the local population than is any other middle level regional spatial unit.
- (ii) A district is large enough to serve as a viable planning unit.
- (iii) Because of historical reasons it has a settled pattern of administration with a high degree of internal consistency and well-established administrative relationships.
- (iv) Most information relating to revenue, land records, irrigation works, development loans, housing, roads, electrification, social services, etc., is organised on a district to district basis.
- (v) Most departments and agencies of the State governments have their regional offices located at the district level.
- (vi) Because of the well-entrenched administrative system at the district level, district planning facilitates a clearer evaluation of the impact of the development efforts and initiatives on the people and the institutions of that area.

(vii) People's awareness of the administrative process in a district is high because of their long time association with the district administration.

As a whole, development agencies at the district level have an important role to play in the planning and development process. The 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution have raised some hopes for the empowerment of district and lower level institutions but the results so far are not very encouraging. It is time for the policy makers to realise the importance

of grass root and diversified planning particularly in a country like India with so much diversities, imbalances and differences in needs and aspirations. It is the absence of appreciation of people's aspirations and steps to fulfil them that create situations of regional and sectional movements which ultimately become serious issues for national integration itself. National integration can best be achieved by involving the people as participants in decision making and implementation of developmental process and not by imposing values and needs from the above.

### EXERCISES

1. Why is decentralisation important in India?
2. Describe the composition and functions of National Development Council.
3. Explain the development of District Planning Agencies.
4. Describe the changes in the nature of District Planning Committee brought in by 73rd and 74th amendment of the Constitution.
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) State Planning Boards;
  - (ii) Panchayati Raj and Planning;
  - (iii) Need for Decentralisation.

## CHAPTER 10

### Development of Weaker Sections : Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes

YOU have already read that after independence the Constitution of India, keeping in view the desires and aspirations of the people, values strengthened during national freedom movement and the ideas prevailing in the world, envisaged for State not only a democratic political order but also the goals of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. These goals are clearly reflected in the Preamble of the Constitution, in parts on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles and other specific Articles in the Constitution. All these provisions suggest that India is a welfare state, committed to the welfare and development of its people in general and of vulnerable sections in particular. The vulnerable sections in India include Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, Women, Minorities, Disabled and Children. For the welfare of these people mere guaranteeing of right to equality or universal adult franchise were not sufficient. The ideal of *political democracy* had to be backed by *social and economic democracy*. Therefore,

what was required was a strong constitutional mechanism for protection of interests and rights of vulnerable or weaker section's of society and at the same time special schemes and programmes for their welfare, development and empowerment.

#### SCHEDULED CASTES

Scheduled Castes are people belonging to those castes, races which have been or may in future be specified in a list in accordance with Article 341 of the Constitution. In traditional terms these are the people who were considered outcastes, categorised as untouchables. This was a part of the rigid caste system dividing the Indian society into high and low on the basis of birth without any logic or rationale. The people of lower castes considered untouchable were assigned menial jobs and occupations. They were oppressed and exploited by those who belonged to the higher castes. Economically and socially they remained extremely poor and marginalised.



During the course of history there had been emerging voices against the caste system. Religious and social reformers have been raising voices against it and for its abolition. Religious movements like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Bhakti movement in general had rejected the social and ritual justification of this caste system and oppression. The system, however, has remained. During British colonial period with the arrival of western liberal values and rise of socio-religious reform movements the question of caste discrimination came to the forefront. Within lower caste people themselves there emerged a consciousness and awareness about their plight and demand for change. Dr B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, in particular, though in different ways, had brought up the issue of caste discrimination in a significant way. British colonial government, for various reasons had begun formulating some policies including those of reservations, for these castes. The national movement made the issue of Scheduled Castes upliftment part of its agenda. As such at the time of independence, there was both a demand and commitment for SCs welfare and development. The government, therefore, took up the task of SCs welfare right from the time of enactment of the Constitution.

### **SCHEDULED TRIBES**

Another social category economically, socially and politically marginalised is that of Scheduled Tribes. Legally like

Scheduled Castes, tribes are people belonging to tribes or tribal communities specified in the list of such tribes as per Article 342 of the Constitution. Scheduled Tribes are weaker sections not in terms of caste. They are the people who have been living in remote forest areas and hill tracks as tribes without any access to modern socio-economic inputs. It is difficult to define the tribal peoples of India in terms of any single set of formal criteria. They are popularly believed to constitute the aboriginal element in Indian society. But most tribals share certain common features like, nature of rurality, illiteracy, economic backwardness, and social deprivation. Historically, one of the principal feature of the tribal population has been its ecological, economic and social isolation. For centuries, the tribal people have been confined to hills and forests. This isolation has left definite impression on their social systems. It has also given them, in spite of wide cultural variations, a common destiny in the Indian society.

Like Scheduled Castes, it was during British colonial rule that there emerged a tribal consciousness. Here, the reason was little different. As mentioned above for centuries tribal areas had remained unconnected with the mainland and mainstream. Therefore, they were outside the effective control of state and state laws. They had their own economy, tribal laws and customs. It was during British rule that with the extension of administration all over and laying of

railways, roads, etc. that tribal areas came under direct administrative control. Along with administrators, traders, money lenders and entrepreneurs also reached tribal areas. Tribals were deprived of their land and autonomy. In many cases there started tribal revolts. There also emerged among national movement leaders and British administration a concern for protection and welfare of tribal people.

### **WELFARE OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES**

From the above it becomes clear that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been the most disadvantaged and neglected people in Indian society. As mentioned in the beginning, the situation and needs were acknowledged by the framers of the Constitution themselves. Thus, on the one hand Constitution of India itself prescribed certain protective measures, safeguards and welfare measures for these sections and on the other hand successive Five-Year Plans have also regarded the welfare of SCs and STs as a major objective of development policy. In addition, both the Union and State governments have taken up specific steps and launched various schemes and programmes for their improvement.

#### **Constitutional Provisions**

The Constitution prescribes protection and safeguards for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as also of other weaker sections either specially or by way of insisting on their general rights

as citizens with the objective of promoting their educational and economic interests and removing social disabilities.

Article 17 of the Constitution abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice in any form. The untouchability (offences) Act was passed in 1955. Its scope was enlarged and its panel provisions were made more stringent by amending it in 1976. It was renamed as Protection of Civil Right Act. In 1989, another Act called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) was passed.

While Article 17 of Fundamental Rights abolishes untouchability, Articles 14, 15 and 16 establish principles of equality and social justice. Article 14 proclaims equality before law and equal protection of law for all. Article 15(1) prohibits discrimination on grounds of race, caste, sex, religion or place of birth. Article 16(1) further provides equality of opportunity to all. These two articles apart from proclaiming every one equal also gives power to the State for making special provisions for SCs and STs.

Apart from the protective discrimination clauses in the Constitution, the Directive Principles of the State Policy may be considered as mechanism for realising the goal of social justice and social transformation in the direction of just society. Articles 38 and 46 specifically aim at securing social justice to the deprived sections of the population. Apart from these Articles, provisions have been made for reservation of seats for SCs and STs in

Lok Sabha and State Assemblies and governmental services and educational institutions. There is also a provision for setting up of tribal advisory councils and separate departments in States and appointment of a special officer at the Centre to promote their welfare and safeguard their interests.

### **National Commission for SCs and STs**

In 1990 by 65th Amendment of the Constitution the special officer's post under Article 338 has been substituted by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The SC and ST Commission shall consist of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and five other members to be appointed by the President. It shall be the duty of the Commission: (i) to investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution or under other laws; (ii) to enquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the SCs and STs; (iii) to participate and advise on the planning process of socio-economic development of the SCs and STs; and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State; (iv) to present to the President annually, and at such other times as the Commission may fix reports upon the working of these safeguards; (v) to make in such reports/recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or any State for the effective

implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the SCs and STs; and (vi) to discharge such other functions in relation to the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the SCs and STs as the President may subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, by rule, specify. The Act also provides that the Commission, while investigating and monitoring any matter relating to safeguards provided for SCs and STs, shall have all powers of a civil court trying a suit. It is also provided that the Union and every State government shall consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting SCs and STs.

### **Special Schemes and Programmes for SCs and STs**

In accordance with these Constitutional provisions and directives the government of India and all States have been formulating and implementing various schemes and programmes for the upliftment of SCs and STs within the process of Planning and outside. These programmes relate to education, skill formation, creating job opportunities and development of the areas in which these people are concentrated.

In the field of education in most of the States, education up to higher level has been made free for SCs and STs. Seats have been reserved for them, generally, in accordance with percentage of population, in various

educational institutions. A Book Bank scheme has been launched to provide textbooks required for the students pursuing medical and engineering degrees, agricultural, veterinary and polytechnic courses. A Girls Hostel Scheme was started in Third Five-Year Plan with the purpose of providing residential facilities to tribal girls in pursuit of education. A similar scheme was started for boys in 1989-90. Various schemes of scholarships have also been started including pre-metric, post-amtrac, and higher education. In addition to these there are other schemes also for helping improve educational levels and standards of SCs and STs.

To help SCs and STs in employment, apart from making reservation in jobs, specific schemes have been started for training and skill formation. One of these is the coaching and allied scheme started in the Fourth Five-Year Plan for imparting training to SCs and STs in respect of various competitive examinations held by recruiting bodies such as Union Public Service Commission, State Public Service Commissions, Public Sector Undertakings, Banking service recruitment boards and similar agencies. There are State Scheduled Castes Development Corporations to uplift the SC/ST population living below poverty line. In 1992-93 vocational training centers were set up in tribal areas to develop the skills of the tribal youth for gaining

employment or self employment opportunities. In the Ninth Plan period (1997-2002) a separate plan of action for the development of Primitive Tribal Groups has been formulated. In 1987, the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India was set up with the prime objective of providing marketing assistance and remunerative prices to ST communities for their minor forest produce and surplus agricultural produce and to wean them away from exploitative private traders.

#### **Baba Saheb Dr Ambedkar Foundation**

Apart from schemes for education and employment there also has been launched programmes for empowerment of SCs and STs. An important step in this direction was taken in March 1992 with the establishment of Baba Saheb Dr Ambedkar Foundation. The Foundation has been entrusted with the responsibility to manage, administer and carry on the schemes and programmes identified during the centenary celebrations of Dr B.R. Ambedkar. Some of these are Dr Ambedkar National Award for social understanding and uplift of weaker sections; Dr Ambedkar International Award for social change, harmony, equity, justice and human dignity for the exploited and the under privileged; and putting up Memorial for Dr Ambedkar.

### **Tribal Research Institutes**

Some States have set up Tribal Research Institutes, for research, education, collection of data, training, seminars, workshops, professional inputs in the preparation of tribal sub-plan, publication of tribal literature, codification of tribal customary laws, etc. The tribal sub-plan strategy was evolved during the Fifth Five - Year Plan. It is based on the twin objectives of: (i) protection of interests of tribals through legal and administrative support; and (ii) promotion of development efforts through plan schemes to raise their level of living. There are now 194 integrated tribal development projects.

### **STATUS OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES**

From the above discussion of Constitutional and legal provisions and of some of the plans, programmes and schemes started for the welfare, development and empowerment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, it becomes clear that these people have not only been made equal citizens of India but have also been given special privileges, preferences and concessions to come out of their traditional lower and inhumane position.

At the same time if we look at the overall conditions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, particularly in rural areas, we find that in spite of constitutional provisions and various plans, the poverty, illiteracy,

destitution, oppression and bondage of these sections in large areas remain intact. Untouchability, though banned under the law continues to be widely practiced. India's bonded labourers are almost exclusively drawn from SCs and STs. Only an elite class amongst SCs has benefited from the government's policies and welfare measures.

The reasons for this apathetic status of SCs and STs are many. First of all the problem is that provisions and plans for the welfare of the SCs and STs are strong at the constitutional and planning levels, but weak in the implementation. In many reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the Planning Commission and other bodies, it has been pointed out that the staff and administrative machinery provided by the States is not adequate to carry out the policy of welfare, even if necessary funds are voted by the Parliament, hence, the failure in implementation.

Another problem is of inadequate funds and corruption. To begin with, either adequate funds are not allocated for the plans and programmes or allocated funds are not made available. Many a times a significant proportion of funds do not reach the beneficiaries — a glaring example of the failure of land reforms. This failure has kept SCs in particular deprived of land and dependent on landlords and big farmers. In case of tribal development the bureaucrats, trained in the colonial tradition to maintain law and order unaware of tribal social, cultural and

linguistic traditions and values, and unconcerned with their expectations end up as exploiters of tribals rather than their protectors.

The problems of administrative apathy and lack of funds is very much linked with problems in planning itself. The planning in general has been lopsided, piecemeal and middle class or even elite oriented rather than mass oriented. At the political level decisions are taken more keeping in view the immediate concern for votes and not the long-term visions. One result of this is while law has established commissions, and enacted laws for preventing untouchability and other offences against SCs and STs, these provisions lack teeth and an effective machinery for imparting justice. Particularly in case of Scheduled Tribes, planners have not appreciated the tribal culture, language, religion, customs and land rights. They, therefore, formulate plans with their own assumptions and as parts of national plans.

A serious matter that has emerged during last decade or so with regard to status of SCs and STs is upper caste backlash in some areas. Reacting to emerging consciousness among these castes and their struggle for rights in some rural areas upper castes have begun coercing them violently including killing the activists and raping the women. In some cases this violence is being committed by organised groups like Ranveer Sena in Bihar. In view of the nature and orientation of bureaucracy and police,

this backlash is not crushed with that heavy hand as it is required. Infact, in many cases there is connivance of police and other authorities in such cases of oppression.

Thus, in spite of Article 17 of the Constitution, untouchability offences Act and Protection of Civil Rights Act untouchability is practiced openly in many places not only in villages but also in cities. All this is resulting in alienation of those groups and emergence of Tribal and *dalit* movements. These movements are using both constitutional and extra-constitutional methods to seek justice thereby posing new issues in India's political process.

#### **WELFARE OF OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES (OBCs)**

In India apart from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, there are other weaker sections, who are economically, socially and educationally backward. They are known as Other Backward Classes. Article 340 of the Constitution empowers the government to appoint a Commission to investigate into the conditions of Other Backward Classes and make recommendations.

It is necessary to make it clear that the Constitution uses words "Backward Class". It means not just any backward person, but a group of people having general characteristics of backwardness. Constitution, however, does not specify which groups constitute backward classes. The Government had appointed two

**Backward Classes Commissions.** These commissions have given the criteria to identify backward classes on the basis of communities or castes.

The first Backward Classes Commission was appointed in 1953 under the Chairmanship of Kaka Saheb Kalelkar. This Commission used four criteria for identifying the Backward classes: (i) low social position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society; (ii) lack of general educational advancement among the majority of a caste/community; (iii) inadequate or lack of representation in government services; and (iv) inadequate representation in trade, commerce and industry. The Kalelkar Commission on these basis identified 2,399 castes and communities as Backward Classes. However, there were differences within the Commission. Therefore, government did not accept the recommendations of this Commission.

The second Backward Classes Commission was appointed in 1978 under the Chairmanship of B.P. Mandal and this was known as Mandal Commission. This Commission formulated 11 indicators: four on caste based social backwardness, three on educational backwardness and four on economic backwardness. In the Commission's opinion backwardness was related to Caste. Accordingly, it identified 3,743 castes as backward on the basis of above mentioned indicators. Since then these castes have come to be known as Other Backward Castes (OBC's) meaning thereby backward castes other than Scheduled Castes.

The Commission recommended reservation of 27 per cent of jobs for OBCs in central services, public sector undertakings, nationalised banks, universities and affiliated colleges and government aided firms in the private sector. Some quantum of reservations for OBC students was recommended in all scientific, technical and professional institutions of education run by the Central and State Governments. The Commission also made recommendations for economic and occupational development of the OBCs.

In August 1990, Government of India announced the acceptance of Mandal Commission's recommendations. Since then 27 per cent reservation has been made in jobs by Central government and various percentages by State governments. In addition, other schemes have also been formulated and launched for the welfare of Backward Classes. Some of these are given below:

#### **National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation**

This body was set up by the government of India in January 1992 with the objective of providing concessional loans to the members of backward classes living below the poverty line. The corporation has also launched a special scheme for eligible women beneficiaries of backward classes under the name of *Swarnima*.

### Schemes for OBCs

From 1998-99 following schemes have been launched for the welfare of OBCs:

- (i) Pre-examination coaching: to coach candidates belonging to OBCs whose parent's/guardians annual income is less than Rs one lac;
- (ii) Hostels for OBC Boys and Girls;
- (iii) Pre-metric Scholarships;
- (iv) Post-metric Scholarships;
- (v) Assistance to voluntary organisations: The scheme involves the voluntary sector to improve educational and socio-economic conditions of the OBCs to get them gainfully employed.

From the above, it becomes clear that apart from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes the government has also made adequate provisions for the welfare of Other Backward Castes. Some, observers, however feel that a number of castes which are economically well off are getting benefits in the name of OBCs for political reasons, whereas people who are economically backward but technically do not belong to these castes remain neglected. According to these observers Constitution suggests that backwardness is to be identified by class and not by caste or tribe. They, therefore, suggest use of economic criteria for backwardness.

The Supreme Court in its judgement on 16 November, 1992 while accepted the criterion of caste as relevant for reservation felt that within Backward castes those whose economic

advancement is so high that it necessarily means social advancement or those who have occupied certain posts of high social status should be excluded from getting the reservation benefits meant for OBCs. Once they are advanced socially which also means economically and educationally they no longer belong to the Backward Classes. However, the judgement also suggested that those who have attained sufficient capacity to compete with others should be taken out of the OBCs. This has been described as rule of exclusion based on "creamy layer" concept. The implication of this judgement is, (i) Caste though a necessary condition is no longer a sufficient condition; (ii) Economic test should be applied along with the already existing identification criterion.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that in accordance with the commitments made during national movement and declarations pronounced in the Preamble of the Constitution of India to secure to all citizens of India Justice, Liberty and Equality. There had been provisions in the Constitution and policies in the planning process and otherwise for the welfare of those sections of society who have been denied justice and equality for thousands of year simply on the basis of birth. This has to be done because socio-economic justice implies rejection of the unjust social structure and status-quo. There are no two opinions about the fact that caste system in India denotes a hierarchical stratification of society based on



division and gradation of people by birth. Therefore, it implies social inequality. For the lower caste people their lower position has got reinforced into a low class position by the deepening unemployment and poverty.

It was not sufficient merely to mention in the Constitution that all citizens of India are equal and free. There was need to create conditions and environment by which the exploited people could come out of centuries old oppressive system. For this were adopted various schemes and programmes for the welfare and development of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes. At present the welfare of SCs and STs is given special attention by both the Central and State governments. Special programmes for their welfare have been undertaken in the successive Five-Year Plans and the size of investment in these special programmes has been increasing from Plan to Plan. A number of persons belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes now are in various levels of government jobs, educational institutions, Parliament, State Assemblies and local-self government bodies. They do have access to social institutions.

At the same time a large number of persons belonging to these categories in different parts of the country continue to suffer discrimination, social exclusion, and oppression. They still live in a pathetic situation of poverty, illiteracy and social marginalisation. Mindset of a large section of persons in

India continues to be besieged with beliefs of superiority and inferiority of caste. In rural areas at many places Scheduled Castes have to live outside the village. They continue to be engaged in traditional menial jobs. They suffer oppression and violence in the hands of upper-caste landlords, not allowed to vote in election and own land. Reasons for this are many which include lack of political will, faulty planning, administrative apathy, lack of resources and widespread corruption. At the same time because of introduction of democracy and universal franchise the so-called lower caste and tribal people are becoming aware of their plight and rights. They are asserting for justice and change in the position. This on the one hand is forcing the State to take effective steps for their welfare and on the other hand is causing a backlash from certain upper castes who do not want any change in status quo.

It is important for us to understand that there is no religious, scientific or other rationality behind hierarchy of caste system. The rigidity of caste system is not only against the principles and ideals of justice, equality and freedom but also a big hindrance in the path of nation's development. We have to come out of our mindsets, appreciate the values and norms of a democratic, welfare state and society and work for a harmonious, equality based just system. In this State alone cannot do much. What is required is both support and pressure from enlightened and educated sections of society.

**EXERCISES**

1. Describe the provisions made in Indian Constitution for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
2. Mention the functions of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
3. Examine the various schemes launched by the government for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
4. What steps have been taken by the government for the welfare of Other Backward Classes?
5. Describe the significance of Mandal Commission Report.
6. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Baba Saheb Dr Ambedkar Foundation;
  - (ii) Creamy Layer.

**CHAPTER 11****Development of Weaker Sections : Women****THE GENDER JUSTICE**

**O**NE significant section of society that has been denied justice in India, in fact in a large number of countries world over, is that of women. For centuries they have been relegated to sidelines of social, economic and political life. Women have been given a subordinate status promoting oppressive and unequal human relations at all levels of society. It is being stressed that the problems of women, who constitute half of the world's population, are the problems of society as a whole, and that changes in the present economic, political and social situation of women must become an integral part of efforts to transform the structures and attitudes that hinder the genuine satisfaction of their needs. Thus, any process of development and social justice that does not take into account the necessity of improving the status of women and finding more effective methods and strategies that will enable them to have the same opportunities as men to participate actively in the development of society and country can not be considered genuine. India is no exception to this.

**WOMEN'S WELFARE IN INDIA**

Women in India for centuries have received unequal treatment in almost all spheres of life. Indian society is a patriarchal society. During the course of history there also had been protests against this position of women. Particularly during Bhakti movement in medieval period saints and religious reformers had taken up the question of emancipation of women. But they did not have much impact.

During British colonial period with the arrival of liberal ideas and in some cases as a reaction to British rule there sprang up many reformist movements in India. Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthna Samaj and many other movements took up the cause of injustice against women. As is well known, the early reformist Raja Ram Mohan Roy denounced child marriage, and sati and worked for the emancipation of women in general. The nineteenth century also saw for the first time the enactment of social legislation by the government which included abolition of Sati (1829), Widow Remarriage Act (1856), Civil Marriage Act (1872), etc. Another significant

feature of the nineteenth century is the attempts towards girls education.

In nationalist movement also, the Indian women's immense hidden potential found a forum for its release. Gandhiji called on women to give up *purdah* and participate in politics. In 1917 a women's delegation met the Secretary of State for India to demand franchise for women. In 1927 was launched All India Women's Conference for the welfare and development of women.

While as a result of social reforms and nationalist movement there emerged awareness about women's plight and consciousness for their upliftment, in general there was not much change in the social attitude towards women, particularly in rural areas. Also in spite of some significant social legislature, property, inheritance and such laws remained against women. In general, at the time of independence they were outside the main stream of socio-economic process and in actuality did not have a rightful place in society.

### **WOMEN'S WELFARE IN INDEPENDENT INDIA**

From the above, it becomes clear that justice for women was one of the issues of development even before independence. Accordingly, it became one of the focuses of developmental planning in independent India.

In the Constitution of India itself Articles in Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles gave concrete shape

to these intentions. Article 14 confers equality before law and equal protection of law for all. This obviously means law can not be discriminatory against women.

Article 15 not only prohibits any discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth but also empowers the State to make any special provision for women and children. It means in favour of women and children other sections can be discriminated against, if it is so required. Similarly, Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in matters relating to public employment.

Article 19 guarantees to all citizens including women, freedoms of speech and expression, assemble, form associations or unions, move freely throughout the territory of India, to reside and settle anywhere and to practice any profession or carry on any occupation.

The Fundamental Rights thus, make women like men and other sections of society equal and free in all walks of life. In addition provisions of Fundamental Rights give powers to the state to make special provisions for women and children. Special provisions further, are given in the form of directives to the State in the Directive Principles of State policy. These are:

- (i) Men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39);
- (ii) There is equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39);
- (iii) The health and strength of workers men and women and the tender

age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their age or strength (Article 39);

- (iv) Make provisions for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Apart from these negative and positive obligations on the state, the Constitution also (after the 42nd Amendment 1976) imposes a fundamental duty on all citizens, "to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women" (Article 51A). As mentioned earlier the Constitution of India has also granted universal franchise. Thus, women has equality both in right to vote and contest elections.

### WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Efforts for welfare and development for women have been initiated at two levels. One is enactment of laws and second is formulation of welfare schemes and projects.

#### The Laws

Enactment of laws means using law as an instrument for change and development. In this context in last 50 years or so many laws have been enacted with a view to remove disparities and provide conditions for welfare. Some of the important laws that have been passed by the Parliament are: Special Marriage Act 1954, the Hindu Marriage act 1955, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956, Dowry Prohibition Act 1961,

Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971, the Equal Remuneration Act 1976, the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act 1978, and the Criminal Law (Second Amendment Act) 1985, the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act 1984.

In addition to enactment of laws by the Legislature, the Judiciary also has been interpreting some existing laws in more favourable ways for women. In a landmark judgement in November 1995 the Supreme Court gave the widow and daughter of a deceased equal right to property left by him. Judiciary's decision in cases like *Shah Bano and others* have also been important in terms of judicial activism to reform the Muslim personal laws.

#### Welfare Schemes

Apart from enactment of laws efforts have also been made to formulate and implement programmes and plans for providing access to women in education, skill development, employment, fulfillment of special necessities, gender sensitisation, etc. Women's welfare and development has also been a part of Five-Year Plans.

The Government of India in 1953 established a Central Social Welfare Board with a nationwide programme of grants in aid, for promoting welfare and development services for women, children and under privileged groups. The Board has its State counterparts.

A separate department of women and child development was setup at the

centre in 1985 to give a distinct identity and provide a nodal point on matters relating to women's development. The National Policy on Education — 1986 was a landmark in the field of policy on women's education. The consequent programme of Action for the National Policy on Education stated that the main features of the implementation strategy would be:

- (i) to gear the entire education system to play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women;
- (ii) to encourage educational institutions to take up active programmes to enhance women's status and further women's development in all sectors;
- (iii) to widen women's access to vocational, technical, and professional education at all levels, breaking gender stereotypes;
- (iv) to create a dynamic management structure that will be able to respond to the challenge posed by this mandate.

In 1987 the programme of support to Training-cum-Employment for women was launched to strengthen and improve the skills for employment opportunities for women below poverty line in traditional sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, handlooms, handicrafts, cottage and village industries and sericulture where women are employed on a large scale. Another programme entitled the 'Indira Mahila Yojana' was started in 1995 with the aim of organising women at the grassroot level to facilitate their

participation in decision-making and their empowerment. In October 1998, the Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project was also sanctioned.

### **NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**

To safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women the Parliament in 1990 enacted a law to establish the National Commission for Women. The Commission came into existence on 31 January, 1992. The functions assigned to National Commission for Women are wide and varied covering almost all facts of issues relating to safeguarding women's rights and promotion. Its mandated activities include review of legislation, interventions in specific individual complaints of atrocities and remedial action to safeguard the interest of women where appropriate and feasible.

As a whole it can be said that in post-independence period there have been conscious efforts to change the position of women from inequality to that of equality. At present, legally and constitutionally, women in India are given a status of equality with men. Women are free to choose any form of education and training to equip themselves for a career. They can undertake any specialist and higher learning. But when we see the social reality what is found is that on the one hand only a small section of urban educated women have been benefited from the claimed legislative and developmental actions and on the other

hand gender bias in society not only continues but in some ways has taken a worse form in the shape of violence and crimes against women. The question of status of women in Indian society remains serious and deserves attention.

### EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The other major sectors of visible differences between male and female status are education and employment. The female literacy rate in 2001 was 54.16 per cent as against 75.85 per cent literate males. On the eve of independence literacy rate of women was 7.9 per cent in comparison to 54.16 per cent in 2001. Despite this the number of illiterate women has increased over the decades due to population growth, non-enrolment of girls and dropout from the formal system of education. Illiteracy and lack of education among women limit their achievements in the field of employment, training and utilisation of health facilities.

### SOCIAL INDICATORS

The Indian Constitution guarantees legal and social equality to women. Various laws have been enacted to make gender equality a reality.

If a close scrutiny of the existing laws is made, it becomes clear that still many laws, particularly with right to social issues, are in favour of men. What is more important is that in practice social behaviour towards women is full of biases.

In matters of property, in spite of recent laws and judicial decisions giving women's equal share in the family property, often justice is denied to women by their families. In many instances, the women concerned are illiterate and, therefore, are duped into signing away their legal property rights.

Obviously, the above status of women is not due to constitutional provisions or lack of laws or programmes. Reasons are various. First is the deep rooted patriarchal system, which makes male not only the head of the family but socially gives all decision making powers to him. Within this patriarchal system the process of socialisation both of male and female children makes them grow with the future acceptance of their roles. In an average Indian family preference is shown to male children.

Along with these social factors, our planning has also neglected the development of women in a comprehensive manner. The programmes have been piecemeal and in isolation. More important is that while programmes have been formulated adequate funds have not been released. Thus, in the male dominated family structure and caste and kinship based society, lopsided development and planning designed and implemented by status quo oriented bureaucracy has not allowed the desired changes in status of women in terms of equality and opportunities.

### MOVEMENTS TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT

From the above it becomes clear that change of attitude towards women within the family and social system completely dominated by men cannot be brought about by making laws or policies alone. There is a need to bring women themselves in decision making and implementing process. Exclusion

of women from the political decision making bodies and governmental structures have been reinforcing factors in gender-based discrimination. No serious attempt has been made either by the governments in power or any political party to address the problem of women's participation in decision making bodies.

#### Women's Representation in Parliament 1952-1999

Lok Sabha

Rajya Sabha

Year	Seats	Women MPS	Percentage of Women MPS	Year	Rajya Sabha* Women MPS	Percentage of Women MPS
1952	49	1	2.04		16	6.54
1957	508	1	0.20		18	6.54
1962	508	1	0.20		18	6.54
1967	525	5	0.95		20	08.68
1971	521	2	0.38		17	07.09
1977	544	5	0.92		25	10.25
1980	544	6	1.10		24	09.37
1984	544	8	1.47		28	11.43
1989	547	5	0.91		24	09.80
1991	547	5	0.91		38	15.5
1996	543	7	1.29		20	06.52
1998	543	7	1.29		15	05.52
1999	543	9	1.66		19	07.75
Average	528	5	0.95		22	09.00

\* The composition of Rajya Sabha changes every two years. The figures of Rajya Sabha have been picked up only for those years which allow comparison with Lok Sabha. The average for Rajya Sabha is based on these years only.

Source: CSDS Data Unit, Delhi



The women's movement, therefore, have been struggling for reservation for women in elective bodies. They achieved partial success with 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments providing 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institution and Municipalities and Municipal Corporations. Struggle for such a reservation in Parliament and State Assemblies is on while almost all political parties in public support this demand, but when the bill to implement this comes in the Parliament, in one way or the other, it is not allowed to be passed.

### **NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN 2001**

The government of India in 2001 issued a National Policy for the Empowerment of women. The major objectives of this policy include:

- (i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realise their full potential.
- (ii) The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres — political, economic, social, cultural and civil.
- (iii) Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office, etc.

- (iv) strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

According to National Policy, all Central and State Ministries will draw up time bound action-plans for translating the policy into a set of concrete actions through a participatory process of consultation with Centre/State departments of Women and Child Development and National/State Commission for Women.

The National Policy document also talks of strengthening of institutional mechanisms, resource management, legalisation, gender sensitisation, partnership with the voluntary sector organisations and international cooperation, to achieve the desired goals.

Needless to say the National Policy for the Empowerment of women 2001 for the first time presents a holistic approach and presents a comprehensive notion of women's development and empowerment. It is now to be seen whether it remains a document of intentions or something really comes out of this.

Since India became independent, many policies and measures had been adopted to improve the conditions of women. Despite all this, the situation of women has not improved much. Women, in general, have not been in position to avail benefits from these measures. However, many agencies like the Central Social Welfare Board and other departments have been set up to look after the welfare of women. There have been innumerable schemes

initiated to bring about economic self-reliance through employment, income generation, education, skill training and other developmental programmes. To back them up, the State has also passed many laws. In fact, India ranks as the country with the maximum amount of social legislation for women.

Let us not forget that the full and complete development of any country requires the maximum participation of

women as well as of men in all fields: the under nationalisation of the potential of approximately half the population is a serious obstacle to social and economic development. It is time for both men and women to come out of myths, imposed traditions and false notions of superiority of sex and join hands for a more happy and harmonious personal family and social life.

### EXERCISES

1. Mention the provisions in the chapter on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy with regard to welfare of Women in India.
2. Enumerate any three laws enacted by the Parliament since independence for the welfare of women.
3. Mention the main objectives of National Policy for the Empowerment of women, 2001.
4. Examine the demand for reservations of seats in Parliament and State Legislatures as a mechanism for empowerment of women.
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) National Commission for women;
  - (ii) Education and employment status of women;
  - (iii) Women's social status.

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**UNIT IV**

**CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES TO  
INDIAN DEMOCRACY**

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**CHAPTER 12****Inequality  
Social and Economic**

**Y**OU have read that the framers of the Constitution of India adopted a democratic political order not only as a desirable political system based on the ideals of peoples' participation, but it was also a mechanism to achieve the ideals of equality, liberty and social justice. Democratic political order, it is said, ensures, at least in principle, equal participation of all individuals irrespective of caste, creed, sex and social origin in socio-economic and political life of the nation. The Preamble of the Constitution, and chapters on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles make it clear that framers of the Constitution wanted Indian Constitution to be an instrument of socio-economic justice. The basis of socio-economic justice is equality — political, social and economic.

Seen from the perspective of working of democracy also equality is considered as one of the pre-conditions for its successful functioning. Democracy implies that there should be a substantial degree of equality among people. Equality here means that inequality of wealth, of social

rank or of education and access to knowledge should not be so considerable as to result in permanent subordination of some groups of people to others. Thus, the idea and principle of democracy cannot be divorced from the principle of equality. If democracy is peoples' participation then the formal participation in electoral process is only one indicator of the equal opportunity to participate. The effective participation cannot be ensured without creating a condition of effectivity. And this effectivity can be advanced through ensuring substantive equality. Mere political equality in terms of equality of opportunity would face disjunction in case of social and economic inequality. Hence, the ideal of political democracy has to be backed by social and economic democracy. In India we adopted democracy to achieve, along with political equality, social and economic equality. Also, in the long run we needed social and economic equality as a necessary condition for the successful working of democracy. However, even after 55 years of independence we have enormous

inequalities in our society and these are posing a serious challenge to our democratic system.

### INEQUALITY

Socio-economic inequality in India is a heritage of long history. India is the world's classic unequal society from time immemorial. Inequality in India's past was the result of a rigid caste system that had ordained professions by the accident of birth in a given family and *Jati*. The deprived and marginalised were told that their destitution, low status and misery are ordained by destiny (*karma*) and that they have to work within their assigned status determined by their birth.

Another type of inequality i.e. poverty, has been the consequence of colonial past. It is not only India as a whole that became poor, but within that there emerged unequal classes and differences in the levels of incomes. Certain sections had monopoly over land and means of production, and larger masses were dependent on them for employment and survival. Another aspect of income inequality is the large and persisting disparity between the rural and urban incomes and inequalities between different regions and states, called regional inequalities and imbalances. We are discussing below the nature and extent of social and economic inequalities and their impact on political process. In another chapter we will read in detail about regional inequalities and their consequences.

### SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Social Inequality in India has largely been prevalent on caste basis. The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Castes (broadly known as backward classes) represent the social groups which have suffered down the ages due to caste prejudices, economic inequality, educational backwardness.

### Scheduled Castes

The term Scheduled Caste signifies those groups of people who were out of the caste system or the varna hierarchy in the past. They comprise the bulk of erstwhile untouchables or untouchable castes. The Scheduled Caste is a politico-legal term. It was first coined by the Simon Commission and then used in government of India Act 1935. When India became independent this term was adopted by the Constitution for the purpose of providing these castes some special privileges and constitutional safeguards.

According to the practice of determination of caste by birth and assigning social status to them the people belonging to Scheduled Castes were the lowest in the caste hierarchy. They were kept out from participation in public life by being branded as untouchables. Of course Scheduled Castes do not constitute a homogeneous group. Even among themselves there is further stratification and ranking. But together they are segregated on the criteria of untouchability. They have always been

outcastes. Only after independence, their rights have been recognised and they have been declared equal citizens by the Constitution of India. As already discussed in Chapter 10 various efforts are being undertaken to improve their status and position in the society. However, the results so far are not much encouraging. Hence, social inequality on caste basis persists.

### LEGAL EQUALITY

You have already read that the Preamble of the Constitution of India establishes equality, justice, and liberty as the cardinal principles in regulating the society and state in India. It was not mentioned as a mere pious wish. The non-discrimination principle of citizenship rights included in the category of fundamental rights ensures equality before law and equal protection of law, equality of opportunity and liberty. The Constitution ensure equality of opportunity to all irrespective of caste, gender, religion, and one's social status. It provides opportunity to equal access in the public domain. The Constitution (Article 17) mentions unambiguously the abolition of untouchability and makes its practice a criminal offence. Through the chapter on Directive Principles, the Constitution (Article 46) directs the State that it must endeavour to promote the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes among the weaker sections of the society.

Above all, the Constitution has made the provision for preferential

treatment or *affirmative action* through policy of reservations as a method removing age-old disparities and indignities. The idea of reservation was accepted through provisions of fundamental right itself. Article 15 (4) makes provision for the advancement of any "socially and educationally backward classes of citizens" and Article 16 (4) provides for reservations in appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which in the opinion of the State is not adequately represented in its services. Articles 15 and 16 empower the State to make reservations for Scheduled Castes in educational institutions and employment. The Constitution specifically mention that the seats shall be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Accordingly out of 543 Lok Sabha seats 79 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and out of 3,997 seats in State Assemblies 541 seats have been reserved for them. The reservation policy thus is provided in (i) government appointments; (ii) in admission to educational institutions; and (iii) in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies of the States.

You have already read in an earlier chapter various policies, plans and programmes formulated and implemented for the welfare and upliftment of Scheduled Castes. Thus, it can be said that the issue of social inequality on the basis of caste system was boldly tackled by the makers of the Indian Constitution. Thereafter, during the last 55 years the central and the

state governments have enacted various legislations in favour of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other economically and educationally backward classes. Specific schemes, and programmes have been launched for their welfare. As a result of all these, there have come some changes in the status of Scheduled Castes. Some of them have found ways of moving upward both at socio-cultural as well as political level. But as a whole the real benefits of the Constitutional provisions and welfare schemes have not reached to the most needy and deprived persons.

Though, the Constitution has abolished untouchability, it still continues in various parts of the country. The masses of SCs continue to toil, mainly as the service class for their survival. They are by and large landless labourers. They are mostly engaged in menial jobs with little control over resources such as land, forest and water. The land reforms, the legal measures to attempt redistribution of land resources, have not been implemented.

The emergence of a minuscule minority among Scheduled Castes on account of socio-economic transformation and reservation policy is symbolic of empowerment. The representation of SCs and STs in the Central Government Services speaks of facts. As seen in Table 12.1, it is quite clear that they are mainly employed in Group C and Group D services. More than fifty per cent of the Safai Karamcharis (sweepers)

come from this group, which indicate a kind of occupational continuity. Some work in most dehumanised and degraded conditions. According to government records over 800,000 persons are employed as manual scavengers. Even if a middle class has emerged among the SCs due to the measure of reservation policy, they do not enjoy the same amount of honour and prestige associated with their achieved status as enjoyed by members of higher castes.

As far literacy rate is concerned, in respect of SC/ST, they are far behind the general population. The enrolment ratio and dropout rate in schools among SC students have been quite negative as compared to the general students. Dropout rate of SC girl children is up to 75 per cent.

Added to all this is the fact of atrocities against Scheduled Castes. The police records suggest that while the decennial general crime rate has come down, the atrocities or the incidence of violence against SCs has increased. One of the reasons for increasing violence against them is the rising awakening among them about their rights and intolerance of the same by certain sections of upper castes. While Scheduled Castes are slowly trying to recover from such disabilities, their social mobility is hampered because of structural problems and mindsets. May be, it will take some time to come out of this social thinking. This is also true of the Scheduled Tribes as well.



**Table 12.1: Representation of SCs/STs in Central Government Services (as on 1 January, 1998)**

Group	Total	SCs	Percentage	STs	Percentage
A	63,466	6,608	10.41	2,047	3.23
B	1,05,679	12,510	11.84	2,868	2.71
C	21,35,640	3,48,309	16.31	1,28,776	6.03
D (Excluding Safai Karamcharis)	9,98,672	2,14,784	21.51	69,168	6.93
Safai Karamcharis	1,71,994	95,430	54.32	6,916	4.02
Total (Excluding Safai Karamcharis)	33,03,457	5,32,211	17.62	2,02,859	6.14
Total (Including Safai Karamcharis)	34,75,451	6,27,641	19.44	2,09,775	6.04

**Note:** Information in respect of five Central Ministries/Departments is not included.

**Source:** India 2001: A Reference Annual, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 2001.

**Table 12.2: Percentage of Literacy for Different Groups of Population During 1971-91**

Population Group	1971		1981		1991	
	Total	M	Total	M	Total	M
SCs	11.7	15.1	31.12	40.93	49.91	23.76
STs	1.3	4.9	24.52	34	40.65	18.13
NSP	38.3	22.3	52.34	28.9	69.55	44.8
General	29.3	38.7	46.89	21.82	64.13	39.29

- Notes:**
1. NSP stands for non-scheduled population and general includes all the population.
  2. When the percentage of literacy for the years 1971 and 1981 has been calculated by dividing the literates by the total population, inclusive of the children in the age-group of 0-4, in 1991, the same has been calculated in exclusion of the children in the age-group of 0-6.

**Source:** B.S. Bhargava and Avinash Samal "Protective Discrimination and Development of Scheduled Castes: An Alternative Model for Good Governance" *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XLIV, No.3, Annual Issue, 1998.

### Scheduled Tribes

The word Tribe has been used to refer to groups belonging to forests and hill areas and distinct from so-called mainstream population. It was first used by the British along with prefixes like jungle and hill, aboriginal, indigenous, etc., to describe the people who seemed to have little contact with the main culture. The common features were described that the tribes (i) live away from the civilised world in the inaccessible parts lying in the forest hills; (ii) they belong to either one of the three stocks — Negrito, Australoid or Mongoloids; (iii) they speak the same tribal dialect; (iv) they profess primitive religion known as 'Animism' in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element; and (v) they follow primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest products; and they are largely meat eaters.

For ages, the Tribes had little more than a casual contact with the so-called civilised or advanced cultures and societies. It was during British consolidations that a contact was established with areas of their habitation. They are not a homogeneous group. They are spread over the various regions of India. Areas in which they are particularly concentrated include areas of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Northern and Southern Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, North East States, West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra,

Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Union Territories of Andaman and Nicobar islands and Lakshadweep. Majority of the tribes depend on land and forest to make a living. Their social life is also interwoven around the land they live on. But per capita land available to tribal people has been decreasing. During the British rule, with the opening up of means of transport and communication, there came infiltration by non-tribals into tribal areas. Their land has also increasingly been taken over by the government for mining and industries.

As a whole, at the time of independence, the situation of tribal people was both backward and different. Their standard of living, judged by any norms, educational standards and physical quality of life, was low. At the same time they have different culture, religion, values and traditions. Though, they were not part of prevailing traditional caste system but in many parts of the country they came to be considered with contempt as low caste people. With regard to their development and welfare the problem was three fold. To raise the standard of life, to integrate them in the Indian social-political system and at the same time to protect their identity. You have already read that framers of the Constitution provided special provisions for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes. Similar to those for Scheduled Castes, including reservations in jobs, educational institutions and legislatures.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes along with certain other backward castes are socially unequal because of discrimination and mistreatment by upper castes or advanced sections of population. A large section of ST population suffers from economic inequality due to widespread poverty among them. Poverty, however, covers many others also.

### ECONOMIC INEQUALITY: POVERTY

You have already read that as a result of British colonial exploitation at the time of independence, India had become one of the poorest countries of the world. Not only India was a poor country, but within this the distribution of income and wealth tended to be too unequal. It is not that there is no poverty in other countries. Even in Britain and USA there is poverty. What was important in India at the time of independence was that there were unprecedented inequalities. Therefore, poverty became a big social and political problem. India after independence has made some efforts both to raise the level of income of people and also to remove vast inequalities. There also have been significant achievements in bringing people out of poverty. However, still a large population lives in pathetic conditions of poverty. When we talk of poverty, it is important for us to know what exactly we mean by poverty, what is the extent of poverty in our society and what are its consequences?

### POVERTY : MEANING

In most general terms poverty is the denial of opportunities, to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living. In fact, poverty is a socio-economic phenomenon which defies any precise definition. Its concept and content varies from country to country depending upon what a particular society accepts as a reasonable good living standard for its people. In view of this poverty can be considered in absolute and relative terms:

*Absolute Poverty* refers to the inability of a person or a household to provide even the basic necessities of life. It refers to conditions of acute physical wants, starvation, malnutrition, want of clothing, want of shelter, total lack of medical care etc. Absolute poverty is also called subsistence poverty, since it is based on the assessment of minimum subsistency requirement, which is a condition to remain just alive.

*Relative Poverty* is a concept to measure availability or lack of opportunities according to standards of life at a given time and place. It refers to the fact that different societies have different standards; hence, it is not possible to have a universal measurement of poverty. For example, in USA a family not having two cars might be considered poor whereas in India family with a single car is considered rich.

Whatever the type of poverty, it is a fact that it generates inequalities in

social and economic powers, which in turn affects political power. It is therefore, necessary that for success of democracy economic inequalities should be minimum. In India we have problems both of absolute and relative poverty. But more serious is that of absolute poverty.

### POVERTY IN INDIA

It is a fact that a vast population in India has been living below subsistence level but the extent of poverty came to be known only in 1960s when scholars started measuring and studying the problem in a serious way. To measure poverty, the concept of *poverty line* has been used. This is based on the amount of income required for a person to purchase a barest minimum desirable nutritional standards of caloric intake. It is suggested that in Indian conditions in rural areas a person needs an average of 2,400 calories per day and in urban areas an intake of 2,100 calories per day. According to a study made by Dandekar and Rath to buy this much food in 1960 a person required Rs 15 per month per person in rural areas and Rs 22.50 in urban areas. According to this criteria about 38 per cent of the rural population and nearly 50 per cent of urban population lived below the poverty line. The Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85), whose foremost objective was removal of poverty, indicated that 50.7 per cent of rural population and about 40 per cent of the urban population was living below the poverty in 1979-80.

Accordingly, the absolute number of poor was 31.7 crore of which 26 crore were residing in rural areas and 5.7 crore in urban areas.

The poverty line was later revised upwards in terms of monetary expenditure taking into note the rising cost of living. Thus, in 1984-85, with the criteria of 2,400 and 2,100 calories of food for rural and urban areas, poverty line was drawn at per capita monthly expenditure of Rs 107 for rural and Rs 122 for urban areas. On this basis 39.9 per cent of the rural population and 27.7 per cent of urban population was estimated to be below the poverty line. The proportion of total population below the poverty line in 1984-85 was 36.9 per cent. In 1993-94, 34.3 per cent of population or 32.0 crore people lived below poverty line. This was based on required per capita monthly income of Rs.205.84 in rural and Rs 281.35 for urban areas. According to government of India Economic Survey 2001, and Tenth Five - Year Plan Document 26.1 per cent of population lived below poverty line. This figure is contested by several independent economists. The Human Development Report for 2000 has placed India at 128th among 174 poor nations with 34.6 per cent of its population as poor.

Although, there are different estimates of poverty by governmental and other bodies, it is generally accepted that there are substantial number of people living in poverty. It is also a fact that percentage of people living below poverty line has been

declining but in absolute numbers, it remains the same because of increase in population. Hence, about 30 crore of India's population lives below poverty line. The situation is worse in areas of Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh where households falling below the poverty line goes beyond 40 per cent.

### POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES

The national leaders who took over power at independence were aware of the pervasiveness and depth of poverty in India, along with associated problems of unemployment and underemployment and inequalities in resources and income. But in the initial years the problem of poverty was not attacked directly. It is from Sixth Five-Year Plan that a number of programmes have been promoted as means of carrying or lifting people over the poverty line. Accordingly, apart from relying on the overall higher rate of growth of the economy, some specific measures to alleviate poverty also have been formulated.

These programmes fall into two broad types. One was designed to lift beneficiaries above the poverty line by providing them "with productive assets" or skills or both so that they can employ themselves usefully to earn greater incomes. The second type of programmes were designed to be

ameliorative, to provide temporary wage employment for the poor and the landless in seasons when employment opportunities are reduced and in areas which are dry and drought prone where jobs are less available even in the best of times.

Unfortunately, most of the schemes to alleviate poverty-stricken people have not reached their intended targets. The reasons for this are administrative apathy, wide spread corruption, inability of socially and economically powerful sections to exert pressure on political and administrative machinery, lack of political will to implement most important policies of land reform and family planning, and incapacity amongst poor themselves to organise and fight for their rights. Apart from inequalities among people, there also are inequalities between states and regions. We will discuss them in another chapter.

Thus, in India we still have a large population living below poverty line. This is in spite of the fact that considerable development has been achieved in agriculture, industry as well as service sector. The benefits of development have been appropriated by socially and economically powerful, upper middle and middle classes and upper castes. The maldistribution of assets leaves about one-third of the population without effective means of satisfying their basic needs. A major portion of these economically poor are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In other words, in India social and economic inequalities are linked.

## INEQUALITIES AND POLITICS

Dr B.R. Ambedkar in his final address in the Constituent Assembly on 25 November, 1949, observed:

"On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principles of graded inequality which means elevation of some and degradation of other. On the economic plane we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. On the 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradiction? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy".

These words of Dr Ambedkar, it seems, our planners and policy makers did not take seriously. Result is, ever increasing social tensions and aberrations in democracy. It is the vast ocean of poverty stricken humanity, especially in the rural areas that constitutes the electorate. Poor, illiterate, with a sense of belonging only to the caste or community and with no access to proper communication, this enormous human wave is driven to the polling station. They can affect the course of change. During various elections they have proved that their

voting act is not isolated from the socio-economic setting. Since, they are in majority, properly organised and mobilised they can radically alter the election results. Therefore, the vested interests have to manipulate the elections to negate their democratic outcome. The crude ways for that are to increase the role of money and muscle power, to whip up communalism and casteism and use violence in elections. The ruling classes, in their own interests encourage religiosity, fundamentalism and obscurantism. If social and economic inequalities are not reduced, social tensions and political violence are likely to increase.

India inherited a society full of inequalities, both social and economic. Caste has been a great factor in creating and maintaining both social and economic inequality. Nature of property, relations and mechanisms of production introduced and developed by British colonial administration increased these inequalities as also produced new types of inequalities. Independent India adopted a democratic system to change this. There was a Constitution with plenty of promises. A process of planned development was initiated.

It seems that although constitutional provisions and legal texts exist to abolish untouchability and to protect the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and although social and educational policies have been adopted to improve the situation of SCs and STs and to

protect them from abuses, widespread discrimination against them and the relative impunity of those who abuse them continues. Similarly, in spite of Ninth Five-Year Plans having been completed and various schemes to alleviate poverty been launched and implemented, about one third of population lives below poverty line, that is having not enough to eat two times a day. There are many others who do not have access to required hygiene, health care, education, housing and clothing, etc. In addition, gaps between rich and poor are increasing. At the same time introduction of democracy, and elections and flow of information world over has brought awareness among the deprived and the poor. They tend to use

their voting power for their amelioration. The unresponsiveness of the economic system to the basic needs of the poor makes them desperate and drives them to blind opposition of the system. They are attracted by fundamentalist, communalist and terrorist groups. Both Social and Economic inequality thus are a great threat to the survival of democracy, stability of the system and unity and integrity of the country. These need to be tackled on priority basis and in all seriousness. Development should not be seen as mere increase in national income or production. It has to be seen in the fulfillment of at least minimum needs of all and creating a just social order.

#### EXERCISES

1. What do you understand by the terms Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes?
2. Explain the Constitutional provisions provided to ensure equality to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
3. Describe the extent of Poverty in India. What programmes have been undertaken to alleviate poverty?
4. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Poverty line;
  - (ii) Preferential treatment;
  - (iii) Democracy and Equality;
  - (iv) Inequalities and Politics.

## CHAPTER 13

### Education and Illiteracy

IMPORTANCE of education, both for success of democracy and development of society and country, has been stressed by experts and scholars for centuries. Education exercises a decisive influence on social and economic development. It not only enhances the productive capacity of the individual but also plays a crucial role in ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of wealth generated in the country. It also helps in producing an enlightened citizenry, vital for the success of democratic polity. It is also a potent force for national reconstruction and cultural rejuvenation of the country. Human Development Reports of recent years have clearly pointed out that education is an investment for development. If human development is about expanding people's choices to lead the lives they value, then education surely has to be an integral part of it. India has a long tradition of organised education. Historians suggest that there is no other country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence. But, as is well known that during colonial rule hardly any effort

was made for educating the masses. Limited educational facilities were created to produce English language knowing subordinates for colonial administration. Hence, at the time of independence number of literates in India was small, it was about 6 crore that is only about 18 per cent of the total population. More than 30 crore persons were illiterate. Within literates most belonged to upper castes, middle classes and from cities. Almost entire population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and most women and rural people belonged to the category of illiterates. Male literacy rate was 27.16 per cent and female literacy was 8.86 per cent. Thus, at the time of independence, India inherited a system of education which was not only quantitatively small but also characterised by the persistence of intra and inter-regional as well as structural imbalances.

After the attainment of independence the national government in India did embark on a programme of providing elementary education to its teeming millions. As a result the literacy rate in 2001 census has reached 65.38 per cent. The male literacy rate



is about 76 per cent and that of females is about 54 per cent. While in comparison to 1947 this seems to be a big achievement, but in terms of promises, needs and expectations much more is required. In 2001, out of 83.88 crore of people in the over seven year age group 26.84 crore were illiterate and 3.8 crore children were out of schools. This is the highest number of illiterates in any single country in the world. Of course reason for this is India being second highest populated country. Yet it is a matter of concern. While the world is talking of 10-12 years of education for all, India continues to struggle with five years of primary schooling. To understand that we can have a look at the efforts made for attaining universal literacy and problems we face.

### TOWARDS LITERACY

The importance and necessity of education for democracy, development and human dignity was appreciated by the framers of the Constitution themselves. Hence, through Article 45 in chapter on the Directive Principles they embarked upon the State that it shall endeavor to provide, within a period of one decade from the commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all until they complete the age of fourteen years. So it was expected that by 1960 all children between the age of six and fourteen years will be in schools. The question was not merely of bringing children to school but making adults

also literate, because, as the document on Challenges of Education-1985, mentioned, "if adequate measures are not taken for the spread of education, the chasm of economic disabilities, regional imbalances and social injustice will widen further resulting in building up disintegrative tendencies."

In spite of pivotal importance of education for social and economic development and poor state of literacy at the time of independence, in the initial years of planning the required seriousness was not shown towards elementary education and spread of literacy. While elimination of illiteracy was expressed as one of the major concerns of the government, resources were allocated more for higher education than to primary education. Hence, in the early years not much progress could be made in the direction of achieving higher rates of literacy. As can be seen from Table 13.1, literacy rate increased to 28.30 per cent in 1961, 34.45 per cent in 1971 and 43.57 per cent in 1981. In other words even after more than 30 years of independence literacy rate was not 50 per cent. Kothari Commission on Education (1964-66) which studied the problems of education in India traced the causes for failure to achieve universalisation of education to lack of adequate resources, tremendous increase in population, resistance to education of girls, general poverty of the people and illiteracy and apathy of parents.

Many education experts do not agree with these causes in totality. According to them various studies have

shown that an overwhelming majority of parents, even among deprived sections, attach great importance to their children's education. It has also been found that economic dependence on child labour is not the main reason for poor families inability to send their children to school. They find the faults in lack of resources and wrong priorities. It is pointed out that in the first 25 years of independence the number of universities grew more than

The proportion of expenditure on higher education rose very substantially in the Second Five-Year Plan of the late 1950s and remained high throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The reasons for this imbalance between primary and higher education are attributed to the development plans as in most other cases, favourable towards urban areas, middle and upper middle classes and upper castes because of the pressure these groups

**Table 13.1: All India Literacy Rates (in per cent)**

Year	Male	Female	Total
1901	9.5		5.3
1911	10.6		5.9
1921	12.2		7.2
1931	15.6		9.5
1941	24.3		16.9
1951	27.2		18.6
1961	40.2		25.30
1971	46.0		31.45
1981	56.35		43.57
1991	64.16		52.21
2001	75.85		65.38

Source: JBG Tilak and MV Vergese, Financing of Education in India (Paris, UNESCO, 1991).

four times, then doubled itself in the next 25 years. As Table 13.2 shows, the annual growth rate of enrolment in higher education outpaced the rate at which elementary education was growing. This was true of institutional expansion too, especially in the 1960s.

had been able to exert on the government. J.P. Naik, Member Secretary of the Education Commission in India wrote in 1965, "the largest beneficiaries of our system of education are boys, the people of urban areas, and the middle and the upper classes:

**Table 13.2 : Growth of Education (average annual growth rate in per cent)**

	Enrolment	Institutions
1951-61	6.2	4.7
1961-71	5.0	2.1
1971-81	2.6	1.9
1981-89	3.3	1.3

Source: JBG Tilak and MV Vergese, Financing of Education in India (Paris, UNESCO, 1991).

Educational development, particularly at the secondary and higher stages, is benefiting the 'haves' more than the 'have-nots'.

**NEW PERSPECTIVE: NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION — 1986**

From the above it becomes clear that while the framers of the Constitution and planners appreciated the need for a literate population and universal education for all children, at least in the age-group of 6-14, the achievements in first thirty years of independence were not satisfactory. In absolute numbers as against a total of 30.1 crore illiterates in 1951, India had 42.5 crore illiterates in 1981 — an increase of 12.4 crore during 30 years (increase in number

was due to Growth in population though in percentage terms there was decrease). If this trend was to continue, by A.D.2000 India would have had 50 crore illiterates. In the middle of 1980s there came a realisation of this sorry state of affairs. By this time it was also becoming clear that world was moving very fast in science and technology developments. The country was facing both internal and external challenges of development. And it was clear that the education is the most effective instrument to meet these challenges. In view of these in 1985 a review of the prevailing education system was made. Based on this review presented in the document "Challenge of Education — a Policy Perspective" in 1986, the National Policy on Education was

formulated and got approved by Parliament. This came to be popularly known as New Education Policy. There was also brought out a Programme of Action. The National Policy on Education — 1986 was revised in 1992 and also a new Programme of Action brought in. National Policy on Education (NPE) — 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA) — 1992 envisage that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality should be provided to all children up to the age of 14 years before the commencement of the twenty-first century. As per the commitment of the government, about six per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would be earmarked for Education sector by the year 2000 AD and 50 per cent of the outlay will be spent on Primary Education. The NPE reiterated that “The new thrust in elementary education will emphasise two aspects: (i) Universal enrolment and retention of children up to 14 years of age; and (ii) a substantial improvement in the quality of education.” The NPE suggested that it shall be ensured that all children who attain the age of about 11 years by 1990 will have had five years of schooling, or its equivalent through the non-formal stream. Likewise, by 1995 all children will be provided free and compulsory education up to 14 years of age. The NPE also took note of socio-cultural inequalities in a significant way and listed specific steps not only for equality of access to education but also for equalisation with regard to the status of disadvantaged sections of society. It

laid down that educational transformation, reduction of disparities, universalisation of elementary education, adult education and scientific and technological research would be accepted as national responsibilities for which the provision of adequate resource support will be the concern not only of the State governments, but of all the agencies which are collectively responsible for national development.

To attain the goals and ideals of universal elementary education and those set in the New Education Policy, various measures had been taken and programmes and schemes launched. Important of these are as given below.

#### ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

To fulfil the commitment of augmenting resources for education, the allocation of funds for education, has over the years increased significantly. Plan outlay on education increased from 153 crore in the First Five-Year Plan to Rs 19,600 crore in Eighth Five-Year Plan and to Rs 20,381.64 crore in Ninth Five-Year Plan. The expenditure on Education as a percentage of GDP also rose from 0.7 per cent in 1951-52 to 3.6 per cent in 1997-98. The outlay on elementary education was 64.6 per cent of the total central sector plan outlay in 1999-2000. There is as such a significant increase in expenditure on education, though it still is below the targeted 6 per cent of GDP. The March 2002 budget allotted 3.8 per cent of GDP to education.

### UNIVERSALISING ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

As a result of the Eighth Five-Year Plan more than 95 per cent of country's rural population have primary schools within one km and about 85 per cent have upper primary schools within three km. As a result (i) enrolment of children of 6-14 years of age in primary and upper primary schools has gone up steadily to 87 and 50 per cent respectively; (ii) significant improvements have taken place in enrolment of girls and SCs/STs; and (iii) number of primary and upper primary schools have gone up from 2.23 lac in 1950-51 to 7.75 lac in 1996-97.

In addition to increase in allocation of funds and opening of schools, there have been launched schemes like District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) initiative; National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal Scheme); Operation Blackboard, National Literacy Mission etc. The District Primary Education Programme was launched in 1994 as a major initiative to achieve the objective of universalisation of primary education. It aims at providing access to primary education for all children, reducing primary dropout rates to less than 10 per cent, increasing learning achievement of primary school students by 25 per cent, and reducing the gender and social gap to less than five per cent.

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme was started on 15 August 1995. It is aimed at improving enrolment, attendance

and retention while simultaneously impacting on the nutrition status of students in primary classes. The programme envisages provision of cooked meals/processed food for children studying in Classes I-V in all government, local body and government aided primary schools.

The Operation Blackboard Scheme was launched in 1987-88 with a view to bringing about substantial improvement in primary schools. The scheme has three components: (i) provision of at least two all-weather rooms; (ii) provision of at least two teachers, one of them preferably woman; (iii) provision of essential teaching and learning material including blackboards, maps, charts, a small library, toys, etc.

### NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Studies and reports have shown that a number of children, even if willing, cannot go to schools for various reasons and compulsions. The reasons may be non-availability of schools near residence, children engaged in work, assisting in performing domestic chores like fetching water, fuel, fodder or attending to siblings, children dropped out from schools at one stage, girls unable to attend schools due to social conditions, etc. For providing elementary education to such children the government of India, Department of Education has started from 1979-80 programme of non-formal education. Under this scheme Non-Formal Education Centers are run by voluntary

agencies. Evening Schools are opened, children are engaged in studying by other means also.

### ADULT EDUCATION

The National Policy of Education also envisages that illiteracy should be eradicated at all levels particularly in the 15-35 age group. The Programme of Action stipulated that about 8 crore adult illiterates in the age group 15-35 would be taught. Later the programme aimed to impart functional literacy to 10 crore adult illiterates by 1997. To achieve these targets, the major strategies include reorganisation and strengthening of the existing schemes of adult education, launching of mass programmes of functional literacy, organisation of various programmes of continuing education, strengthening technical resource system, etc. for eradication of illiteracy.

### NATIONAL LITERACY MISSION

Realising that the eradication of illiteracy from a vast country like India is beset with several social and economic hurdles, a National Literacy Mission was set up on 5 May 1988, to impart a new sense of urgency and seriousness to adult education. After the success of the area specific, time bound, voluntary based campaign approach first in Kottayam city and then in Ernakulum district in Kerala in 1990, the National Literacy Mission had accepted the literacy campaigns as the dominant strategy for eradication of illiteracy.

During the last ten years 574 districts out of 597 districts in the country have already been covered by the literacy campaigns. The creditable performance of the National Literacy Mission received international recognition when it was awarded the UNESCO Noma Literacy Prize for 1999. The National Literacy Mission was revitalised with the approval of the Union government on 30 September, 1999. The Mission's goal is to attain total literacy by 2005. The Mission seeks to achieve this by imparting functional literacy to non-literates in the 15-35 age group. The focus of the campaign now is on the four major Hindi speaking and literacy backward States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Some States like Kerala and Mizoram have made significant progress in achieving literacy rates. According to 2001 census it is 90.92 per cent in Kerala and 88.49 per cent in Mizoram whereas in Bihar it is 47.53 per cent and Jharkhand 54.33 per cent. As already mentioned, percentage of the literacy in the country as a whole is 65.38. A special programme for women was launched in 1989. It is called *Mahila Samakhya* (education for women's Quality). The programme aims at creating an environment for women to seek knowledge and information with a view to bringing about a change in their perception about themselves and that of the society. It is being implemented in about 6,877 villages in 51 districts of eight States namely Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra

Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

The above mentioned schemes and programmes have brought some improvements in the literacy situation of India. Particularly during the decade 1991-2001 performance has been significant. As already mentioned the literacy rate has risen to 65.38 per cent. 75.85 for males and 54.16 for females. The female literacy rate has increased by about 10 percentage points during 1981-91 but by almost 15 percentage points during 1991-2001. The most outstanding increases in female literacy rates during 1991-2001 have been recorded in Backward States: Chhatisgarh from 27.5 per cent to 52.4 per cent, Rajasthan from 20.4 to 44.3 per cent, Madhya Pradesh from 29.4 to 50.3 per cent, and Orissa from 34.7 to 51 per cent. It can therefore be said that the literacy campaigns have definitely achieved success in large scale through community and social mobilisation, increasing school enrolment, enhancing awareness on issues of social and gender equity. At the same time it is true that as yet we are quite behind the targets we have fixed.

The Constitution envisaged free and compulsory education for children between 6-14 age-group by 1961. This goal has been getting postponed again and again. Even NEP postponed it to 1995. At the World Conference on Education for all held in Thailand in

1990, India along with 155 other countries committed itself to universal primary education and halve the adult illiteracy rate by 2000. But in 2001 we had about 26 crore illiterates that is more than 30 per cent of above 7 years of age are as yet illiterate. Added to this is also a fact that majority are those who are enrolled in schools are not getting quality education. For success of democracy and development universalisation of elementary education not only means universal facilities, universal enrolment and universal retention, but also universal quality of teaching and learning.

Education is one of the most important prerequisites not only for successful working of a democratic system but also to achieve the goals of personal, social, political and cultural development. In any welfare state, provision of elementary education to all is a must.

This goal of universal elementary education means universal provision of facilities, universal enrolment and universal retention. Universal provision of facilities, however, may not necessarily ensure universal enrolment and universal enrolment may not guarantee universal retention. What is therefore important is policies and programmes to take care of all these aspects. Framers of the Constitution embarked upon the government to work to attain these goals in the nearest possible time. India's literacy rate has increased from 18.33 per cent at the time of independence to 65.38 per cent in 2001. This is not a mean

achievement. But it cannot be overlooked that in spite of all commitments we have entered twenty-first century with about 26 crore people illiterate. World's largest population (in terms of numbers) lives in India. Illiteracy is also linked with poverty and social backwardness. That means a large section of people belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and of course poor are illiterate. Illiteracy keeps these people not only economically backward but also socially and politically unaware. Accordingly, these people remain available for exploitation by caste, community and such traditional sentiments in elections and other socio-

political activities. Literacy is not merely mastering the art of reading and writing. It gives people self-confidence and strength. It empowers people with skills for productive work and above all a capacity to make decisions which is one of the most important requirement for a meaningful participatory democracy. Therefore, it is important that all out efforts are made to achieve universalisation of education without any further loss of time. For that it is required that adequate allocation of resources, assurance that these resources reach their destination, participation of community, a dedicated administration, and above all social awareness be assured.

### EXERCISES

1. Explain the importance of education for democracy. What was the status of literacy in India at the time of independence ?
2. What do you understand by Universalisation of Elementary Education? Mention any five programmes started in India in this regard.
3. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) New Education Policy;
  - (ii) Non-Formal Education;
  - (iii) National Literacy Mission;
  - (iv) Adult Education.



**CHAPTER 14****Regional Imbalances: Regionalism, Linguism and Separatism**

INDIA is a vast plural country, full of diversities of religions, castes, languages, tribes, cultures, etc. A number of cultural and linguistic groups are concentrated in certain territorial segments, to which they are attached, emotionally and historically. As has been said that during colonial rule the administration was interested in economic exploitation of the country and not in its development; it encouraged various divisions based on religion, region, caste and language and did not pursue any plan or strategy for a balanced development of the country. These resulted in regional imbalances, and group identities. Subsequently, the independent India saw the rise of regionalism, linguism, separatism, etc. In this chapter we will read about the background, causes and nature of these phenomena and possible ways out to check them. All these are related and interconnected.

**THE REGION**

A region is a territory, the inhabitants of which have an emotional attachment

to it because of commonality of religion, language, usages and customs, socio-economic and political stages of development, common historical traditions, a common way of living, etc. Any one or more of these, and above all widely prevalent sentiments of togetherness, strengthen the bond. This territory can coincide with the boundaries of a State, parts of State or even with more than one State. A sense of discrimination or competition on economic, political or cultural grounds, desire for justice or favour gives rise to regionalism. Depending on reasons, and related nature, regionalism can be manifested in many ways like demand for autonomy or powers for State, creation of new State, protection of language or culture of the region or separation from the country.

**REGIONAL DISPARITIES**

By regional disparities or imbalances is meant wide differences in per capita income, literacy rates, availability of health and education services, levels of industrialisation, etc. between different

regions. As already mentioned, these regions may be either states or regions within a State. In this regard in India there are enormous imbalances on various accounts. The exploitative nature of British colonial rule either created or accentuated regional disparities. The planning in independent India has also not been able to remove these.

### COLONIAL LEGACY

As is well known, the British colonial administration was primarily interested in selling their products in Indian markets and taking away raw materials from here. In some cases they were also interested in establishing some industries to invest their surplus capital and use cheap labour. Keeping these needs in view, they introduced *Zamindari* system in some regions to get maximum land revenue. In some regions they favoured peasant proprietary system and improvement of agriculture to create markets for their products. As such, in agriculture there came up significant variations both in production relations and level of production in different states and regions.

The pattern of urbanisation was based on the strategy of exporting primary products and importing finished goods. This laid the foundation for the emergence of port towns as the major centers of urban-industrial activities. Therefore, the growth of trade and commerce in colonial India meant the creation of jobs and educational opportunities at coastal centers like

Bombay, Calcutta and Madras and some princely states' capitals. This also led to the emergence of some consumer industries in these enclaves and hence to the development of a merchant capitalist class. This gave these regions a head start over others where the vast tracts of agriculture had lost their traditional handicrafts and other small scale non-agricultural activities in the face of competition from the high technology associated with the modern processes of industrialisation.

Another factor in the uneven regional development was the growth of the education system. The British imperialists had linked India to Europe via trade relations and the coastal areas especially around the ports of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. To man the establishments in these areas modern education was introduced. An educated professional class, mainly lower paid government and commercial clerks, grew up in these areas. These regions also threw up an elite group of lawyers and other professionals who were involved on both sides of the independence movement.

On the eve of independence inter-state and inter-district disparities were quite sharp and widening. There were differences in the levels of per capita income and consumption, literacy, medical and health facilities, natural resources, population growth, infrastructure development, employment opportunities etc. The independent India, thus, was burdened with the task of removing these disparities.

## REGIONAL POLICY IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

The need for the removal of regional disparities was well recognised by the leaders of the independent India. The Constitution of India, had made it mandatory for the government at the Centre to appoint a Finance Commission once at least in every five years. It was to examine the problems arising out of the gaps between the needs for expenditure and the availability of revenue and other such matters. Accordingly, the balanced regional development had become the declared goal of the Central government and of its two principal agencies — the Planning Commission and the Finance Commission. One of the objectives of planning was to restore the balance between various areas and regions. However, these institutions were to work within overall socio-economic infrastructure of the country and the developing political process. As has already been mentioned that because of the strategic position of the ruling class and adopted model of development right from the beginning, the development has been drifting away from the desired goals. Moreover, to begin with planning was primarily restricted to the national level. Hardly any attention was paid to the problem of regional disparities and the few measures that were taken, were adopted to deal with specific problems faced by certain areas having natural calamities. Thus, the problem of regional development in a national context did

not get adequate attention of the policy makers. Some of the already developed regions enjoyed the privilege to develop further at the cost of the backward regions which continued to stagnate.

The Third Five-Year Plan devoted some attention to the problem of regional disparities. Some efforts were made to identify the backward regions. Fourth plan onward, planners have increasingly emphasised this objective. Deliberate policy measures are being taken to improve the levels of living of the people in regions identified as backward. However, in practice, in spite of the increasing awareness of these aspects, very little has been achieved.

While industrially backward regions have been identified by India's Planning Commission, no such attempt has yet been made as regards regions which can be deemed to be backward from the point of view of overall economic development. Actually, the main focus of regional policy during the Indian plans has been on the dispersal of industry among the different regions of India.

But, in spite of various attempts for industrialisation, agriculture continues to be the most important economic activity from the point of view of output and employment in most of the States in India. And within the agricultural sector, because of emphasis on immediate increase in production, inter-state disparities in per capita agricultural production have been on the increase. It is well known that in agricultural development policy, the green revolution and its impact has

been confined to relatively small areas. Thus, the disparities in socio-economic conditions of the people have been increasing both within and between different regions of the country.

### **REGIONAL IMBALANCES AND REGIONALISM**

Existence and continuation of regional inequalities both among States and within States create the feeling of neglect, deprivation and of discrimination. In a country which is multi ethnic and multi religious, with groups concentrated in states or regions, these disparities also become cause of social conflicts leading to political and administrative problems. In any case regional imbalances are a major cause of regionalism in India in many ways. The movements for creation of separate States in Jharkhand area of Bihar and West Bengal, Uttaranchal and Chattisgarh in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were because of underdevelopment of these regions in those States and a feeling of deprivation and exploitation among people. Finally, these areas were constituted as separate States in 2001. Similar movements are going on in Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh, Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, Darjeeling region of West Bengal and in some other regions.

Apart from sense of deprivation in the neglected States or regions there also are grievances due to sectoral imbalances in States like lack of industrial development along with agricultural development. Because of

this, on the one hand there have developed interests, particularly in rural areas of developed States, and on the other sectoral conflicts. Both these are encouraging regionalism in developed States. For example, in areas where Green Revolution was introduced and has been successful, the new rich farmers class has become economically and politically important. They are now interested in perpetuating the concessions and facilities which were given to them. In spite of agriculture having become quite profitable they want subsidies to continue and income not to be taxed. These rich farmers in such States provide major social basis of regional parties.

Another aspect of imbalanced development is that because of development only in limited areas, the work force from other States and areas, keep on flocking to the developed areas in search of job and employment. Continuous large scale arrival of industrial labour from South India and other parts to Bombay, from Bihar and Orissa to Calcutta and agricultural labour from eastern UP and Bihar to Punjab, for example, are creating two types of tensions. First, it affects the cultural harmony of those areas by creating apprehensions among the linguistic and cultural groups about their position. Second, it generates ill feeling in the local work force, who either are unable to get jobs or in view of migratory labour's willingness to work at lower rates become unable to bargain effectively with the local

employees. This gives birth to the sectional organisations and sons of the soil agitations.

Similarly expansion of education, particularly higher education, but not industrialisation and other job-creating institutions is increasing the army of educated unemployed youths in the backward regions. These frustrated young men are allured by the movements against the inflow of people from other countries and States. One of the basic reasons behind Assam agitation is this. Similar developments are simmering up in parts of Bihar and Orissa. Besides, these unemployed youths are also attracted by the caste, communal and other sectional agitations fighting for the protection of rights on sectarian lines. Conflicts on caste lines, particularly for reservation of jobs in Bihar and Gujarat, growth of caste and sub-caste associations in towns and cities and continuous increase in communal conflicts, in spite of modernisation and expansion of education are, to an extent, due to this reason.

These regional imbalances are hindrances to national economy and a national politics to a great extent. It creates different levels and patterns of politics and gives rise to inter-state, inter-region and center-state disputes. In certain cases, it coincides with communal and cultural differences, thereby accentuating such conflicts. One of the most important aspects of regionalism in this context is Linguism.

## LINGUISTIC

Language is the most important means of human interaction and an instrument by which a whole community is organised. In a multi lingual country like India there are two problems associated with language. First, a common language seems to be the essential ingredient of national life. Second, language being the most faithful reflection of culture of an ethnic group, linguistic groups are concerned about protection and promotion of their languages. The central problem, thus, is how to evolve a common national life in the diverse languages and cultures.

In the colonial era English was the common language. It was the sole medium of intercommunication among the elitist sections of the different linguistic communities. It was used in the administration, adjudication and education both at the central and provincial levels. This of course meant that masses were kept out from administrative, political and economic opportunities whatsoever were available. Therefore, while the British language policy served the needs of the colonial rulers, it could not serve the purpose of an independent nation with democratic institutions. Apart from the sentimental issue of injuring the national pride, the use of English widened the gap between the educated elite and the people, the ruler and the ruled. As a result, the

wide segment of the population remain detached, passive and alienated from the political process and economic programmes of the country.

In view of the above, language issue had started emerging as a significant one during struggle for freedom itself. The issues being raised were primarily three; (i) the official language of India after independence; (ii) creation of linguistic States whose boundaries during British rule did not conform to linguistic divisions; and (iii) the status of regional languages.

### THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

With regard to declaration of official language there were very strong opinions in the Constituent Assembly. A section vehemently argued for recognising Hindi as the official language. But the representatives from the non-Hindi areas opposed this demand on the ground that accepting Hindi as the official language would result in the dominance and influence of the Hindi region over the whole of India. In case of competitive government jobs, Hindi speaking people would naturally gain added advantage. They also felt if Hindi was accepted as the official language, communication in the international arena would become difficult.

The supporters of Hindi rejected all these arguments and emphasised that as the Hindi-speaking people constituted the largest language group (about 40 per cent) in India, the claim of Hindi as the official language was

quite natural. They felt, if a foreign language like English was accepted as the official language, it would not be possible to keep a close touch between the government and the people. Finally, the Constituent Assembly came out with a compromise formula. The Constitution declared Hindi to be the official language. It, however, also provided for the continued use of English for all official purposes of the Union for a period of fifteen years. Further, the Constitution provided that the legislature of a State by law might adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language / languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State.

While the Constitution provided for the use of English as official language for the Union government for fifteen years, the Official Language Commission appointed in 1955 reported strongly in favour of replacing English by Hindi. With this recommendation, the long standing discontent and fears of non-Hindi speaking people burst forth. Southern critics bitterly opposed the recommendations. There were widespread demonstrations. The government once again came out with a compromise. That is, the formal change over to Hindi would take place in 1965 (that is in fifteen years after the adoption of the Constitution) and English might not be used as an official language there after. In April 1963, the Official Language Bill was formally introduced in the Parliament. The

introduction of the bill generated heated debate and witnessed some of the rowdiest scenes in the history of Parliament. Promoters of Hindi demanded immediate implementation of the constitutional provisions of official language and MPs from non-Hindi regions particularly from the South and West Bengal argued strongly for the retention of English. The bill allowed the continued use of English for official purposes without any time limit; and at the same time, it stipulated that acceptance of Hindi as the official language is to be reviewed in 1975. The non-Hindi speakers were assured that Hindi would not be imposed on them without their consent.

During these conflicting years, in order to satisfy the conflicting claims of various language groups and to promote national integration and inter-state communication, a Three Language Formula was evolved in education. It required that schools throughout the country would teach their own regional language, English and either Hindi in non-Hindi speaking areas or a language other than Hindi in the Hindi-speaking areas. In practice, this formula has been used as a mockery. For example, in most schools in Hindi speaking areas other than Hindi, language taught is Sanskrit.

After Jawaharlal Nehru's death in 1964 the situation once again deteriorated. Home Minister Gulzarilal Nanda, a strong proponent of Hindi, issued a directive to all Ministries to

report on the progress made in promoting the use of Hindi for official purposes. This evoked intensified protests and agitations in the non-Hindi speaking States, particularly in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. They demanded staturisation of "Nehru's assurances". In view of widespread and violent protests, the Parliament in 1967, amended the Official Language Bill. It provided that English shall continue to be used for all official purposes for which it was being hitherto used till all the non-Hindi States agreed, by a resolution of the State Legislatures to switch over to Hindi.

In 1977 when Janata government came to power, the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai made it clear that Hindi would not be imposed on the non-Hindi speaking areas. But he also said that there was the need to develop a link language and common script "to strengthen the cultural unity of India". This was taken as a hint favouring Hindi and was opposed. During the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi the Central government in September 1986, issued a circular for its employees asking them to use Hindi in their official correspondence and documents. Again, there were strong resentments against the circular in Tamil Nadu and many other States.

It is thus, quite clear that introduction of Hindi as India's sole official language has received negative responses and strong opposition from non-Hindi speaking areas, especially the Southern States. As a result

language in education, language in administration, language in communication, etc. have become major issues. Services and jobs under the government are linked with these. Any feeling that owing to adoption of the mother tongue of one section of the people as official language, chances of those citizens whose mother tongue is different and who are not equally proficient in that language, would be detrimentally affected gives rise to frustration and resistance. It was these fears that also gave rise to the demand of creation of linguistic States during freedom struggle itself.

### LINGUISTIC STATES

A number of linguistic groups concentrated in fixed territories had a feeling that if that territory was a State it would be an effective way to protect and promote their language and culture as also to have better chances in economic activities with their language as the official language of that State. During British rule provinces were created not by any rational or democratic considerations but by the military, political or administrative conveniences of the time. Along with the growth of national movement there also was growing cultural and linguistic consciousness and therefore, a demand for adopting linguistic principles for constituting provinces or states. The introduction of provincial autonomy and the institution of quasi-responsible government at the provincial level under Acts of 1909 and 1919 created a strong

ground for linguistic provinces. Congress in its Nagpur Session of 1920 recognised the provinces along linguistic line in order to stimulate the movement.

After independence, to begin with, States were not organised on the basis of language. This was not acceptable to most linguistic groups. Hence, there started agitations. In 1952 there was a major movement in the Andhra region of the then Madras Province for creation of a Telugu speaking state. During this agitation death of a respected leader Poti Sriramulu forced the government to concede the demand and the State of Andhra was created. Simultaneously, a States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) was also appointed to study the demand for organising States on language basis. The Commission in its report, submitted in 1955, felt that in multi lingual States political leadership and administrative authority remained the monopoly of the dominant language group. Linguistic minorities were denied an effective voice in the governance of their States. Commission, therefore, recommended the principle of linguistic homogeneity for reorganisation of States.

The Central government, realising the depth of public sentiment on the issue, accepted the recommendations of SRC and in 1956 reorganised most of the States on language basis. In 1960 bilingual Bombay was bifurcated into unilingual Maharashtra and Gujarat. In 1966 Punjab was divided into Punjab and Haryana.



In spite of these divisions, in every State were left a large number of people whose mother tongue was different from the language of the majority group. This was unavoidable. But in general in the whole process of reorganisation of States there was desire for the reconciliation of diversities in the main national theme. There was satisfaction among various cultural-linguistic groups. But as already explained, in the absence of removal of regional disparities in economic development, linguistic States provided an easy base for regionalism. At the same time issue of official language, as discussed above, also created tensions in Centre-State relations.

Thus, a combination of regional imbalances, lack of clear language policy, desire of politicians to use public sentiment to create vote banks, concentration of cultural-linguistic and religious groups in specific states and process of centralisation of political and economic powers, has caused emergence and development of regionalism in India. To a great extent, in any plural society like India, regionalism can be considered a natural phenomena. It is primarily a process and mechanism for bargaining, expression of grievances, political mobilisation, manifestation of dissatisfied aspirations and reaction to centralisation. But in certain cases, either because of mishandling by the government, misuse by vested interests or interference by external forces, it takes the shape of separatism. Then it is a real threat to national integration

and social harmony. To understand this a little better, let us have a look at the nature and threat of separatism.

### SEPARATISM

By separation is generally meant movement to secede from the country and become an independent State. This can also be called as the most aggressive manifestation of regionalism which generally, comes up in border States. Some suggest that separatism is a result of the presence of religious, linguistic or ethnic minorities, concentrated in border States and lack of loyalties to nation in them. A number of studies in India as well as outside have clearly proved that it is not the presence of religious or ethnic groups that in itself is a natural source of conflict. It is a sense of alienation that comes in a group because of various reasons, that makes the group available for use by vested interests within and outside the country for separatist movements. These causes can be: (i) Exclusion from employment opportunities because of language or religious requirements. (ii) Denial of land ownership or refusal to recognise traditional land ownership. (iii) Economic development projects in minority regions which benefit the majority instead of minority. (iv) Lack of developmental activities and absence of employment opportunities. (v) Refusal to use minority language in public schools and administration. (vi) Suppression of movements expressing democratic aspirations or

grievances. (vii) Similarity of culture, language, values, traditions, etc. with the people across the border.

Any of these reasons may cause a sense of deprivation or neglect in people. This sense is fueled by propaganda by external forces interested in destabilisation of country because of strategic, military, ideological or economic reasons. Vested interest from within also use these sentiments to bargain with the government. Small groups from these communities, assisted and encouraged by external forces, use violent means and even terrorist tactics. All this results in alienating the minorities further. This alienation or sense of discrimination, real or perceived, is exploited by political populism and divisive forces. People start feeling that in a new country, so called their own country, they will have everything for themselves. They do not realise that elite are using them for their own vested interests. For example, champions of Pakistan like Jinnah represented interests not of all Indian Muslims but only of elite Muslims. After the creation of Pakistan, bulk of Muslims in that country remain as poor, as exploited or as discriminated by elite as they were before partition.

In understanding separatism, the extreme form of communalism and regionalism, it is important to keep in mind that no religious, cultural or ethnic community is homogeneous as communalists or separatists make it to be. Every community is divided along several lines like caste, class, culture,

language, profession, etc. It is also important to note that several studies have shown that the real carriers of communalism, regionalism and separatism are those belonging to educated middle classes. And most of these middle class people happen to be not so enthusiastic about religion or traditions. But at the same time they have reasons to resent as they find the existing system, detrimental to their interests as well as their prospects of development. They, therefore, seek a place for themselves and look for support from their communities. There also are apprehensions among minority groups because of the behaviour of certain sections of majority, who with a wrong understanding of nationalism and patriotism attempt to impose their own religious or cultural values as that of the whole society or nation.

Thus, separatism arises from a variety of causes which include imbalanced development, elite competition, use of religion and culture by vested interests, weakening of secularism, abetment, support and encouragement by external forces and powers. The process of separatism generally starts with expression of grievances, movements for autonomy or better treatment, moving to extreme regionalism or fundamentalism and separation. Studies all over the world have made two things very clear. One, separation or secession are no solutions to complaints of injustice, deprivation or discrimination. In fact, in most cases of separation problems have multiplied. Second, suppression of regional or

ethnic movements in the name of administrative convenience or law and order situations has proved counter-productive. What is needed, therefore, is on the one hand a genuine approach towards balanced development, social justice, plurality, accommodation and decentralisation; and on the other hand, a firm handling of terrorists, fundamentalists and communalists without distinction of religion or community, political patronage and ideological preferences.

India is a vast country consisting of various cultures, languages, religions, castes and tribes. These have been co-existing in a harmonious manner for centuries providing India a composite culture and sense of unity in diversity. During colonial period, in general, there emerged a stronger sense of loyalty to the nation among various communities. At the same time due to colonial policy of divide and rule, competition for resources and jobs in emerging modern economy, apprehensions about loss of identity in new social order, there also was emerging group consciousness among various communities. After independence because of various factors including regional imbalances, non-fulfillment of expectations of masses in terms of developmental goals, lack of clear language policy, exploitation of peoples' sentiments by political groups for electoral purposes, diversive and divisive tactics used by vested interests to maintain status-quo and designs of external powers to keep

India destabilised, underdeveloped and weak, there had been emerging regionalism, linguism, communalism and separatism. In a vast and diverse country like India, regionalism is neither a matter of surprise nor a threat to national integrity and unity in itself. Regionalism can have both positive and negative aspects depending on the causes of its emergence and how it is dealt. In India too, we have both these experiences. In many cases, regionalism by providing people a mechanism to express their grievances and getting concessions from the government have helped in strengthening the process of integration. In some cases, having become tool in the hands of vested interests and abetted by external forces, it has taken the shape of separatism, using terrorist techniques. Indian society therefore, has to understand the issues of regionalism and linguism in an objective and dispassionate manner, looking into social, economic and cultural aspects. Societies characterised by cultural pluralism have a built in tendency for conflicts but are not necessarily prone to disintegration. India has a long history behind it that provides its strength and sustenance. What is required is efforts to build a modern society based on full respect for human liberties, pluralism, and a better social deal for all, a society that does not succumb to communalism, fundamentalism and terrorism of any kind.

**EXERCISES**

1. What do you understand by regional disparities? How far colonial administration was responsible for this?
2. Examine the steps that have been taken to remove regional imbalances in India.
3. What is meant by regionalism? How far regional imbalances are responsible for emergence of regionalism?
4. Explain the Official Language Policy of India.
5. What do you understand by separatism? Describe the causes of emergence of separatism in India.
6. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Linguism;
  - (ii) Linguistic States;
  - (iii) Regions.

## CHAPTER 15

# Communalism, Casteism and Political Violence

**A**MONG the diverse challenges that Indian democracy is facing today, not only for the survival of system but also of the people as a community, quite serious are those of communalism and casteism. They are afflicting our national life, social relations, disrupting the bonds of unity among the people and affecting the process of development. Communal and caste tensions are disturbing the social peace and order diverting the State resources from developmental activities to unproductive expenditure on maintenance of law and order. What is more disturbing is the fact that these phenomena affecting even those sections of society which are generally, considered to be modern, tolerant and liberal. It is generally said that technological and economic development leads to decline of traditional, irrational beliefs and interactions and the emergence of new bonds of socio-economic roles, undermines communal and caste identities. But in India, even after fifty-five years of independence, in spite of modernisation and industrialisation,

tremendous expansion of education and urbanisations, communal and caste loyalties have not only continued but are assuming serious dimensions. It is, therefore, important to cope with these challenges. And for that, it is necessary that we understand what these problems are, what are the causes for their emergence and growth and what can be done to tackle them.

### COMMUNALISM

The word communalism comes from the word community, which in simple term means individual's, attachment or identification with the community to which she/he belongs. In this sense, the term 'communal' is a positive term. In its modern usage, term 'communalism' refers to the tendency of socio-religious groups of a sectarian exploitation of social traditions as a medium of political mobilisation to promote political, social and economic interests of one group even at the expense of or in an antagonistic conditions of other group. In doing so, the religious group may consider other religious

communities as opponents and enemies.

Communalism in this context has been explained mainly in two ways: (i) as an ideology or belief system; and (ii) as a social phenomena. As an ideology, it means, a belief that people who follow a particular religion have common social, political and economic interests. Therefore, one should have primary social and political allegiance to one's religious groups. This belief in due course takes the shape of social phenomena. It means aggressive assertion of communal identity in organised way in opposition and antagonism to other religions. This assertion is used to demand voting on religious basis and also confronting the opposing group violently.

It is important to clarify here that adherence to a religion is not communalism. As Rasheeduddin Khan points out, even indulgence in ritualism, superstition, obscurantism, magic, charm and occult practice like astrology is not communalism. They are merely irrational, unscientific and primitive orientations of individuals related to themselves and their behaviour due to conformist traditions or fear of the unknown. Even commitment to conservative values in social life and conservative orientation in politics is not communalism. It could be called social backwardness. Communalism is using and exploiting religion for political purposes and mobilising one religious community against other community. Communalism in this sense is a modern

phenomena and not a phenomena of the past.

It is also important to note that communalism and communal violence or riots are two distinct stages. Communalism may not necessarily lead to communal violence. The primary factor involved in the promotion is creation and consolidation in one community of certain prejudices against other community. This existence of prejudice may always not be necessarily reflected through violence but nevertheless is very dangerous and a reason for violence whenever it occurs. Therefore, it is important that it is not only communal violence or communal riots that pose a challenge to social harmony and democracy but the very ideology and system of communalism itself.

### **CAUSES AND FACTORS BEHIND COMMUNALISM**

Communalism is a multi dimensional, complex, social phenomena. There are social, political, economic, cultural and religious factors which account for the genesis of communalism and communal violence. It has generally been seen that determining role in creating communalism is not played by religion but by non-religious forces. A careful scrutiny of the demands which have been and are made by communal leaders will reveal the true character and objective of communal politics under the mask of religion, tradition and culture. Seen in historical context, British imperialism used it as a divide

and rule policy. The same has been continued by vested interests after independence using various factors. Let us have a look at these.

### COLONIAL LEGACY

As is well known, British administration was interested in exploitation of India and not in its welfare. Reaction to this was emergence and growth of nationalism posing a serious threat to continuation of colonial rule. It served the colonial administration to divide and rule. They, therefore, nurtured and promoted religious differences. They first projected social and cultural variations and then promoted political divisions by playing up rival social, economic and political claims of Hindus, Muslims, tribals and lower castes. The communal award, separate electorates, recognition of communal demands, etc., can be taken up as examples of this policy.

In fact, the type of politics approved, tolerated and encouraged by the British imperialism was only communal politics. It is in this historical context that communalism came to acquire the meaning of being opposed to national identity, of being against secularisation process, of being too narrowly and negatively attached to one's own religious community and use of religion for political purposes:

Response to colonial rule was nationalism and national movement. Unfortunately, it could not counter the British policy of divide and rule. Rather, in some ways it also became instrumental, though unconsciously, in

consolidation of communal identities. No doubt, the pioneers of the Indian National Movement were great men and hoped to develop political nationalism to secure political ends, irrespective of religious differences. In an age of rationality, enlightenment and socio-religious reform movements, they wanted to keep religion strictly at personal level and away from political principles. But some of them perhaps in their enthusiasm, could not realise the methods they were using for mobilising people. For instance, in the nineteenth century, one stream of Indian nationalism acquired a historical dimension derived from a reformulated view of Hindu past. There was an emergence of militant nationalist stream supported by leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai. The Ganpati festival and Shivaji festival started by Tilak to mobilise the masses against the colonial rulers, though were not intended to be against Muslims, but in the historical context they alienated themselves as they could not take an active part in these festivals.

Another factor was that the national leaders adopted the policy of bringing unity from above. Whenever there was a question of differences on certain issues concerning religion, only the top leaders, not necessarily representatives of communities, were consulted. The national leaders thought that every community in India was homogeneous and well-knit and the communal leadership was the authentic spokesmen of the problems of the community. Masses were never

taken into confidence. This method encouraged communal leaders to keep their communities in belligerent mood and make use of that to bargain their own positions. The real concern of these leaders was not welfare of their communities but protection of their own vested power and political interests.

As such, both the policies of British colonial administration and failure of national movement to counter that on a firm social and secular basis, helped consolidating communal, caste, tribal and linguistic identities. Most serious consequence of this was the partition of India and its aftermath in independent India.

### COMMUNALISM IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

At the time of independence, as a result of British colonial policies and other factors mentioned above, there was an atmosphere of various religious, linguistic, caste and cultural groups having gone into narrow sectarian loyalties. In this situation, the partition of the country on religious basis and consequent violence had surcharged the communal situation. Various minorities were feeling a bit insecure and worried about their future position in independent India. The new government, and the framers of the Constitution were very much concerned for unity and integrity of the country, sense of security to all its citizens, and maintenance of social harmony. All these were the values to which National Movement was

committed. These were also required for strengthening of democracy and achieving a rapid development. Framers of the Constitution, therefore, rightly decided to establish India as a secular State. It meant respect for all religions and tolerance of all faiths, no State religion and support or favour to any religion by the State. Along with secularism were adopted democracy and a commitment to economic development. It was expected that in a secular democratic set up government and people would get involved in economic development collectively, thereby building a new Indian society. What was expected was a new political culture based on full respect for human liberty, justice and equality.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC CAUSES

As you have already studied, at the time of independence resources were limited and expectations were very high. In this situation planning was introduced to maintain a balanced development. But the planning could not achieve the desired goals as a whole. Soon, there emerged a competition for limited resources. In this competition the vested interests found an easy way to mobilise people on caste, communal and regional basis to demand better share. The propertied and ruling classes found religion and religiosity most useful for reinforcing their hegemony, their ideological dominance and social control over the common people. It may be mentioned here that no religious community is a



homogeneous community. In every community there are poor and rich, unemployed and underemployed. In fact, the poor, underemployed, unemployed and suppressed in every community, have common grievances against the rich and the powerful. The rich and powerful, therefore, have a vested interest to keep people divided on religious basis rather allow them to unite on class or economic basis.

Similarly, the political parties and governments, having failed to fulfil the expectations of people, use religion and tradition as diverting tactics. Almost all political parties having failed to keep their promises for removing inequalities or poverty and afraid of peoples' wrath in elections turn to create and raise communal issues. Some parties tell the minorities that they are being discriminated against by majority dominated governments and others tell people from majority community that governments are engaged in minority appeasement and are neglecting their interests. The frustrated, educated unemployed or underemployed youth, full of energies to act is particularly targeted to keep them busy in divisive politics. It is in this context that youth in India today has fallen prey to communal leadership and show greater religious fervour, fundamentalistic attitude and nearness to communal identities than ever before. It is not a coincidence that the period of economic crisis that is the decades of 1980s and 1990s have also been worst in terms of communal violence.

Along with this is the fact of failure of the State to consolidate secularism and formulate policies of multiculturalism required in a plural society. India is a multi religious country. The believers of each religion are very proud of their religion and are concerned about maintaining their religious identity. In this socio-religious context, the functionaries of the secular state have to maintain equal distance from all, and at the same time they have to harmonise inter religious social relations. While the constitutional framework provides a strong basis for the separation of democracy and religion, the actual practice of democracy has revealed that the political parties and governmental functionaries have not been able to internalise the constitutional framework. Religious rituals are being used at State functions.

### **ELECTORAL POLITICS AND COMMUNALISM**

Needless to say, introduction of universal adult franchise was a bold and revolutionary step on the part of founders of Indian Constitution. But unfortunately, soon after independence, political parties and politicians rather than strengthening democratic traditions of competing on the basis of programmes and ideologies, started looking for easy ways of mobilising voters. They found in religion and caste easy factors to strengthen their "vote banks". The law in India does not debar political parties to be

organised on the basis of caste or religion. Even the Supreme Court, in a Judgment delivered on 17 July, 1995 has ruled that political parties which are identified with a particular caste, community, religion or language can seek votes to promote their cause without creating hatred for their adversaries. Given this opportunity, political parties and leaders evolve strategies for acquiring power in a shortest possible time and in an easiest way. Thus, most political parties have carefully carved out combinations of support bases in which the units of mobilisation remain principally community, caste and language and region. Due to continuous failure of planning in fulfilling peoples' socio-economic aspirations, the people have been getting alienated from the system. Political parties are exploiting this sense of alienation of people also. Consequently, the use of religion in electoral politics and in nomination of candidates and campaigning on communal appeal have accentuated the process of communalism to a serious level.

The consequence of the above is that today, the marriage of politics and religion has led to the growing incidents of communal violence. Mosques, Temples and Gurudwaras are being used not only for political mobilisation but also to stockpile arms and weapons. Communal and quasi-religious groups are emerging as political organisations. Religious passions are being whipped up for the sake of political power. Communal issues are being given

importance and real issues of socio-economic development and transformation are being sidelined.

The need of the hour is to face this challenge to democracy, development and social harmony in a united way. The conscious, the educated and concerned citizens should take the lead and teach the people. Those who are exploiting ordinary peoples' emotions, their religious beliefs and ignorance need to be exposed. Since religion teaches respect of others; and tolerance; it does not teach violence. Existence of different religions, therefore, does not lead to communalism. It is fundamentalism and communalism which is distorting it.

### COMBATING COMMUNALISM

It is time for the State and government also to realise that ultimately anti-social elements, communalists and criminals, rather than serving the interest of political parties and governmental functionaries have themselves started staking claims for power. Communalism, therefore, should be dealt with an iron hand. The government should not yield to communal pressures. The formation of political parties on communal lines should not be encouraged. Political parties should either evolve a code of conduct not to use religion for electioneering or let Election Commission or Parliament enact such a code. We need a State machinery which is efficient, strong and impartial enough to put down communalism and communal violence

and ensure safety to all section of the society. Political, religious or other compulsions should not be allowed to come in on the way of this. Educational system must be reconstructed to emphasise the composite nature of our culture and inculcate secular and scientific temper among young students. We have to realise that communalism hinders social and economic change, which is so essential for all of us. Therefore, if political process is not decommunalised then our democracy itself is likely to perish. Alternative to democracy is fascism or dictatorship. The history of many countries is a proof that Fascism and dictatorship are good neither for majority nor for minorities.

### CASTEISM

It has been pointed out in the beginning of this chapter that along with communalism, casteism is another serious challenge that India's democratic process is facing at this juncture. We often hear and read in newspapers the frequent instances of caste confrontations, leading even to violence and deaths. The issue of reservations in services and educational institutions on caste basis, raises a storm every now and then. At election times newspapers are full of caste analysis of constituencies, parties selecting candidates on caste basis and castes providing support basis to parties. Fact of the situation is that caste is playing the most significant role in Indian politics at all levels and in

various ways. As in the case of communalism, at the time of independence it was expected that with the adoption of parliamentary democracy, industrialisation and modernisation, the narrow, parochial influence of caste in society would go away. But like religion, in practice, caste appeals, caste mobilisation, caste violence and caste-based parties have increased. Why and how it has happened and what are its consequences for our social and political process? Let us have a look at that. For a proper understanding of the problem it is first necessary to know what is meant by caste.

### CASTE AND CASTE SYSTEM

While the phenomena of caste is the most important characteristic of Hindu society, no precise definition of caste is available. Though, there are some linkages of caste with *varna* system but the two are not the same. Caste is usually a localised group having a traditional hereditary association with an occupation. The principle of birth forms the exclusive basis of membership in a caste group. Accordingly, one's profession or occupation is assigned on the basis of one's birth in a caste and not on the basis of ones liking. A caste group has also restricted rules regarding food and marriage. One may marry or carry on close relations only within ones own caste group. In view of closeness of the system all members of the same caste are supposed to be

treated alike. Caste system also envisages vertical differentiations between castes creating a hierarchy on the basis of superiority and inferiority. Some castes are considered low and polluting to the extent of being considered untouchables. In this sense of hierarchical stratification of society based on division and gradation of labour, caste also implies inequality and contains elements of exploitation and oppression. The system is further divided into sub-castes. Thus, there are *jatis* and *upjatis* (castes and sub-castes).

### CASTE AND POLITICS

As you have read in the case of religion, the British imperialist interests lay in characterising the Indian people in terms of communities and castes. They used these identities for political divisions. Yet, British belonging to Western liberal society could not restrict educational institutions or jobs under their control to particular castes or religions. Thus, having got opportunities for education and jobs, there emerged in many castes educated middle class. To get further concessions from the government, they started forming caste-associations. Social reformers in India also took note of the oppressive and divisive nature of caste system and stressed upon the needs for reforms. With education, emergence of awareness and hopeful of support from government, social reformers and liberal leaders and some from lower castes themselves began trying to improve their status, and protect their interests and rights.

Thus, during colonial period the caste system began to acquire new identities and dimensions. It undermined the vocational basis of caste, its economic rationality, its interactional restrictions and its spatial and political isolation. However, the grip of caste system on society did not change much. Caste continued to persist as the main identity mark in Hindu society. In this dual context of caste-based society and changing dimension of caste mobility in independent India, caste became an important political resource.

### CASTE IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

In independent India, with the introduction of universal adult franchise and beginning of a process of socio-economic development and transformation, caste has acquired a new role. In the new system, caste has both the positive and negative roles. The government recognition of caste as a category for reservations has added a new dimension to cast based politics. Until the introduction of the principle of universal adult franchise, the politically active sections, particularly in rural areas, were generally men of higher castes. The grant of franchise gave importance to numbers. This gave a chance to lower castes and deprived groups to organise themselves, assert their numerical strength and get justice. In this situation caste mobilisation became an important means for seeking justice.

The caste associations provide channels of communication and bases of leadership and organisation which enables those still subverted in the traditional society and culture to transcend the technical and political literacy which would otherwise handicap their ability to participate in democratic politics. One result of this is that now all political parties talk of welfare and development of lower castes.

The other view looks at the use of caste in politics as divisive and diversive. First aspect of this is that democracy, elections and processes of change came as threat to the position of traditional powerful sections in the rural areas who generally, happened to be from upper castes. They, therefore, developed an interest in perpetuating the caste system for legitimisation of their existing position by exploiting the ignorance of the masses. There also emerged conflict within ruling classes, particularly between the rich peasantry and urban industrial classes. In this, for gaining importance, the rural rich found caste mobilisation as a useful means to pressurise political parties in their favour. Thus, in protecting their class interests as landowners against landless and small peasants, the higher and middle castes got united. By this they were successful in sculling the land reforms and retaining control over land. Economic dominance rooted in control over land, provides the rural elite conducive opportunities to control the political and administrative institutions at the village level. This control, in turn, gives the ruling elite,

tremendous influence over the lower castes at the time of elections. The caste affiliations of rich and medium level land owners is, thus, of great importance to political parties.

Another use of caste to ruling classes is to keep the voters divided, on caste basis. By using caste, like religion, they can keep voters attention diverted from socio-economic issues and failures on development plans. In a democratic society in elections numbers count. Majority of Indians are poor and deprived. If they all join hands, it will be very difficult for the parties favouring propertied sections to win elections. Similarly with freedom to form associations, workers, landless labourers, peasants and other marginalised sections have the opportunities to form associations, trade unions, etc. United, these associations can gain tremendous bargaining power. Faced with the challenge from the mobilised and expectant masses, the ruling classes find traditional identities of caste, religion, region, etc. as important means to keep the masses divided. Caste being the most widespread and deeply entrenched identity comes most handy. Political competition based on issues and ideologies is thus reduced to a process of caste game.

### CASTE AND ELECTIONS

Thus, caste has become an important factor in electoral politics. The lower caste people know that vote is a potent weapon in their hands. With

government having failed to ameliorate their conditions, these castes are trying to assert by influencing election results. One report of 1989 elections in Bihar recorded "What is important is that hundreds of thousands of *dalits* were able to cast their votes for the first time resisting all threats to their lives. This has given them a new *izzat*, and, in the process, the already declining feudal order in Bihar has been given another severe jolt." At the same time, to maintain their power upper caste landowners are using all possible means to perpetuate the system. Thus, caste considerations become important in electoral calculations with the result that booth capturing and rigging of ballots are resorted to. In many parts of constituencies where the scheduled castes and lower caste and poor form nearly 40 per cent of electorate, they are at times not allowed to reach the polling stations. The electoral strategies of political parties have further strengthened caste identities and loyalties.

Political parties work on the basis of the demographic map of parliamentary and assembly constituencies and base their strategy of nomination of candidates and mobilisation of voters on the calculation of possible caste coalitions. Since, no one caste is absolutely dominant in any large parliamentary or assembly constituency, political parties seek to manipulate coalitions of castes and direct their electoral campaign towards mobilising the people as Brahamins, Jats, Kammas, Reddies, Rajputs, etc.

During the election, local caste leaders, with influence over their fraternity are mobilised with promises of rewards for support by various party candidates.

By consciously encouraging caste loyalties in elections, cabinet formations and other political appointments, the parties and leadership have strengthened caste identities. Caste has become an instrument of bargaining in politics because caste arithmetic has been used as the basis of political legitimacy. Thus, caste identities have been solidified because a new consciousness has been created by political leaders that caste is a very important bargaining factor in capturing the party machine, seats in legislatures or positions in cabinets.

Results of this role of caste in politics in general and in elections in particular are also caste conflicts, caste violence and caste wars. The society stands fragmented and divided. Socio-economic, national and civic issues in elections do not matter. Political parties rather than relying on their performance and programmes, look for caste supports and power brokers. This has sharpened social cleavages. Caste vs caste politics does not make politics competitive as is required in democracy. Democratic political culture is based on the spirit of accommodation of diversities; but casteism, like communalism, is based on *social exclusionism*.

### **VIOLENCE**

The most aggressive manifestation, of communalism, casteism, and

deteriorating political process is violence. Communal violence, caste violence and political violence in general have attained serious dimensions. These days, whenever we open a newspaper, we find references to violent clashes between religious groups, between castes, or between linguistic communities. During elections, we read about booth capturing, voters are allowed to vote on gun point, people being killed during elections, mobs being fired at. Rising violence in politics can more clearly be seen in communal riots, caste oppressions and conflicts and criminalisation of politics.

Communal riots are engineered by vested interests for political, religious and economic reasons. Since much has not been done to secularise the society, people remain backward in their social thinking, caught in superstitious beliefs and obscurantist practices. Ruling classes have allowed pre-partition legacy of communal division to intrude into politics, lending legitimacy to religious fundamentalism. To perpetuate the divisions, violent confrontations are encouraged. The decade of 1990s has seen an alarming rise in the graph of Hindu-Muslim riots that had been increasing steadily all over India for several years. Various studies have shown that riots are primarily an urban phenomena and are provoked by communal ideology on one hand and economic confrontation on the other.

So far as caste violence is concerned it is taking various shapes. First, as a result of agricultural development,

*zamindari* abolition and above all green revolution, there has emerged serious conflict of interests between higher and middle castes. This has turned into fierce struggle for political power. The aggressive political posture by other Backward Castes is one manifestation of this, whereby OBCs having economic power are keen to improve their social and political position. This many a times leads to violence.

Second aspect of caste violence is higher castes backlash against emerging awareness and assertion of independence by lower castes particularly Scheduled Castes. The Scheduled Castes are threatened not to vote against landlords. They are not allowed to go to polling stations, violence is used to rig the polls and capture the booths. Third manifestation of caste violence is related to the second. The lower caste groups, landless labourers, suffering from unemployment and poverty are mobilised by militant and extremist groups like Naxalites for violent actions.

As a whole, caste violence in its various shapes has been increasing. It has started entering urban areas too; for example, as was evident during anti-reservation agitations in 1990. During election times, communal and caste violence become more aggravated along with general decline in political system. In some cases it has become a norm that whoever can employ goons to terrorise the voters, capture polling booths and mark ballot papers in his favour, stands a better chance of winning. The criminals now have

started entering politics directly through political parties or as independent candidates. By acquiring political power, criminals are able to pressurise police and administration not to act against their criminal activities. This obviously results in spread of crime and violence in society in general.

The most serious manifestation of political and social violence has been the growth of terrorism. Many communalists, fundamentalists or those owing allegiance to militant ideologies, have started using the language of gun to prove their own point right. There are various factors that have contributed in swelling the ranks of terrorists in various regions. In some cases, innocent victims of state repression go underground and join the ranks of terrorists or insurgents.

Whatever may be the reasons, terrorism edges out debates in a democratic form and suppresses dissent. Terrorist groups, owing allegiance to fundamental organisations, even aim at subjugating members of their own communities to follow norms and practices selectively taken out from their traditional religious practices and systems on the plea of restoring the fundamental purity of their respective religions. While imposing such traditional norms on members of their particular communities, they threaten the democratic rights of their own people. Another important point is that, organised terrorism in India, as elsewhere, has been able to acquire

sophisticated weapons. When the gun starts becoming decisive force in political discourse, democracy obviously comes under great threat.

As a whole, when criminals, hoodlums and gangsters become an integral part of political process, one of the consequences is the gradual demise of democratic institutions. The escalation of violence in recent decades, thus, is a great challenge Indian democracy and society is facing today.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that Indian society and democracy are facing serious challenges from forces of communalism, casteism and violence. With the adoption of Parliamentary democracy, industrialisation and spread of education, it was expected that narrow parochial influence of religion, caste, ethnicity, etc. would wane. But very opposite has happened. Several causes are responsible for this. India is a very ancient society and religion plays a dominant role in the life of the majority of the people. But, religion and religious pluralities in themselves are not reasons for communalism. It is the use of religion by vested interests to keep the society divided that causes communalism. So is the case with casteism. Unfortunately, most political parties are compromising with communal and caste politics as also using criminals for electoral success. As a result, the ideology of communalism is not confined to organised communal organisations only. It has penetrated into the system itself. Since, all sectional forces of communalism and casteism



compete against each other; they adopt aggressive methods of imposing their ideology.

Use of violence in communal and caste politics has given legitimacy to violence and crime in politics. The Election Commissioner G.V.G. Krishnamurthy, has gone on record to say that the situation is threatening to degenerate into a "government of the criminals, for the criminals, by the criminals".

Such a sorry state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue for long. The doctrines of liberty, equality, fraternity, social justice, secularism, fair play and rule of law, enshrined in our Constitution have to percolate into our daily lives. The government, the political parties and citizens all must play their role in the fight against these challenges. It should be recognised that politics should be kept free from ills of the social environment, and should be

used for reforming the society. The government should deal with communal and divisive forces with a firm hand. Political parties should fight elections and exercise political power on the basis of an ideological perspective, of course, taking care of social, cultural and linguistic interests of various communities in India. However, the State apparatus should be insulated from communal or caste feelings.

We have to understand that the real purposes of communal and caste politics is to keep us divided. Masses are religious minded but not communal. Hence, the educated and the conscious have to protect them from falling prey to communal forces. Communal and caste sentiments are bound to lose their strength in India with the growth of democratic and humanistic values. We in India are in a desperate need to make a new beginning. With firm determination we can do this.

#### EXERCISE

1. Explain the causes and factors for the emergence and development of Communalism in India.
2. Describe the role of Caste in electoral politics of India.
3. What are the factors responsible for emergence of violence in Indian politics? What threat it poses to democracy?
4. How can communalism be curbed?
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Casteism;
  - (ii) Terrorism.

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UNIT V  
INDIA AND THE WORLD

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## CHAPTER 16

# Foreign Policy of India Determinants and Basic Principles

**F**OREIGN policy, in general terms, means maintenance of relations with other countries and participation in international political and economic affairs. It is a combination of principles, interests and objectives through which a State formulates and conducts its relations with other countries. Traditionally, it is believed that a country's main concern while dealing with other countries and participating in international affairs is protection of its national interest. However, the national interest is not the sole determinant in formulating a country's foreign policy. It is very difficult to pinpoint a country's national interest in isolation. In fact, a foreign policy serves two major goals — namely, protection and promotion of national interests and participation in global concerns like peace, disarmament, development, justice, decolonisation, etc. Therefore, a country's foreign policy is generally, determined by an interplay of four factors. These are: (i) national interest; (ii) geographical and political location and situation; (iii) nature, type and relation with neighbours; and

(iv) international environment. In other words, it can be said that two broad types of influences, i.e. the domestic environment dealing with factors (i) and (ii) and international environment dealing with factors (iii) and (iv) influence the making of foreign policy of a country. It is, however, important to keep in mind that both these environments are dynamic and keep on changing. Countries accordingly have to keep pace with these and reevaluate their policies from time to time. Besides, there are certain long-term aspects of these environments which determine some basic characteristics of a country's foreign policy. India's foreign policy has been and is being influenced by both external and internal environments; and elements of continuity and change are prevalent. In other words, there are certain basic characteristics of our foreign policy which we have adopted from the beginning, and there are periodic adjustments and changes in that, particularly in terms of our relations with specific countries. First, we will discuss the elements or factors that

have been shaping India's foreign policy, and the main characteristics of that policy and changes and adjustments therein. In subsequent chapters, we will read about India's relations with some specific countries.

### **DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENT**

Among the domestic determinant the primary factors shaping India's foreign policy have been its history and culture, geographical situation, national philosophy and identity, demands of economic development and political organisation.

#### **History and Culture**

India's history is not only very old but also complex. This history has given India a pluralist society and a value system. The writings of well known modern Indian thinkers show that belief in ancient social values is still very much alive in modern India regardless of whether it is practised or not. Important traditional values which had some impact on India's foreign policy are tolerance, the equation of mean and ends, and non-violence.

The character of British rule with its merits and demerits, and national freedom movement also had its impact on the formation of its foreign policy. This according to Prof. A. Appadorai is three fold: (i) it gave a stimulus to the national movement for freedom which in turn led to India's support for the freedom of dependent people; (ii) racial inequality clearly existed under British rule which made India realise the

inequality of racial discrimination and, in turn, led her to stress on racial equality in her foreign policy; and (iii) India continued as a member of the Commonwealth after she became independent. At the same time the fact that, before 1947, opportunity was denied to Indians to participate in the decision-making process in foreign policy, India remained out of touch with the realities in the modern world.

The history of India has also given her a pluralistic society. The Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh faiths were born in this country. Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Islam entered it later on. They all prospered here in an atmosphere of tolerance and reverence. Various religious and ethnic groups in India also have sensitivities towards their coreligious and cultural groups outside India. The government, while taking decisions on certain issues, therefore, cannot just overlook them. For example, presence of a large Tamil population in Sri Lanka and the concern of Indian Tamils for them cannot just be overlooked. As such on many issues in foreign policy India has to be very careful.

#### **Geographical situation**

India's location in the centre of South Asia places her in a significant geo-political situation, both for the international community and India herself. Added to it is the size and population of India. All the countries of South Asia which are the members of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) i.e. Bangladesh,

Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have common borders with India which is the biggest and the largest of all these countries. Therefore, there are expectations from it as well as apprehensions of its dominance. Similarly, India and China are not only two most populous countries of the world but also have potentials to emerge as middle level powers. Two such bordering countries in view of commonality of interests can enter into cooperation or conflict depending on various situations including the decisions taken by their leaderships. In such a geographical situation Super Powers, too, have interests in India and her relationship with her neighbours.

### **National Philosophy and Identity**

During her national movement for freedom certain values and commitments emerged which, in a way, have become a part of our national philosophy. India's freedom movement was unique in the sense that while it strived to achieve freedom for the country, it was also responsive to the currents and cross-currents of international relations. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian National Congress passed a variety of resolutions expressing its views on the problems of the world. India's commitment to world peace, anti-colonial struggle, opposition to racism, commitment to democracy, freedom, secularism and peaceful coexistence are certain important values which came out from our freedom struggle. Promotion and protection of

these values has to be a part and parcel of our foreign policy. Also, during national movement, the sense of India's national identity related to its territorial boundaries has been evolved. Protection of territorial Indian identity i.e. unity and integrity of India are our prime concerns.

### **Demands of Economic Development**

The economic development of India has been of such an urgent need that policy-makers were right to use foreign policy as a tool to further the developmental process. Foreign policy has an impact on the economic development of an underdeveloped country. It may help to secure foreign aid for economic development. It may encourage or discourage the flow of foreign private capital. It may through foreign trade policies and trade agreements, promote or retard exports with their impact on balance of payments as well as economic growth, and it may also through encouraging joint industrial ventures with parties in other developing countries, give an impetus to increase production in order to establish the industrial unity.

In this context working for world peace and avoiding conflicts were essential for India's economic development. War not only diverts funds from development to defence but also effects foreign trade with neighbouring countries and foreign aid both of which are essential for development. Further, in a bipolar world to receive aid as well as maintain its sovereignty, India had to formulate

a foreign policy conducive to maintain balance of power. In order to attain self-sufficiency, it is essential to develop avenues of favourable foreign trade rather than depend on foreign aid. Therefore, foreign policy, has to lay emphasis on this aspect to achieve regional cooperation. Thus, the demands of economic development have been an important factor in the evolution of India's foreign policy of non-alignment as well as friendship with all countries.

### **Political Organisation**

In the parliamentary democracy of India formulation of policy and activities of government are accountable. Though, in the name of national interest and strategic issues involved, government on matters of foreign policy, seeks some autonomy from parliament. It cannot be totally secretive since foreign policy forms an important segment of the public policy. It follows that the people would have an interest in the formation of that policy. In this context, Parliament, as the representative of the people, has occasionally been a useful guardian in the formulation of foreign policy. Public opinion, expressed through the press and studied by public opinion polls, has had to be taken care of by the makers of foreign policy. Political parties have, of course, been keenly interested in foreign policy and no government, even one commanding a large majority, can afford to ignore their view points.

### **THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

The domestic determinants provide values and concerns for a nation's foreign policy. The external environment provides the arena of action and broader global concerns and trends. The situation at the time of India's independence was that of post Second World War that has ended in 1945. The world stood divided into two blocs—one liberal democratic capitalist world led by the United States of America and the other Communist world led by the Soviet Union. Not only world was divided into two rival blocs but there was cold war also between the two to prove superiority. Related to this was Arms race particularly the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In the post-Second World War period there also had emerged process and ideology of decolonisation. In the process newly independent countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America had emerged as new entrants in international politics. Those which were still not granted independence were struggling for that and seeking support from erstwhile colonies like India, as also from newly established United Nations Organisation (UNO) and those developed countries like the USA who had fought in the war on the claimed principles of democracy and self-determination.

Even before India's independence the national movement had started taking note of global dimensions covering developments in many parts of the world like resurgence of



nationalism in Asia and Africa, the emergence of China and Japan; the rise of Fascism in Europe; role of the USA in world affairs; October Revolution of Russia establishing communist states and process of decolonisation. The Indian National Congress in its sessions in 1926, 1927 and 1928 had adopted resolutions against imperialism, in support of liberation struggles and for strengthening of bonds of solidarity with the people of Asia and Africa. In the given international scene India, with its size and history, was expected to be in the forefront of issues facing colonial and newly independent countries. India's foreign policy was to be determined accordingly.

The above description of determinants of India's foreign policy makes it clear that India's foreign policy was to be a projection of the values which we have inherited through the centuries and during our national movement as well as our present concerns. Like colonial powers and developed countries India was not tied to the concepts of a foreign policy designed to safeguard overseas possessions, investments, carving out areas of influence and establishing domination over others. India's first concern was to safeguard its independence. She had equal interest in the maintenance and safeguarding international peace as an essential condition of her economic, social and political development. These concerns remain relevant even today. At the same time during last 55 years there had also

been changes and new developments, some even drastic. India, thus, established certain basic characteristics of its foreign policy after independence which are still there. At the same time, there have been changes from time to time. A particular drastic change in international affairs was the disintegration of Soviet Union and collapse of Communism in East European countries in early 1990s. Related to this has been the process of globalisation. These events have made almost all countries, particularly, developed countries to have a fresh look at their foreign policies and relations. We can have a look both at the basic characteristic of India's foreign policy its continuity and changes in it.

### **FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA : BASIC PRINCIPLES**

As mentioned above, even before India's independence the leaders involved in the national movement had started taking interest and present the vision of India's foreign policy. Jawaharlal Nehru in particular took a very active interest. The Indian National Congress in 1927 established its Foreign Affairs department with Jawaharlal Nehru as its main spokesman. In 1946, assuming office as Prime Minister and incharge of foreign affairs department in the interim government, he made a clear declaration about future foreign policy. He said "we shall take full part in international conferences as a free nation with our own policy and not

merely as a satellite of another nation. We hope to develop close direct contacts with other nations and to cooperate with them in the furtherance of world peace and freedom. We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past two world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the denial of freedom any where must and endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war."

In the context of the above statement and to protect India's national interests, to maintain the territorial integrity and to achieve economic development, the foreign policy objectives before India were:

- Maintenance of Freedom in Policy Formulation;
- Promotion of International (Global) Peace;
- Cooperation with United Nations Organisation;
- Disarmament;
- Opposition to Colonialism, Imperialism and Racism;
- Cooperation Among Development Countries.

### **MAINTENANCE OF FREEDOM IN POLICY-FORMULATION**

It has been mentioned above that history; geography, past experiences and the post-Second World War international situation were the

formative influences on the formulation of India's foreign policy. In addition, it can hardly be overlooked that India's size, potential and perceptions of her leaders postulated an intense interest in world affairs. Indian leadership was highly conscious of her needs and potentials. This awareness reinforced by a powerful nationalist impulse set India to chart out her own independent course in international affairs. Therefore, the basic principle for formulation of India's foreign policy became freedom from external pressures, from power blocs. For this non-alignment became the logical framework of India's foreign policy. We will discuss below basic features and characteristics of non-alignment. Here it is important to note that an independent foreign policy responded to the conscious and sub-conscious urges of the people, imparted a sense of pride and belonging and helped cement the unity of the country.

### **INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

Maintenance and promotion of international peace and security has been one of the overriding goals of India's foreign policy. Right from the beginning India desired peace not merely as an ideal but also as an essential condition for its own security. However, peace for India is not a "pacifist neutralism". Jawaharlal Nehru made it clear. "Peace is not simply renunciation of war, but an active positive approach towards international relations and problems, leading to the easing of

tension by means of solving problems on the negotiating table, by means of the growing international cooperation in different spheres; cultural and scientific contacts, extending trade and business contacts, exchanging views, experience and information". Accordingly, India has been insisting on peaceful methods to solve all problems. It also tried to maintain friendly relations with all countries without considerations of differences in ideologies and political systems. Its message has been "peace", "peaceful development", "peaceful cooperation", "peaceful coexistence" and "struggle for peace".

### **SUPPORT FOR UNITED NATIONS**

As pointed out above India's concern for international peace was not a negative or passive one but a positive and constructive one. Peace meant not only avoidance of war, but also reduction of tension and if possible end of Cold War. For this India considered United Nations as an effective and desirable agency. As such, India decided to give unqualified and active support and allegiance to the United Nations. In a subsequent chapter we will discuss India's role in the UN and its various activities therein.

### **DISARMAMENT**

Another essential concern for peace in India's foreign policy has been arms control, disarmament and related matters. In the context of arms race that began with speed during the Cold War

period after the end of Second World War, it was felt that arms race represents a waste of resources, a diversion of the economy away from its humanitarian purposes, a hindrance to national development and a threat to democratic process. It also impedes relations between countries affecting the volume and direction of exchanges, diminishing the role of cooperation among states and efforts towards building a just international order. Therefore, from the very beginning, India has advocated the prohibition of nuclear weapons and check on the proliferation of all kinds of weapons in the United Nations and other forums. In general, a major objective of India's foreign policy has been comprehensive disarmament. In a subsequent chapter we will discuss in detail India's position and the role it has been playing towards arms control and disarmament.

### **OPPOSITION TO COLONIALISM IMPERIALISM AND RACISM**

As has already been mentioned that India's vision about foreign policy and world affairs had emerged as a part of its struggle for liberation from colonial rule. In that leadership saw its own movement as a part of struggle against colonial domination and the entire imperialist system of oppression and discrimination. Cause of liberation of subject peoples and the elimination of racial discrimination, therefore, became important objectives of India's foreign policy. In fact anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism has been a matter of faith

with India's foreign policy. Similarly, it has been aimed at opposition to all forms of racial discrimination. India firmly believes that racialism is one of the sources of conflict in the world and a threat to international peace. Therefore, India, at various forums has strongly formulated, defended and elaborated the ideals of freedom for all, elimination of racism and racial discrimination and opposition to imperialism in all its forms. In chapter on India and UN, we will discuss in detail India's contributions towards these. It can, however, be mentioned here that the continuity and the consistency with which this cause has been supported by India throughout, has brought her an unprecedented prestige and dignity, particularly among the developing countries.

### COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The major task for India as also for other newly liberated countries was that of nation building and development. In the given situation and international atmosphere of unbearable inequality and exploitation established by colonialism and imperialism this was a very difficult task for any country individually. Moreover the developed Western world was not in a mood to concede their position of domination. India, therefore, firmly believed in the necessity of cooperation and solidarity among developing countries of Asia-Africa and Latin America both for the purposes of struggle against

colonialism and for their economic development. India had formulated this vision even before independence. It is, therefore, not surprising that India became the venue of the first forum of liberated nations. Representatives of 28 countries met in New Delhi in March 1947 at the conference on regional cooperation among the Asian Countries. Another conference of the independent states also met in New Delhi in 1949. As you will read, India played a leading role in the establishment of Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) as a forum of newly independent countries to maintain their freedom in foreign affairs by keeping independent of power blocs and also for cooperation among themselves. India has consistently been working for meaningful cooperation among developing countries. We will study more about it in chapter on India and the UN.

India thus, relied on three main principles: non-alignment, peace and friendship with all countries. India needed the friendship of both Eastern and Western powers. It disliked any interference from outside and realised that keeping the big powers out of the region was a vital pre-condition of political autonomy and national reconstruction. Following this line of approach, Nehru's interest was in mobilising support and assistance of the rich nations of the world for India's economic growth. Further he was in favour of avoiding conflict with Super Powers. He laid emphasis on cultivating the friendship of the emerging countries

and in speaking authoritatively on their behalf on various Councils of the world.

### NON-ALIGNMENT

Peace, freedom from colonialism, racial equality and non-alignment with military blocs, emerged as main planks of independent India's foreign policy. Nehru, the architect of non-alignment himself said, "I have not originated non-alignment, it is a policy inherent in the circumstances of India, in the conditioning of the Indian mind during the struggle for freedom and inherent in the very circumstances of the world today".

When we say that India follows policy of non-alignment, it means that (i) India has no military alliances with countries of either block; (ii) India has an independent approach to foreign policy; and (iii) India attempts to maintain friendly relations with all countries.

### NON-ALIGNMENT AND NEUTRALITY

Non-alignment is perceived by some observers as neutrality. Jawaharlal Nehru attempted to remove the confusion by observing that "neutrality as a policy has little meaning except in time of war."

When we say that non-alignment means to remain independent of blocs, it gives an impression of remaining neutral. Neutrality and non-alignment in fact, are two different concepts. The term neutrality in international law refers to a situation in which a state does not take any side in a war. Neutral

States, generally, do not take sides even in disputes and differences of opinion between other states. Therefore, the term neutrality is basically connected with war or war like situations. Non-alignment on the other hand, is concerned both in war and peace situations and in fact is more relevant in peace.

Non-alignment is a condition of non-involvement in tensions and potential conflicts between military alliances and power blocs. Neutrality as a concept, a term and a situation emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The newly liberated countries of Asia and Africa, led by India, Egypt, Syria, Indonesia and Ghana together with Yugoslavia, refused to fall in line with one power bloc or another. They considered the situation of bi-polarity irrelevant to their own economic development and social change. They refused to be tied down in needless big power conflicts. Therefore, they began to take independent position in the United Nations on several world issues, by refusing to get aligned with one big power or the other.

Therefore, while neutrality is a negative concept, in the sense that it seeks to avoid taking sides in war, non-alignment is a positive concept which on the one hand, refutes alignments and subordination to big powers, and on the other, affirms positive commitment to an independent foreign policy, and to major concerns like peace in the world, cooperation between States based on equality and justice, and economic development for greater human welfare.

In broad terms it can be said that there are three essential features or elements of India's foreign policy. First, the entire exercise of foreign policy as Jawaharlal Nehru himself conceived was to safeguard India's decision-making autonomy, to obtain some additional importance for India and to be heard in the comity of nations about India's views on issues vital to her. This is the fundamental and basic element in the foreign policy of India.

Second, important element was that India should cooperate with other similarly emerging developing countries for mutual benefit. It was believed that by reinforcing the independence of these emerging nations, India shall be reinforcing its own independence.

The third, element of India's foreign policy was cooperation at the world level. It means that India as a non-aligned country, should not get involved or be entangled in the politics of the big powers and yet maintain good working relations with all of them without sacrificing her national independence.

### CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN POLICY

India not only adopted the policy of non-alignment for itself but also became a founder member of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The three basic elements of its foreign policy remained intact. But at times the emphasis on non-alignment and peaceful coexistence, brought in a sense of pacificism in foreign policy. As a result not much attention was given to defence and military capabilities. This weakness

was exposed in a short border war with China in 1962. At the same time efforts for disarmament notwithstanding nuclear weapons proliferation was going on. At India's own borders, China in 1966 tested its own nuclear device. All these developments shook Indian confidence. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru himself, after Chinese aggression, had to express "ultimately the task of any country's foreign policy is to protect its integrity. This is the first test of any country's foreign policy and it if cannot achieve this then it is a failure."

In view of Chinese aggression, India had to take western assistance for its enhanced defence needs. It entered into bilateral agreements with the USA and Britain for purchase and production of arms. Though it did not discard non-alignment, doubts were raised about its ideological commitment. After Nehru's death in 1964, hostilities with Pakistan in 1965, increasing friendship between China and Pakistan, nuclear development in China, idealism in foreign policy had to be further watered down.

During 1960s and 1970s as a result of emerging America-China-Pakistan alliance, increased arms race, developments in East Bengal (Bangladesh), dumping of armaments in Middle East by great powers, world wide military alliance and struggle between the USA and USSR in the Indian Ocean region, India's strategic position came under further pressure. These external environments and domestic developments made India to tilt towards USSR for its strategic

needs. In August 1971 India signed a twenty-year treaty of friendship and cooperation with Soviet Union. It was not a mutual security treaty; it was an agreement for consultation. It, however, raised many doubts, within and outside, about the genuineness of non-alignment. It was more so because in the prevailing circumstances it was alleged to be intended as a deterrent to Pakistan and China.

Even with the change of government at centre in 1977, (the new Janata Party government did not envisage any change in the basic tenets of our foreign policy). The Janata government declared itself in favour of genuine non-alignment, good neighbourly relations, friendship with all, peaceful settlement of international disputes and disarmament.

During 1980s, India more or less, continued its policy and relations with other countries on the principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect and non-interference in the international affairs. However, there was now more emphasis on maintaining India's dignity, self-respect and national interest. It can be said that non-alignment was balanced with pragmatism. India, like many other countries, entered into bilateral and multilateral agreements rather than simply harping upon Afro-Asian solidarity. There also was move towards regional cooperation and therefore, establishment of South Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC). In general, during 1980s there were enough indications of India

continuing to adhere to the basic policy of non-alignment and friendship. At the same time taking pragmatic decisions in accordance with country's specific requirements of development and defence were the basic tenets of India's foreign policy.

### ERA OF GLOBALISATION

From the late 1980s world started changing very rapidly. It was a period of critical times in international relations. It was the time when the super power rivalry got almost eliminated. Disintegration and collapse of Soviet Union and East European countries had changed both the ideological and procedural aspects of international relations. Establishment of united Germany, emergence of European Union, end of apartheid in South Africa and emergence of peace and environmental movements world over all have brought new actors and roles in international relations and politics. Though, the Cold War considered to have been ended, there had emerged new areas of conflicts and tensions. The processes of globalisation was bringing new dimensions in relations between states and role of international organisations. Division of labour and opening of national and regional markets to increasing world trade, and transfer of investments and technology became the order of the day. In this situation it became clear that one cannot remain mired in the past.

The emerging new international order is now being viewed differently by

different observers. One view is that the world has become unipolar in which the USA has become the single most important power. It could act unilaterally without any fear of its actions being challenged. The other view is that after the collapse of bipolarity in the process of evolution emerged a polycentric world where major players are the USA, European Union, Japan, China and Russia. Some speculate whether India too would be a major actor in international decision-making or not.

Hence, a different division of the world has come into sharper focus. Whereas, earlier, it was essentially ideological—between the capitalist West and Communist/Socialist East—now the division is between the rich North and poor South. The disintegration of erstwhile Soviet Union has also led to a situation where the bulk of aid and trade is now being concentrated on the countries of Eastern Europe. Hence, countries like India have to look for alternatives to aid and development. Foreign policy, therefore, has to take care of trade and commerce, negotiations with multilateral agencies, participation in new organisations like World Trade Organisation (WTO), etc. In this new world order ideology is becoming less important.

Another development that the world has been witnessing for the last two decades is that of resurgence of sub-nationalism, religious and ethnic fundamentalism, and terrorism. India is facing these challenges both

nationally and internationally. These phenomena had become international. Terrorist attacks in USA on 11 September, 2001, had brought new dimensions in international politics and international relations. New types of equations and alliances are emerging either to combat international terrorism or establish new types of hegemonies in view of such phenomena. These are very significant factors affecting India's foreign policy.

In the changed situation, India has recognised the need to develop more pragmatic and wide-ranging international relationship. India's major strategic focus has been on her neighbourhood in particular China and Pakistan. In the aftermath of the cold war and with the advent of India's economic reforms and looking for foreign capital investment, there is marked willingness to improve relations with the USA. At the same time, India now seems to be desirous to gain for it what it sees as the country's rightful place in the world consistent with its size and capability. India has not only tested nuclear devices but also has taken a tough position on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) insisting on linking this to a time bound framework for universal nuclear disarmament. India continues to refuse to sign the CTBT and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in their present form, arguing that these treaties discriminate against her and serve principally the interests of the recognised western nuclear states. It is pointed out that in the new world order



in the era of globalisation India's principal aspiration in foreign policy has been to take note of the changes in the world around it without being overwhelmed by them.

At the same time, the Indian policy planners are facing various challenges which they would have to take note of. It is not only that in the post Cold War era the new polarities are emerging but the very philosophy and purpose behind non-alignment does not seem to be the same as it was. The non-aligned oil-producing countries of West-Asia, North Africa and Latin America had already become a separate special interest group. Several non-aligned members of Asia-pacific region have achieved high rates of growth through their own efforts. Similar regional associations and groups are becoming more important than global organisations. Growth of fundamentalism, terrorism, separatist movements world over and international concerns for issues like Human Rights, environment, sustainable development, etc. are also new determinants of the foreign policy in the present world. India too has to deal with it.

Keeping in view its national interest particularly to maintain unity and integrity of India and socio-economic development and transformation, based on its tradition of plurality and tolerance and commitments to values established during nationalist movement as a reaction to colonialism India adopted a foreign polity based on

principles of non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and friendship with all.

The policy of non-alignment by and large turned out to be in her best interest. Therefore, India had continued with the basic characteristics of this policy irrespective of changes in governments. At the same time, keeping in view the developments in international politics from time to time changes and adjustments have been made in this policy. But, these changes have been more in India's relations with specific countries rather than in the basic elements of foreign policy. Right from the beginning, it was clear that non-alignment was not an end in itself. It was an instrument of policy designed to safeguard interests of the country. Therefore, it was not a static policy but subject to change in accordance with needs.

The sudden and important developments in international politics in 1990s have brought both NAM and India's foreign policy at cross roads. At one time it seemed that non-alignment has lost its grounds. Soon it became clear that NAM in many ways continues to be relevant in the areas of democratisation of international relations, establishment of new international economic order, security and well being of small states, resolution of regional conflicts and development, etc. Therefore, it is not necessary for India to abandon its valid ideals or moral principles. But at the same time it is important to keep in mind what Jawaharlal Nehru once said, that "Whatever policy we may lay down, the art of conducting the foreign affairs of a

country lies in finding what is most advantageous to the country". India, therefore, has to be very careful in determining its foreign policy and relations with other countries. Our first concern has to be to prevent any erosion of our independence. Of course, our interest in the maintenance and safeguarding of international peace, as an essential condition for our socio-economic condition, continues. What is important to keep in mind is that Non-Alignment is not a dogma. It is a dynamic process. India has in the past taken an enlightened and a broader view of its interests. Hence, in evolving the components of its national interests,

India attempted a synthesis of nationalism and internationalism, a combination which gave much of the positive content to the concept of Non-Alignment. The promotion of enlightened self-interest remains the most important aspect of India's foreign policy and that of Non-Alignment. It is obvious that Non-Alignment is a means and not an end in itself. The end is the achievement of national and international objectives. India, therefore, has to formulate its foreign policy accordingly. Of course it is equally important to remember that politics without vision, devoid of beliefs, ideals, principles and values is debased of human dignity and national purpose.

### EXERCISES

1. Describe the internal and external determinants of India's foreign policy.
2. What are the basic principles of India's foreign policy? Explain.
3. Explain the meaning of Non-Alignment and distinguish it from neutrality.
4. Describe the importance of Non-Alignment in India's foreign policy.
5. Assess the importance of globalisation in India's foreign policy.
6. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Peaceful Coexistence;
  - (ii) India's role in the UN;
  - (iii) India and Global peace.

CHAPTER

## **India and Her Neighbours** **Nepal, Sri Lanka, China, Bangladesh and Pakistan**

YOU have read that the basic principles of India's foreign policy are non-alignment, global peace, peaceful coexistence, disarmament, international cooperation and struggle against various manifestations of injustice like imperialism, colonialism, racism, etc. These principles had been adopted, apart from commitment to and preference for a value system in view of the enlightened national interest of India. Both the national interest and commitment to values first of all demand maintenance of relations with neighbours. India has a large number of neighbours. It is the largest country in the South Asian region and shares borders with all the countries of the region that is Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. It shares long borders with China, Myanmar and Afghanistan. As a part of its overall policy of peaceful coexistence India has consistently sought peaceful, cordial and friendly relations with all its neighbours. Being neighbours, however, there also had been problems arising out of historical factors, mis-interpretations, external

interventions and overall developments in international politics. Therefore, the relations with all the neighbours had not been the same. There had been ups and downs, differences, adjustments and changes. The process continues to be on. In this chapter, we will have a brief description about India's relations with some of its neighbours to understand an overall situation of the region.

### **INDIA AND NEPAL**

No other two countries in the world share as extensive and intimate ties as India and Nepal do. These two South Asian neighbours share 1,700 Km of completely open, geographically contiguous and therefore, easily accessible border. The magnificent Himalayas, for centuries in the past, acted as barriers to the oncoming influence and military adventures from the north. The Nepali and Indian peoples have close religious and linguistic affinities, they celebrate similar cultural festivals, follow similar customs, rituals and live a life

embedded in common social hierarchies and structures.

For centuries there have been open borders between the two countries and there had also been a free flow of people and goods across the traditional boundaries. British colonial rulers did not annex Nepal. They negotiated its subordination. Accordingly, Rana rulers of Nepal agreed to send Gurkha soldiers to the English Army and Nepali labourers for building the railways and roads in the colonies.

When India became independent, apart from shared cultural values, there also emerged shared security concerns between India and Nepal. Both of them established friendly relations between the two countries in July 1950 and signed a treaty of Peace and Friendship. Thereafter, the relations between the two have been governed by this treaty.

The Treaty had two major dimensions. One regarding the mutual security concerns and the other regarding socio-cultural and economic interaction. The two governments agreed not only to have everlasting peace and friendship between them but not to tolerate any threat to the security of either by a foreign aggressor. The treaty permitted Nepal to import defence equipment from or through India. Both the governments undertook to give each others nationals equal treatment with their own nationals in the matter of residence, ownership of property and participation in trade and commerce. Accordingly, the people of the two sovereign countries have had open access to each other, without

passports, permits etc. Nepalese citizens have had the right to work in virtually all government services in India, barring the three top civil services — the IAS, IPS and IFS. Indian traders, teachers and other professionals have helped build Nepal as has Nepalese labour contributed to the economies of several Indian regions.

### **DRIFTING AWAY**

The decades of 1960s and 1970s saw some bitterness in relations between the two countries. The reasons for this were many. There had been growing a movement for democracy in Nepal. Democratic forces represented by the Nepali Congress secured electoral victory in 1959. But in December 1960, King Mahendra dismissed the elected government and imprisoned Nepali Congress leaders including Prime Minister B.P. Koirala. India was in favour of democracy to the disliking of King Mahendra. At the same time China was trying to appease Nepal. King Mahendra found it useful both for dealing with Nepali Congress domestically and distancing Nepal from India.

Chinese aggression on India in 1962 brought a temporary thaw in bitterness. Under the pressure of war and its outcome India had to relent on its sympathies for the democratic forces in Nepal and take prompt and effective steps to make up with the king. The long term adverse implications for security in the sub-continent were also realised by the king. Therefore, he

agreed to meet India's security sensitivities. In January 1965, through an exchange of letters, the Nepalese government agreed to seek extensive support from India in training, equipment and modernisation of the Nepalese army.

This understanding remained short lived. China seemed to have been placating Nepal well and King Mahendra seemed to be in favour of distancing Nepal from India. Years 1971-72 witnessed the involvement of China in development projects in the Tarai region of Nepal in complete disregard of India's sanctities, provisions of 1950 treaty and assurance given by Nepal in 1965. Nepal was also being used by China and some of the western nations to promote the entry of their own products into India. Nepal wanted to legalise this trade. But India only agreed that primary products of Nepal will have unrestricted entry into the Indian market without any obligation to pay custom duties.

King Birendra who ascended the Nepalese throne on his father's death in January 1972 carried forward his father's policy of distancing Nepal from India with added vigour and determination. India's war for liberation of Bangladesh and inclusion of Sikkim in its territories were seen with a degree of alarm in Nepal. In 1975 Nepal proposed itself to be a Zone of Peace. This proposal sought to establish Nepal's relations with all countries of the world and particularly with its neighbours on the basis of equality. Nepal also wanted guarantees that

adversaries of the system would not secure support or protection in any of the countries.

India, nevertheless, favoured better relations between the two countries. In 1973 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Nepal and next year King Birendra came to India. Both stressed the need for mature and sober bilateral relations.

### RESTORATION

The Janata government which came to power in 1977 took special measures to improve relations with Nepal. The government in 1978 agreed to have two treaties for trade and transit which were governed by one treaty so far. Under the transit treaty, India gave Nepal concessional access to port facilities in Calcutta and also subsidised warehousing facilities. Under this trade treaty both countries agreed to exempt customs duty and quantitative restrictions on mutually agreed basic commodities. India also agreed to waive customs duties on Nepalese industrial products which had at least 80 per cent Nepalese or Indian raw material. These treaties remained in force till 1989. Failure to conclude a new trade treaty that year once again created bitterness between the two countries.

Restoration of multi party democracy in Nepal in April 1990, however, began a new era of cordial relations between India and Nepal. Two treaties on Transit and Trade that had lapsed in 1989, were signed in December 1991. Prime Minister

G.P. Koirala on his visit to India in December 1991 assured that Nepal was no longer dependent on China to meet its security concerns. The Treaties of Trade and Transit were amended in 1993 and further extended for five years in March 2002.

In 1994, King of Nepal visited India and Prime Minister of India visited Kathmandu. The first ever communist Prime Minister of Nepal, Manmohan Adhikari visited India twice within a period of six months in 1995. The two governments signed in February 1996 a treaty concerning the Integrated Development of River Projects in Nepal. India and Nepal are also cooperating well in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

In general, Indo-Nepal relations have remained cordial. There have been occasional changes in the parameters primarily due to Nepal's internal domestic situation, particularly differences between forces supporting democracy and monarchy, as also external pressures, like that of China. Learning from the sore experiences of the early sixties, India has been extremely cautious in avoiding offence to the Monarch's political sensitivities. India has never been hesitant or shy in fulfilling its obligations towards Nepal.

The open border regime between the two countries is unique in the world. Today, it is estimated that about six million Nepalese are in India and millions of Indians have settled in Nepal. The open border system is also sometimes used by criminals, smugglers and underground gangs. In

recent years Pakistan Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) activities against India from Nepal have also been reported. Government of Nepal has helped to curb such hostile activities by cooperating with India as and when such co-operation has been sought. In view of closeness but vast differences in size and population in respective political systems some aberrations in the relations do emerge occasionally. King Birendra and his family members were assassinated in early 2002, anti-India demonstrations and other provocations could have created tensions. But the two governments behaved in a responsible manner. Again at the dismissal of democratic government in October 2002 by King Gyanendra, India preferred not to interfere in the internal affairs of that country, despite its preference for democracy. Both India and Nepal share security concerns. Both have to appreciate each others priorities and domestic constraints for a better relationship.

#### INDIA AND SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka, a small island in the middle of Indian Ocean, is another country which apart from geographical proximity to India, has bonds of cultural and traditional affinity with it for more than four thousand years. Almost the entire population of Sri Lanka including its two major ethnic groups, the Sinhalese and Tamils, migrated at one time or the other from India. The Sinhalese consisting of about 74 per cent of population trace their

ancestors to Aryans from eastern India. Almost all of them have embraced Buddhism and have gradually developed roots in different parts of the island and got assimilated with the indigenous inhabitants. The Tamils who constitute about 18 per cent of the population are mostly Hindus and, trace their roots to Dravidians of Tamil Nadu. In fact there are two groups of Tamils. One who have been in Lanka for long and are as much indigenous to the island as the Sinhalese are. The other, known as Indian Tamils, are the descendants of the Tamil plantation workers who went to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) under British patronage to provide the much needed labour for the development of coffee, tea and rubber plantation.

Sri Lanka had been a colony since Seventeenth century first of Portugese, then of Dutch and finally the British. It attained independence on 4 February, 1948. Though small Sri Lanka is strategically quite important. It is the main connecting link to the air passage from West Asia to Australia, New Zealand and East Asia. Its position on a major highway in the international air and ocean trade route as well as its physical closeness to India makes it important for world powers. In the hands of inimical powers Sri Lanka can gravely endanger India's security. So, India's interest in Sri Lanka have been both economic and strategic. Being small and weak with limited military potential and lying within India's periphery, it is difficult for Sri Lanka to pursue a foreign policy opposed to the

interests of India. However, at the same time Western powers and Chinese interest in Sri Lanka have also been influencing its relations with India. Though part of South Asian region, Sri Lanka is geographically close only to India and, therefore, is not affected much by the bilateral developments of other countries.

In view of the above factors India-Sri Lanka relations have generally, been cordial. After independence Sri Lanka also followed the policy of non-alignment and declared six cardinal principles of its foreign policy: (i) Friendship with all nations; (ii) Peaceful Coexistence; (iii) Greater regional cooperation; (iv) Freedom to take decisions on national and international matters; (v) Support for national independence movements in countries still under colonial influence and domination; and (vi) Championship of the cause of disarmament.

Thus, in the early years India and Sri Lanka saw similarity of visions and interests. Both the countries expressed similarity of opinion on various international crises. However, developments during 1960s and 1970s brought some changes in their perception. Sri Lanka adopted an increasingly neutral posture in respect of Chinese aggression on India as also Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971. In 1971, deep suspicious were aroused in India over the extension of landing and refuelling facilities by Sri Lanka to Pakistani planes flying to and from East Pakistan. In fact with the change in the regional balance of power and creation

of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka had developed some apprehensions against India. Sri Lanka was afraid of coming close to India and Soviet Union as reflected by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, 1971. Sri Lanka began to cultivate more friendly relations with the USA, China and Pakistan. But there was no hostility against India. The outbreak of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka in early 1980, however, brought the relations between India and Sri Lanka to their bottom rock.

### **ETHNIC CONFLICT AND INDIA – SRI LANKA RELATIONS**

As mentioned in the beginning, about 18 per cent of Sri Lankan population consists of Tamil migrants from India. A large number of Tamilian population, particularly of Sri Lankan Tamils, are concentrated in northern and eastern provinces and districts. After independence, Sri Lanka started creating a new State on the basis of language and religion of majority community that is Sinhalese. The Tamils naturally resented these. They were in favour of federalism in Sri Lanka. From 1970s, Sri Lankan government also introduced reservations for Sinhalese in admission to the universities and recruitment to government services. Another aspect of discrimination was the land colonisation of traditional Tamil homelands in the eastern province by Sinhalese population.

In view of the above, the Tamils started demanding a federal state. They started peaceful agitation for the same.

By 1977 there was a tilt in their demand which turned into demanding separation. The agitation for separation gradually started taking militant shape. Rise of militancy, specially among the youth, was for various factors. These were (i) the disenchantment of the Tamil youth with parliamentary democracy as was practiced in Sri Lanka which meant the rule by Sinhalese majority; (ii) their intense pride in Tamil language and Tamil culture; (iii) lack of employment opportunities coupled with discrimination in admission to educational institutions and recruitment to jobs; (iv) their disenchantment with the traditional leadership who were willing to compromise on Tamil rights; (v) their belief and commitment that only violent struggle would enable them to achieve their goal; and (vi) only a separate state of Tamil Eelam would provide security and safety to Tamils. With these perceptions from a small number in early 1980s the number of Tamil militants began to increase in large numbers and in 1983 got organised under Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In view of geographical contiguity of Tamil Nadu and the sympathy of Tamils, LTTE was able to get support from some Tamil groups in India. Indian government while committed to upholding the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka favoured a peaceful solution. It was also concerned with the arrival of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka.

Immediately after 1983, violent upsurges brought India-Sri Lanka relations under cloud. Sri Lanka looked



for assistance from countries like the UK, the USA, Israel, Pakistan, etc. The Western countries, however, advised Sri Lanka to use good offices of India to find an amicable solution. This resulted in India-Sri Lanka accord signed between two countries in July 1987. Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) were sent to Sri Lanka to restore normalcy. This, however, became controversial. Indian forces received criticism from both sides. By some it was alleged that they were fighting against Tamils, while some in Sri Lanka looked upon this as interference in Sri Lanka's internal affairs. In general sending of IPKF to Sri Lanka did not prove useful. They were called back and by March 1990 they were completely out of Sri Lanka. In 1991, during Lok Sabha election campaign, former Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated allegedly by LTTE militants. Although India had taken positive measures to ensure that Indian territory was not used for anti-Sri Lanka forces but suspicions remain. India also has banned LTTE as a terrorist outfit.

Since 1991 after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in India and Sri Lankan presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake a better understanding between the two countries emerged on the handling of ethnic violence and terrorism. Towards this, India's policy toward Sri Lanka consists of three fold commitment (i) to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka; (ii) to the restoration of lasting peace in Sri Lanka; and (iii) to a peaceful, political process

which is the only means of achieving a lasting peace.

For quite some time now the two countries are working towards strengthening bilateral relations in all fields of mutual interest, especially in the economic sector. In recent years top leaders of India and Sri Lanka have visited each other on several occasions. In September 2002, Sri Lanka started negotiating with LTTE for a peaceful settlement. India was taken into confidence. In joint statements India and Sri Lanka had agreed that global terrorism is a threat to international peace and security. They agree that terrorist acts cannot be justified on political, ethnic, religious, social or economic grounds. It seems that India and Sri Lanka are aiming at maintaining close, cordial and cooperative relations, building on the considerable legacy of historic links, common culture, shared commitment to democracy and a general orientation towards non-alignment.

### INDIA AND CHINA

Among India's neighbours a great power and a big country is China. India and China not only share a border of more than 4,000 km but both are ancient civilisations and have relationship with each other for thousands of years. Buddhism arrived in China from India in A.D. 65 . Over the next 4-5 centuries, hundreds of Chinese scholars visited India to learn Buddhism. Among the more well known Chinese scholars who visited

India are: Fa-Hien, Huen-Tsang and Yi Tsing. Many Indian scholars especially Kashmiris also visited China during this period.

*Nationalist movements in the two countries against colonial oppression led to some renewed contacts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.* Chinese leader Sun Yat Sen maintained contacts with some Indian revolutionaries such as Ras Bihari Bose, M.N. Roy, et.al. Rabindranath Tagore visited China in 1924.

### INDIA CHINA RELATIONS SINCE 1947

On 1 October, 1949, formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) that is communist China was proclaimed. India was among the first countries to recognise the People's Republic of China on 30 December, 1949. India supported Communist China's claim for representation in the UN, even at the cost of displeasure of several non-communist countries, particularly the USA.

Thus, India and People's Republic of China began with very friendly and cordial relations. On 1 April, 1950 diplomatic relations between the two were established. An agreement between India and China on Trade signed on 29 April, 1954. Chinese premier Zhou En lai visited India in June 1954. The two prime Ministers jointly enunciated the five principles of peaceful coexistence, which came to be known as principles of *Panchsheel*. These were: (i) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (ii) mutual non-

aggression; (iii) mutual non-interference in each others internal affairs; (iv) equality and mutual benefit, and (v) peaceful coexistence.

Another trade agreement between India and China was signed on 14 October, 1954. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited China in October 1954 and Chinese Prime Minister Zhou En lai again visited India in November 1956. The friendship between the two countries reached its zenith at the Bandung conference of Afro-Asian nations in 1955. After this Conference, India gave full moral and diplomatic support to China. China supported India's claim to Portuguese possession of Goa. Thus, up to 1957 mutual affirmation of indestructible friendship between the two countries continued. From 1957 onwards there started a decline in these relations. It was primarily for two reasons firstly, because of Chinese territorial claims in India; and secondly, differences over Tibet.

### BORDER DISPUTES AND TIBET

Though India in general has not opposed Chinese claims over Tibet, but, there were some differences between the two countries over some actions of China. Tibet, a province of China, is on the northern borders of India. In the past, Tibet was an independent State. From eighteenth century, for historical reasons, it has been considered a part of China. However, Dalai Lama was considered by the people the

legitimate ruler of autonomous Tibet. From 1911 onwards, Chinese were not able to exercise their effective control over Tibet. After establishment of People's Republic of China the government expressed its desire to establish firm control over Tibet, but through negotiations. In October 1950, China launched a full scale invasion on Tibet. India expressed its protest on this armed action. China accused India of being influenced by imperial powers. India, of course, clarified that it recognised Chinese suzerainty and had no intention of interfering in China's internal affairs.

In 1959, there was a sudden uprising in the capital of Tibet. The revolt was put down by China with a heavy hand. The Dalai Lama fled from Tibet and sought asylum in India. He along with thousands of Tibetan was given political asylum in India but was advised not to organise any anti-Chinese resistance on Indian soil. China did not like India's sympathies to Tibetans and described the grant of asylum to Dalai Lama as an enemy-like act. India was even charged as expansionist.

Parallel to developments in Tibet, China also was staking claims on some of the Indian territories as belonging to them. In 1957, it started intruding in Ladakh. In September 1959, the Government of China laid a formal claim to 128,000 Sq. km of Indian Territory in Ladakh and in the North East Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh). The Prime Ministers of India and China met in Delhi in 1960 to

discuss the boundary issue. This was followed by the meetings between officials of the two sides. However, on 8 September, 1962, China started aggression in the Eastern sector of India-China boundary in the NEFA region. The Chinese forces mounted an all out attack on 20 October, 1962 on Indian defence forces along the entire India-China boundary. As a result of this, China additionally acquired about 6,400 Sq. km of Indian Territory. On 21 November, the Chinese declared a unilateral cease-fire. It, however, refused to restore the status quo as it prevailed before the aggression. China thus still holds large tracts of Indian Territory and claims approximately 90,000 Sq. kms of Indian Territory in the Eastern sector of India-China boundary in Arunachal Pradesh.

From this period onward, till the middle of 1970s, China had a hostile attitude towards India. During the India-Pakistan conflict in 1965, the Chinese side extended material assistance to Pakistan and its official statement accused India of criminal aggression. During the India-Pakistan conflict in 1971, China again criticised India for gross interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. On merger of Sikkim in India in 1975, China issued a statement and called it as illegal annexation. China has not yet officially recognised Sikkim as an integral part of India. Earlier China was also angry with India on its nuclear tests in 1974, though India had announced that its nuclear programme was for peaceful purposes. As such it

seemed that from 1958 to 1975 China looked at India as its major geostrategic rival and was bent upon keeping India down.

### TOWARDS NORMALISATION

From the above it becomes clear that the relationship between China and India has been ambivalent. On the one hand, the two nations sought good relations in the early years of cold war when developing and non-aligned countries were keen to keep their distance from super-power politics. On the other hand, both India and China being the only regional powers of size looked like rivals. China was in confrontation both with Western and Soviet powers and had been expressing strong views on most international issues. The situation, however, started changing from 1975 onwards. According to Jagat S. Mehta, China perhaps perceived that India had emerged politically self-confident and economically resilient after the Bangladesh crisis even in the face of the US-China tilt towards Pakistan. At the same time China's own position was being recognised in the international community. It was officially admitted into the United Nations including the Security Council in 1971 by replacing Taiwan. It has already been mentioned that India has consistently followed the one-China policy, despite ups and downs in bilateral relations. Both India and China started talking on the theme of traditional friendship between the

two countries. Immediate outcome of this was that in 1976, the two countries restored ambassadorial level relations after 15 years.

In 1976-1977 other developments in the two countries further paved the way for normalisation of relations. Hardliner Mao Ze dong, the supreme leader of China, died in 1976. In 1977, India for the first time a non-Congress party that is Janata Party came to power at the Centre. As explained elsewhere to establish its credibility, one of the policy of Janata governments was to improve relations with neighbouring countries. Thus, in February 1979 External Affairs Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China. India and China had resumed trade in 1978. Indira Gandhi, when back to power in 1980, continued the initiatives taken by the Janata government. She met the then Chinese premier Hu Kuo-feng in May 1980 at Belgrade, during President Tito's funeral. After 1961 it was the first meeting between the two countries at this level. There after several rounds of talks at different levels took place between the two countries, though differences on boundary issues persisted.

The visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China in 1988 marked the resumption of political dialogue at the highest level. The two sides decided to set up a Joint Working Group to discuss the boundary question. Since then President Venkataraman visited China in 1992, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in 1993, and the then Vice-President K.R.

Narayanan in 1994. From the Chinese side, Premier Lipeng visited India in 1991 and president Jiang Zemin in 1996.

Once again in 1998 there came a temporary set back when India tested nuclear bomb, and gave Chinese threat as one of the reasons. China joined the consensus among the Permanent Members of the Security Council and the G-8 countries condemning the tests. In fact, China had been the most strident critic of India's nuclear policy in the interim. The trip to China by Indian Foreign Minister in June 1999 helped reduce the bitterness. China's anger about India's nuclear tests seemed to have subsided, top level visits were back on track and both sides seemed determined to work towards a more positive relationship. Thus, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the President of India, Shri K.R. Narayanan paid a state visit to China in May-June 2000. Li Peng Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress visited India in January 2001. In January 2002, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji paid an official visit to India.

During these visits leaders have stressed that India and China do not consider each other as a threat and would like to maintain good neighbourly and friendly relations. For China, with its economic reforms and development, India's fast-growing domestic market is important. A strong Indian ally could also create a powerful regional axis to counterbalance the

global dominance of the United States. India also has much to gain from cooperation with China. A settled border with China would facilitate the stabilisation of the troubled north-eastern region in India's domestic politics and reduce opportunities for mischief in its external relations with Bhutan and Nepal. It will also help in dealing with Pakistan. It may be mentioned here that China was not happy with Pakistan's incursion into Kargil in 1999.

In the new historical and objective situation China and India have entered a new stage of relationship. In the words of former President of India K.R. Narayanan, "We have a very good opportunity for exchange of goods and ideas. We have real opportunity to put technical content in our ancient cultural friendship". And in Chinese Premier Zhu's words, "as the two largest developing countries in the world, India and China shoulder important responsibilities for maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in Asia". It is in this spirit that India and China are moving ahead in different areas of bilateral relations such as trade, cultural exchanges, security and foreign office dialogues, science and technology cooperation and efforts to resolve border disputes also. India has made it clear that it seeks friendly, cooperative, good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relations with China on the basis of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence jointly enunciated by India and China

as *Panchsheel*. Long-term stable relationship between the two is important for the mutual benefits of India and China and also for peace in the region.

### INDIA AND BANGLADESH

Bangladesh had emerged as an independent nation in 1971 discarding the two-nations theory which was the basis of India's partition in 1947. As you have already read, India played a very significant role in creation of Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) and was the first country to recognise it as a sovereign state. One of the causes leading to the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan was its geographical location which made it more a part of the eastern rather than the western region. The location of Bangladesh in the sub-continent is strategically significant. It is surrounded on three sides by India — on its western, northern and eastern sides. On its south-eastern side is borders of Myanmar. On its southern areas are waters of Bay of Bengal.

In the background of having played a crucial role in its liberation struggle and geographical location of Bangladesh, India has special interests in its relations with her. Involvement of India in Bangladesh liberation also created a large number of committed friends/foes of India. Both of them have been playing important roles in determining relationship between the two countries. Some external factors have also been playing some role in the development of these relations.

Important of these have been China and forces of pan-Islamism. Therefore, there had been some ups and downs, cordialities and bitterness in India-Bangladesh relations in specific contexts and at specific times.

### THE EARLY PHASE

In the early years of its existence Bangladesh, in view of India's role and help in its liberation, had a sense of obligation and thankfulness towards India. Also in view of its economic position and developmental needs, it was looking towards India for help. It may be mentioned here that Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world. At the same time it is one of the poorest countries. In view of these factors in the initial years under the leadership of Shiekh Mujibar Rehman Bangladesh's relations with India were very friendly. Mujibar Rehman's first visit as Prime Minister of Bangladesh was to India. During this visit, it was resolved that Indo-Bangladesh relations would be guided by the principles of democracy, socialism, secularism, non-alignment and opposition to racialism and colonialism in all forms and manifestations. India assured Bangladesh that it would never interfere in its internal affairs. Shiekh Mujibar Rehman's visit was returned by Indira Gandhi's official visit to Bangladesh in March, 1972. On the conclusion of this visit a Treaty of Friendship and Peace was signed between the two countries. Indo-Bangladesh Trade Pact was also

signed. Although there existed some differences with India, they were not considered significant enough.

The forces inimical to national liberation struggle were also present in Bangladesh. Immediately after independence, these forces started launching anti-India tirade. Sheikh Mujibar Rehman took certain measures to curb anti-India propaganda. In 1974 Indo-Bangladesh border agreement was signed. Steps were taken to resolve Ganga-water dispute and the related problems concerning the Farakkha barrage constructed in India to augment water supply into the river Hoogly. There was an interim agreement on water sharing. Talks were also initiated regarding the exchange of areas in each others territories. Thus, bilateral problems between the two countries were discussed in an atmosphere of utmost friendship and despite attempts by anti-India forces to exploit these problems for creating anti-India hysteria, these were not allowed to go beyond manageable limits.

On 15 August, 1975, the creator of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibar Rehman along with his entire family except two daughters (who were abroad) were assassinated, in a coup by some army officers. As already mentioned there were anti-India forces in Bangladesh. With the assassination of Mujibar Rehman these forces became vocal and in some cases hysterical. General Zia-Ur-Rehman who took over power was to consolidate his position. Naturally, he received support from reactionary

communal forces which were initially opposed to independence of Bangladesh and had supported the Pakistan occupation army. The other pillar of support was ultra-leftist pro-Chinese elements which were highly critical of India's role in liberation and branded it as an expansionist power eager to grab Bangladesh. Internationally the support came from the Islamic world, the Western powers and China, all of whom at that time were critical of India. In such a situation Zia-Ur-Rahman went with projection of India as the enemy of independence and territorial integrity of Bangladesh.

Thus, during the period of Zia-Ur-Rehman, bilateral problems with India became more complicated and hostile postures did not help to sort out differences in perceptions. There were, however, some changes when Janata Party came to power in India in 1977. The Janata government, as with Nepal and Pakistan, adopted a soft attitude even towards military regime in Bangladesh. An interim agreement on sharing Ganga waters during lean months was signed between the two countries. However, other disputes emerged.

Zia-Ur-Rehman was also assassinated in 1981. After a short interval of few months, Lt. General H.M. Ershad staged a bloodless coup and established his own military dictatorship in the country. Under Ershad anti-India and anti-Soviet Union plank was maintained. Political changes in India and the return of Indira Gandhi to power, though not welcome to the

military regime, did have a sobering impact on anti-India tirade, who at the same time vigorously pursued the idea of regional cooperation. He received support from South Asian nations including India and Pakistan and there came up in 1985 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This brought some relaxation in both multilateral and bilateral relations in the region. A step in improvement of relations also came with India's agreement to give Teen Bega Corridor to Bangladesh on perpetual lease.

With the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh in 1990, there also started a move towards improvement of relations with India. Teen Bega Corridor was formally transferred to Bangladesh on 26 June, 1992. India and Bangladesh also agreed to formulate a comprehensive plan for sharing of the water resources. Negotiations during 1994 led to the repatriation of Chakma refugees from Tripura to Chitagong Hill tracts in Bangladesh. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, daughter of Mujibur Rehman, took pains to improve relations with India. She visited India in December 1996 and signed an accord with India on the sharing of Ganga waters for the next 30 years. She again visited India in 1998 and 1999. In any case India had been committed to better relations with Bangladesh.

However, there are emerging some other problems. One of these is

continous influx of illegal immigrants to India from Bangladesh. Another problem, arising particularly since 1990s is the rise of Islamic fundamentalist forces. The Pakistani ISI is reported to have been making use of these forces for its activities against India. In 2002, party of General Zia-Ur-Rehman's wife came to power with the support of some anti-India elements who are hostile but lukewarm in their attitude. Non-Islamic forces in connivance with Pakistan are also taking interest in consolidation of Islamisation of Bangladesh. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, during his visit to Bangladesh in the end of July 2002, went to the extent of expressing regrets for the excesses committed by his country's Army 32 years ago in war of liberation of Bangladesh. The unqualified regrets expressed by the Pakistan President undoubtedly, marks a new beginning in the Pakistan-Bangladesh relations of which India will have to take due notice.

### INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Among its South Asian neighbours it is only with Pakistan that India has not been able to improve relations at the desirable level. Both India and Pakistan form the parts of the same land mass with common historical legacies and with no natural barriers. The two belong to a single civilisation. There are many more things in common between them making them to be the closest. Yet for the last 55 years India and Pakistan



have stared at each other. India has consistently sought peaceful, cordial and friendly relations with Pakistan. At times some of the Pakistani leaders also have desired and attempted for such relations, but certain historical factors, differences between political systems of the two countries, internal political situation of Pakistan, the geo-political settings and ideological differences so far have kept the two at logger heads. To understand the nature of Indo-Pak relations, it is important to know some historical and geographical factors that determine the relations between the two.

### **HISTORICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL FACTORS**

India's history as a society and polity is thousands of years old whereas Pakistan's existence is only from 1947. It has no monumental and historical legacies and traditions separate from India. Being a result of separation from India half of Pakistan's land frontier is with India. *As a pre-independence orientation of foreign policy while India was formulating a vision in the context of its future role in International community, Pakistan's heritage was aspirations, and expressions of Muslim League since its emergence in 1906. It was manifested in their two-nation theory, and communal apprehensions.* Added to all these historical factors to influence Indo-Pak relations were communal holocaust and displacement of population during partition, disputes over the partition of

assets, and accession of princely states, including Kashmir.

India with a long history and nationalist movement behind it, adopted a foreign policy based on principles of non-alignment, friendship and cooperation. Pakistan with no socio-cultural differences with India had to justify its establishment as a separate nation. For this religion, that is Islam, was considered to be the basis of its political structure. Pakistan's rulers felt that other factors were not probably as much important for its sustenance as Islam. Therefore, Pakistan's foreign policy primarily was based on pan-Islamism. Rulers of Pakistan also believed that India has not accepted the reality of partition. They, therefore, looked towards India with suspicion and viewed every action of India as a design against the very existence of Pakistan. An obvious consequence of this view point has been anti-Indianism. The Pakistani ruling elite has always raised the bogey of anti-Indianism so as to sustain their interests in the domestic politics of the country.

Another important factor of difference between India and Pakistan has been consolidation of democracy in India and dominant role of army in Pakistan. Pakistan's self assumed rivalry with India, need to acquire stability, legitimacy, and recognition, and desire to provide a leadership to the Islamic countries have created a desire to accumulate power and demonstrate it. This has shifted centre

of power from its people to the military establishment. Neither the Parliamentary nor the Presidential forms of government, which were experimented, could bring stability in the country. After 1953 the military has been playing a dominant role in the politics of the country and there have been various experiments to confer legitimacy on the military dictatorships.

### **PARTITION AND INDO-PAK RELATIONS**

Immediately after partition, the issues which created irritants between the two countries were transfer of military assets, sharing of river waters of Indus river basin, division of cash balance of undivided India and so on.

With regard to river waters, partition of India left three rivers in Punjab—Ravi, Sutlej and Beas mainly flowing in India and Indus, Jhelum and Chenab mostly flowing in Pakistan. India could have used all the water creating problems for Pakistan. It, however, agreed to supply water to Pakistan from these rivers. An agreement on water sharing was concluded on 19 September 1961 and was signed by Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru and President Ayub Khan which was described as a memorable event towards normalisation of relations between the two countries.

### **THE KASHMIR ISSUE**

Various efforts made between India and Pakistan to establish friendly relations

finally broke down because of dispute over Kashmir. It will be appropriate for you to know the background of this issue.

Before independence, Jammu and Kashmir was one of the 584 princely states. It was ruled by Maharaja Hari Singh. In accordance with the conditions of the partition of British India, rulers of princely states were given the right to determine which state to join—India or Pakistan, or to remain independent. The Maharaja of Kashmir decided to remain independent.

Pakistani leadership motivated with the approach of two-nation theory was of the view that in view of 77 per cent of its population being Muslim, Jammu and Kashmir should join Pakistan. After Maharaja's declaration of independence, on 3 September, 1947 there started tribal intrusions and border raids from Pakistan. The government of Kashmir protested to the Prime Minister of Pakistan. However, four days after the complaint on the night of 20-21 October, 1947 India assessed the position of Pakistan as provocative and direct support to aggression, aimed at occupying Kashmir. On 24 October Maharaja of Kashmir himself appealed to India for help. India's leadership stated that such help could only be rendered on condition of integration of Kashmir with India. On 26 October Maharaja Hari Singh sent a letter to Lord Mountbatten, then Governor General of India about his decision to join India. Indian troops were air-dashed to Kashmir. The troops stopped the advancing Pakistani infiltrators but the war continued for 14 months.

In the mean time on 1 January, 1948 India lodged a complaint with the UN Security Council to ask Pakistan to prevent assisting in the invasion of Jammu and Kashmir. The UN Security Council passed a resolution on 17 January, 1948 appealing to the conflicting sides to resolve their differences through peaceful means and to establish law and order and then to organise a plebiscite for determining the future of the State.

Finally on 13 August, 1948 Security Council passed a new resolution in which cease-fire was envisaged. India and Pakistan accepted the proposal. Consequently, fighting in Jammu and Kashmir came to a halt. The final resolution on this was passed on 5 January, 1949 by which cease-fire line was formally accepted by India and Pakistan.

With the implementation of first part of 1 January, 1949 resolution there came an end to 14 months old war. But, part two of the UN resolution could not be implemented as Pakistan refused to withdraw those forces, including Pakistani nationals under various guises, which had been fighting under the collective name of Azad Kashmir forces. This was a condition precedent to the holding of any plebiscite. While accepting UN resolution of 5 January, 1949 India had sought the clarification from the UN Council that the plebiscite proposal would not be binding upon India if Pakistan did not implement part two of the UN resolutions of August 13. This assurance was given categorically by the United Nations.

In those ensuing years Pakistan tried to win Western countries over its side. India's foreign policy of Non-Alignment was not much appreciated by the USA and its allies. Pakistan in 1954 decided to move away from its neutral course and join a military-political union with the USA, initially through entry into the military bloc of SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organisation) and then the Baghdad pact or CENTO in 1955. Pakistan's close collaboration with the US and its military alliance and India's multifaceted cooperation and understanding with Soviet Union made the Kashmir issue in the UN purely political.

Notwithstanding the discussions in the United Nations, since then, the State of Jammu and Kashmir has remained an integral part of the Union of India and had been participating in its affairs including elections as such. Pakistan has remained adamant on its position on communal grounds. Internal instability and civil-military conflicts in Pakistan have also forced it to keep Kashmir issue alive for emotional diversion of people.

To internationalise Kashmir issue Pakistan once again started in August 1965 sending its troops in civilian clothes across the cease-fire line. These infiltrators were sent to provoke large-scale violence and abet people of Kashmir to revolt or create a war of independence in Kashmir. It resulted in full-scale war between India and Pakistan in which Pakistan suffered humiliating defeat. A UN Security

Council resolution adopted on 20 September, 1965 called upon India and Pakistan to cease-fire.

After the end of war a meeting was held at Tashkant in the then Soviet Union from 3-10 January, 1966 to formalise peace between India and Pakistan. The summit meeting was held at the initiative of the Soviet Prime Minister Alexi Kosygin and attended by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and President Ayub Khan.

Outcome of the Summit was a nine-point Tashkant declaration containing the resolve by India and Pakistan to restore normal and peaceful relations between themselves and to promote friendly relations between their people. It was agreed that the relations between India and Pakistan would be based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other; they will not resort to force, but settle their disputes through peaceful means.

The Tashkant declaration was welcomed world over and for the first time it was hoped that India and Pakistan might turn away from the path of conflict and strive to live in peace. But the hawks in Pakistan did not believe in that. They held the view that peace in the sub-continent was possible only if Kashmir issue was solved to Pakistan's satisfaction. In spite of events of great significance and changes both at international level and in India and Pakistan the internal political situation in Pakistan did not allow to change its position that Kashmir is the core issue between India-Pakistan relations.

Since 1987 Pakistan has been abetting, encouraging and supporting insurgent terrorist movement in Kashmir. Events in Kargil in summer of 1999 made it very clear that the presence of army regulars and Islamic militants on the Indian territory was not a spontaneous performance of the local freedom fighters. By planning operations in Kargil, Pakistani strategists hoped that the international community would be attracted to the so-called fight for freedom in Kashmir would come to the rescue of victims of alleged Indian violations of human rights. Conduct of free and fair elections and participation of significant percentage of voters in elections in Kashmir in September-October 2002 despite of terrorist threat has made it clear that people of Kashmir are not in favour of violence and they desire peace. The parties they voted for also makes it clear that they are not enamoured by Pakistan propaganda. But for Pakistan the Kashmir issue remains as the central issue.

Thus, the initial positions of India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue remain unchanged and are diametrically opposite. For India Kashmir issue has been resolved fully, taking into account the appeal of the Maharaja and signing of the Instrument of Accession to India. It was further reiterated in 1954 by the Constituent Assembly of the State.

At ideological level Pakistan continues to harp on Muslim League's pre-partition theory of two nations.

That is Hindus and Muslims are two nations. India's stand on the other hand is that India is a multi religious, multi cultural, secular state. While Pakistan may be a Muslim majority State, India has a very large Muslim population as well. In fact Muslim population, over 12 crore, is more than in any other country except Indonesia. It is more than Pakistan. It is not only in Kashmir that a non-Hindu religion is in majority but in several other States also it is so. Therefore India has never accepted the idea of religious basis of the State. At the time of partition also it had rejected the two-nations theory totally. Yet, as stated in the beginning, for Pakistan compulsions of identity crisis, internal instability, its desire to be the leader of Islamic world and an anti-India mindset forces the Kashmir issue to be seen in communal terms and kept alive in one form or the other. Unfortunately, it has become so serious that all efforts for peaceful relations between the two countries which are so essential for trade and commerce and development have so far failed. Some of these efforts are discussed below.

### **BANGLADESH WAR AND SHIMLA AGREEMENT**

The most serious internal crisis that Pakistan faced after its creation in 1947 was the upsurge in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) — a direct challenge to the two-nations theory of Muslim League. The consequences of this crisis became a vital and vitiating factor in Indo-Pak

relations. When India was partitioned on the basis of religion, Eastern wing was carved out of Bengal which was more than 1,500 km away from western wing (present Pakistan).

Though people of both the wings were Muslims, they differed from each other culturally and linguistically. Imposition of Urdu was totally unacceptable to them. The differences had continued and East-Pakistan population had felt neglected. In December 1971 elections Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman won majority. Rather than accepting the democratic verdict of election and allowing Sheikh Mujibur Rehman to become Prime Minister, President Yahya Khan arrested and detained him. This led to widespread protests and violence. Pakistan security forces let loose a reign of terror. People started running towards India. By March 1971 about a crore of East Pakistanis had crossed over to India as refugees.

Under tremendous suppression by Pakistani Security forces people of Bangladesh began looking for independence as the only way out. Thus on 12 April, 1971 the Awami League leadership declared independence from Pakistan and establishment of Bangladesh. At that time no country including India recognised Bangladesh. Pakistan's massacre of people continued and so also influx of refugees to India. Seeing the situation becoming worse, India was compelled to intervene and finally on 4 December, 1971, Pakistan waged a

war against India. Pakistan was defeated on all fronts. It surrendered before India unconditionally on 16 December, 1971. About 93 thousand Pakistan troops were taken as prisoners of war. The net result of war was division of Pakistan and creation of a sovereign State of Bangladesh.

In order to normalise the relations between India and Pakistan, the then President of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, desired a meeting between the two heads of the governments. Hence, India-Pakistan Summit was held at Shimla in June 1972. After prolonged discussion an agreement was reached in which both the countries pledged to work for lasting friendship. The two countries agreed to seek peaceful solutions to disputes through bilateral negotiations, they also agreed not to use force against each other and violate the territorial integrity and freedom of each other. The two countries also agreed to establish trade and commerce relations, cooperation in science, technology and cultural fields and recognise the line of control as at the time of cease-fire on 17 December, 1971.

Observers felt that Shimla agreement was a real settlement between India and Pakistan. Though not declared publically implied in the agreement was that the two countries accepted the settlement of Kashmir around the existing realities. It was therefore accepted that after Shimla accord India and Pakistan will work for mutual benefits through cooperation.

### **INDO-PAK RELATIONS AFTER SHIMLA ACCORD**

After Shimla Accord, for some time, the two countries began working for confidence building activities and cooperating with each other. But the hardliners in Pakistan could not reconcile with implied settlement on Kashmir. Under pressure from opponents Pakistan government, in spite of commitment to bilateral approach in Shimla Accord, kept on raising Kashmir issue in several international fora. Nuclear test by India in 1974 created some apprehensions in Pakistan but efforts went on for improvement of relations. Morarji Desai's Janata Party government in 1977 made particular efforts to improve relations with Pakistan. The then foreign minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Pakistan in 1978. There was a general impression that India-Pakistan were on the move for better times. The internal politics of Pakistan, however, did not allow this for long. In 1977 once again there was a military coup in Pakistan in which General Zia-Ul-Haq took over the Presidentship of Pakistan. To consolidate his position, Zia started playing with the emotions of people. By 1980 it became clear that he also had to go for India bashing. It was widely believed that Zia was also interested in taking revenge for the creation of Bangladesh. He, therefore, tried to destabilise India by abetting and encouraging terrorism in Punjab. In the given international situation,

including Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan, Pakistan once again had become a close ally of the Western powers and China. As such, it thought proper once again to internationalise the Kashmir issue. It started sponsoring and supporting insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, which in due course of time took a very serious turn.

### **GUJRAL DOCTRINE AND VAJPAYEE'S EFFORTS**

President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan was killed in August 1988 in an air crash. After some time democracy was restored. Benazir Bhutto, who took over as Prime Minister, though continued with the established parameters of Pakistan foreign policy, expressed desire to improve relations with India. She held talks with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Both referred to Shimla Accord and commitment to bilateral approach. However, the basic issues remained unresolved and the anti-Indian stance of Pakistan ruling elite continued. In 1990, Nawaz Sharif's government and again in 1993 new Government of Benazir Bhutto created both hope and despair for Indo-Pak relations. New Delhi suggested several confidence measures but Pakistan continued to insist on the resolution of Kashmir problem and that too in accordance with the Pakistan's wishes and 1948-49 UN resolutions. The Army and ISI were not necessarily following civilian government's dictates. Thus, support and encouragement to terrorist activities kept on increasing.

A major initiative to improve relations with Pakistan was taken by Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral in 1997 when he initiated the policy of taking unilateral action to improve relations with the neighbours. Gujral's contention was that scarce resources in subcontinent were being wasted in hostilities. He expressed India's readiness as larger neighbour to give more. In March 1997, he said, "I am willing to make concessions on anything, except the sovereignty or secular character of our nation which are non-negotiable. There will be no other partition of India." For once, it seemed that Pakistan was responding positively.

Gujral's initiatives were carried forward by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee who in February, 1999 went to the extent of going to Lahore on Bus. But as already stated Pakistan's internal politics remained an hindrance. While Prime Minister Shariff was expressing his readiness to talk and improve relations with India, his army was preparing to strike in Kargil and ISI was engaged in large scale infiltration of terrorists across the border. Finally came the Army Coup and once again Military rule was established under the command of General Pervez Musharraf. To establish his credibility and win popularity General began harping on Kashmir in very loud voices. At the same time keeping in view the Kargil defeat and increasing isolation of Pakistan in international community, he expressed

his willingness to talk to India. For that purpose he came to India and participated in Summit meeting with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Agra. Whole world was looking at Agra Summit with great hopes. The summit failed because the core issue for Pakistan was Kashmir. India was prepared to discuss Kashmir subject to Pakistan's commitment to end its support and encouragement to terrorism.

Since Agra Summit, relations between India and Pakistan have continued to worsen. Terrorist attack on Indian Parliament in December 2001 and Pakistan continued involvement in Kashmir has made India refuse to talk to it. After 11 September, 2001 events in the USA and international war against terrorism, Pakistan has accepted the fact that the terrorists are using its territory, though has denied its own support to them. It has promised to the world to keep itself away from support or abetment to terrorism. It however, keeps on expressing its moral and political support to the terrorists whom they allege are fighting for freedom of Kashmir. It seems that internal political contradictions of Pakistan are so complicated that politicians there have to remain engaged in politics of one-up-manship in respect of India.

The basic problem in restoration of friendly relations between the two countries is that while for over 55 years India has been a vigorously functioning democratic State, Pakistan still is in search of an identity and

system. In India the defence forces are fully under the control of the civilian and political authorities. In Pakistan on the other hand, they seem to constitute an empire within an empire, perhaps autonomous in decision-making. It is time for India and Pakistan to come out from skirmishes and to address of real issues of human development, but the ray of hope is bleak.

It is obvious that in its foreign policy, apart from general vision, the immediate neighbours have the first claim on its attention. The relations with Nepal, Sri Lanka, China, Bangladesh and Pakistan are of paramount importance to India. India's security, vital interests and well being are intimately tied up with the fate and future of this region. India, therefore, has tried to maintain peaceful and cordial relations with them. However, the differences in size, potentialities and ideological preferences have quite often caused some frictions also, particularly in relations with China and Pakistan. While in recent years there has been tremendous improvement in India-China relations, the relations with Pakistan have further worsened. India remains interested in peaceful coexistence and development of the region. Of course it has to take note of fears and susceptibilities of smaller countries and its strategic interests in relation to China. It is expected that in the post-cold war era there will be a new perspective on regional cooperation and further improvement in relations among neighbours.



EXERCISES

1. Examine India's relations with Pakistan.
2. Explain the phases of cordial and strained relations between India and Bangladesh.
3. Give brief account of India's relations with Sri Lanka
4. Describe India's relationship with China.
5. Assess relationship between India and Nepal.
6. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Shimla Agreement;
  - (ii) *Panchsheel*;
  - (iii) Kashmir problem;
  - (iv) Indo-China border dispute;
  - (v) Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

**CHAPTER 18****India's Relations with USA and Russia**

**I**N a situation of bloc rivalries and cold war the national leaders of India, after independence, believed that an independent India should be willing to make adjustments in respect of her relations with other nations. However, the prime concern for her was its national interest. Soon after the end of the Second World War the prevalent situation was complex and delicate. Although the Western powers led by the USA and the erstwhile Soviet Union fought the common foe, the Nazi Germany, during Second World War, their suspicions for each other prior to the war, during the war and after the war continued. By 1947 the dividing lines were clearly drawn. The newly independent Afro-Asian countries, on account of their fragile economic and political conditions were susceptible to pressures from both the super powers. Both the superpowers were trying to assume the role of system builders for the world and were expecting other states to follow their lead. Both had a firm belief in the rivalry between the Eastern and Western camps. They also opined that there was little room for a third camp. The bipolarity of the world

was accepted as a natural consequence of the Second World War.

It was in this situation that India decided not to join either of the power blocs and to follow a policy of non-alignment. Main concern at that time was its development and transformation, to raise the standard of living of the people and not military power. For this, India needed independence in decision-making and support from all possible avenues. The only way to preserve India's independent identity and seek help from both the powers was to avoid excessive intimacy and identification with either bloc. At the same time, to attain the goals of national economic development and political stability, to ensure the unity and socio-economic growth of the country, to prevent aggression, or the threat of aggression to its independence, it was necessary for India to maintain friendly relations with both the super-powers. The super-powers had their own perspectives, interests and parameters to deal with countries in this region. In this context, India's relations with the USA and erstwhile Soviet Union (now

Russia) emerged in a situation of bloc-rivalries during the cold war. In this chapter we will discuss in brief the origin and development of India's relations both with the USA and Russia including former Soviet Union.

### **INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Indo-US relations have remained complex and at times paradoxical. Though there is tremendous change in the relationship between the two after the end of the cold war and particularly in the phase of recent terrorist challenges, yet it is clear that they are neither complete partners nor are they complete adversaries.

USA is three times the area of India but the population of India is two and a half times than that of the USA. In terms of industrialisation and economy USA is one of the most developed and rich countries whereas India is a developing country. Both India and the USA are plural countries in terms of cultures and religions. Both are secular democracies, committed to constitutionalism, rule of law and freedom of individual and the press. But in terms of strategic requirements, military ambitions and vision about international politics, the two countries differ considerably.

### **ORIGIN OF INDO-US RELATIONS**

Relationship between India and the United States goes back to pre-independence days. United States was

sympathetic and supportive of India's struggle for freedom. During the Second World War period USA supported the idea of right to self-determination for the people all over the world. Thus, after independence, while India was formulating its foreign policy with a strong desire to be independent of power blocs, it was also expecting that with independence and democratic institutions the USA would come forward to support its struggle against poverty and for development. USA had peculiar interests in South Asian region. Its main concern was to contain the spread of Soviet influence and her communist ideology. The USA was afraid that the Soviet Union would take full advantage of the power vacuum, created by the withdrawal of the British from India. It also thought that the fragile economy of the Afro-Asian countries was best suited for breeding the communist ideology. Emergence of China as Communist Republic in 1949 increased these apprehensions and interest in the region. At the same time, US considered itself to be the sole global power and suspected that India had the ambition and potential to be a regional hegemony by virtue of its size, economic and military potentials. It may thus become a challenge to American authority.

In view of the above to contain Soviet Union and extend their own influence, Americans adopted a two-fold approach. First, to confront the suspected Soviet expansionism through military force. Second, by launching plans for economic recovery

known as the "Marshal Plan". The period from 1947 to 1955 saw the emergence of a series of military alliances and extension of economic assistance to several nations which were willing to go along with the American plan. Quite a few nations in Europe, Asia and Africa accepted the American patronage while some others went under the Soviet fold. India, in the framework of its vision of non-alignment, opted for the policy of friendship with all but enmity to none; the policy of seeking help without strings for India's economic development; and the policy of employing freedom to judge all issues on their merit. India, also did not approve the American policy of containment of Communism against Soviet Union and China through a system of military alliances, and sought to promote a climate of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. Infact, India was among the first countries to recognise Communist China and establish diplomatic relations with it.

As against India's desire to remain independent while maintaining friendly relations with the USA, Pakistan soon began to accept its dominance. The main reason for this was Pakistans' animosity against India and search for allies in the international scenario. Pakistans' search for security, status and identity coincided with the United States search for an ally in South Asia to buttress its global strategic imperatives. In 1954 Pakistan became a member of military alliances such as CENTO and SEATO sponsored by the

USA. Pakistan offered Peshawar, adjacent to the Soviet Union, for operation of military spy planes of USA. This move of Pakistan was mainly to internationalise the issue of Kashmir. The military pacts were, obviously, seen by Indian leaders as steps to contain India's policy of non-alignment and independence of action.

USA condemned non-alignment openly. In 1954 it was the first country to support Pakistan's stand on Kashmir issue in word and deed. Pakistan received huge amounts of military aid from the USA. Pakistan's alignment with the United States belied the hopes of Indian decision-makers. India was forced to be friendly with the other Super Power i.e. the Soviet Union for the diplomatic vantage and military build-up within the constraints of its non-aligned identity. Soviet Union also took keen interest in the affairs of newly independent countries of Asia and Africa. Soviet Union appreciated the policy of Non-Alignment. In South Asia, the Soviet Union found a sympathetic ally in India inspite of its not joining the military alliances.

Thus, in order to encourage India to remain a liberal democracy and not to go under the communist dependency, USA maintained a favorable economic, cultural and educational relations with India in the decade of 1950s and 1960s. It provided valuable assistance to India under the Technical Cooperation Agreement of 1951. It also made available to India huge quantities of food grains during periods of shortages. But in military -

strategic terms, American policy was to contain India by strengthening its military alliance with Pakistan and creating a regional balance of power. This policy to check India was due to three concerns of the USA (i) India had an alignment with the USSR which was an adversary of the USA; (ii) India's ambition and potential to be a regional power by virtue of its size, economic and military potential; and (iii) US apprehension that a threat of war in the Indian sub-continent might prove to be threat to international peace. To contain Indian ambition and regional hegemonic capacity, USA worked to build up Pakistan as a pillar of sub-continental security. USA was so much apprehensive of India's potential to emerge as a regional power that it even condemned liberation of the Portuguese colonies of Goa, Daman and Diu by India whereas it was expected that the USA would applaud the action. America had been advocating elimination of colonial rule, and self-determination. India was surprised and shocked. It found that the USA was more concerned about her NATO ally, Portugal, instead of honouring its commitment to anti-colonialism.

During this period, USA gave military aid to India only once in 1962 i.e. at the time of Chinese aggression. At that time the USA provided India with the useful moral and material help. There was also some change in American perception of non-alignment. John F. Kennedy administration believed that the cold war neutrality of Third World nations was an

acceptable alternative to Communism. Furthermore, India was key power in Asia; and its relative neutrality would be preferable to its adopting Communism. However, the new Chinese communist threat forced USA to continue the flow of military assistance to Pakistan.

The American justification of military aid to Pakistan was that it was directed against the Soviet Union and China. But, as a matter of fact for Pakistan the aid was principally meant to be used against India. However, it may be mentioned here that American President Eisenhower had given a written pledge to Prime Minister Nehru that American weapons would not be permitted to be used by Pakistan in its war with India.

Whatever improvement in Indo-US relations took place after 1962, it deteriorated after 1965. At that time, India was suffering from severe food shortage and US administration slowed food aid shipments to India. Even this had no impact on India, who continued to speak against the US action in Vietnam. During 1966-1969 some efforts were made to improve the relationship between the two countries. Not much came out of this. On the contrary developments between 1969-71 brought the Indo-US relations to the lowest ebb.

By this time serious difference had developed between Soviet Union and China. US administration started serious efforts to improve relations with China. For India US-Pakistan-China axis was a serious cause of worry. Yet,

India tried to maintain its non-aligned stance. In view of developments in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), in 1971, the situation radically changed. American pro-Pakistan policy finally induced India to sign the Indo-Soviet Treaty and come further closer to the Soviet Union. Bangladesh crisis in 1971 clearly revealed the decisive influence of the USA on Pakistan in its strained relationship with India and its tilt towards Pakistan. India's underground nuclear test in 1974, was criticised by the United States, though India had made it clear that its nuclear programme was entirely for peaceful purpose. Apprehensions between India and the USA reached its peak in 1979 with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan because India did not condemn the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. In view of the situation, Pakistan was given the status of a frontline state by America and it received significant military aid. Thus, supply of fresh arms by the USA to Pakistan and non-condemnations of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan by India renewed tensions between India and the United States. However, at the same time the visit of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1974 to India and other diplomatic efforts to improve the relations between two countries saw positive and visible change.

### **TOWARDS NORMALISATION OF RELATION**

Till the last years of 1970s, in general, US administration perceived Indian

policies as decidedly pro-Soviet, whereas Indians saw their own policies as continuation of non-alignment and non-interference. A meeting between Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and President Reagan in October 1981 at the Cancun meeting made the two to reexamine postulates of their foreign policies. The Reagan administration continued to consider the US-Pakistan security relationship highly important and offered a substantial military aid package to Pakistan. However, he also realised the importance of improved relations with India and adopted a two-track approach of continuing to arm Pakistan while assisting India on political and economic issues. Thus, during 1980s the USA and India expanded high-technology cooperation. In November 1984 a memorandum of understanding was signed to regulate the export of defence technology to bring in a new era of understanding.

Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister, evinced great interest in improving relations with the US. The US administration responded favourably. The two countries signed a memorandum on high technology transfers. The US also offered advanced military equipment and weaponry, including aircrafts. On India's expressing her concern, US even withdrew offers to sell surveillance aircraft to Pakistan. The development of new relations, of course, were not without hindrances and problems. On many issues the differences between the two countries persisted. One of these was on nuclear policy. However, in view

of India's increasing economic, military and strategic importance and policies of economic liberalisation adopted by her the process of normalisation kept on accelerating and received significant stimulation after the end of the cold war.

### **INDO-US RELATIONS IN POST COLD WAR ERA**

The end of the cold war marked a significant change in the US approach towards the Indian sub-continent. With the end of cold war and collapse and disintegration of Soviet Union, the ideological confrontation between the East and the West ended. Centrally controlled economies started moving towards market economy. US thought itself to be the sole Super Power. In South Asia, with the collapse of Soviet Union and its withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan's role in furthering US strategic goals of containing the Soviet Union became redundant. Pakistan's relentless pursuit of a nuclear capability also caused US to distance itself from Pakistan. Moreover, in the age of globalisation, India was looked upon as one of the major emerging markets, because of its size, huge population, a large middle class community, and its economic potential. To cope with its economic problems, India had also started looking for external investment, technical cooperation and trade relations. Also Pakistan's continuous encouragement to terrorism in Kashmir and its efforts to internationalise the

Kashmir issue was a matter of concern for India. Thus, both India and the USA began to shed the ideological blinkers donned to protect their interests during the cold war. They started discovering each other afresh. Now, USA recognised that with economic strength, India was an important player in this part of the world. Its growth potential — economic and political could not be ignored.

In view of the above changes both economic and defence relations between the two countries started taking new shapes. The discussions between the two countries moved India into an arena of military consultations which the US had never experienced before. The major hurdle that continued between the two countries was over nuclear policy. India not only continued to refuse to enter into discriminatory arms control agreements but also developed its missile programme. In this context conduct of nuclear tests by India in 1998, significantly eroded its relations with the USA. The Clinton administration in USA imposed sanctions both on India and Pakistan. The context of Indian nuclear and missile proliferation was not fully appreciated by the US policy makers. India had long standing territorial disputes with nuclear and near — nuclear powers. India had no way to defend itself against its neighbours except by recourse to a nuclear deterrent, so that it could acquire diplomatic and military space in the troublesome strategic environment of the Asia-Pacific.

After 1998 nuclear tests, inspite of sanctions imposed by the USA, India

tried to keep the relationship from becoming bitter. Known for its pragmatic approach, the American foreign policy establishment also seems to be accommodating the Indian nuclear policy. An example of this came in November 1998 when a large faction of the Pakistani military and Pakistani — backed terrorists crossed over the Line of Control on the Kargil heights. The USA joined other members of the international community in condemning Pakistan for this. While criticising Pakistan, the USA also took upon itself the role of a mediator between India and Pakistan. The terrorist attack, on 11 September, 2001, in the USA has opened a new chapter in the relations between India, Pakistan and the United State of America.

In view of the spread of terrorist activities the world over, America recognised the necessity of an international war against terrorism and also to build links with non-traditional partners. In this, the US administration looks towards India as the potential part of global surveillance that the US wants to build against terrorism. It is well recognised that India enjoys internal stability as well as military and economic strength, and that it has a mature non-expansionist international attitude. Both Indian and the USA are targets of cross-border terrorism. Thus, we may find increased cooperation between the US and India in dealing with the problem of terrorism in the near future. This, of course, does not mean that America is losing interest in

Pakistan. Infact, it is trying to improve relations with Pakistan also, particularly, to check the growth of fundamentalist forces.

As already mentioned, in the changed situation there also are some unique opportunities for India and the US to expand trade relations as well. India has a major need for technological cooperation. It can, therefore, be said that India and the USA have emerged from a history of mistrust and a relationship which lacked depth to the process of an economic and strategic dialogue and cooperation. American calculation of course is for the fulfillment of its own national interest. It is, therefore, important that while India should continue developing friendly and cordial relations with the US it should also remain vigilant about its own interests, and safeguard its sovereignty and independence.

### INDIA AND RUSSIA

Russia emerged as an independent State in 1991, after the disintegration of the USSR. But Russia has declared itself to be "State-continuator" of the erstwhile USSR. India and most of the other countries also recognise Russia as the successor State to the former Soviet Union. As such India's relations with Russia are both a relationship between new non-communist Russia and a continuity of relationships with the former Soviet Union. Developments during last decade also suggest that Indo-Russian relations in many ways are based on continuity. India's



relations with Soviet Union were of special significance. The importance attached to them cut across party lines. There was a national consensus on the need for a strong and stable relationship with the USSR. This seems to be continuing from both sides, though there are some changes on certain accounts in view of post cold war situation. In the new foreign policy concept released by Russian Federation on 10 July, 2000, it has been stated that one of the crucial directions in the Russian foreign policy in Asia will be to develop friendly relations with the leading States including India. To understand the nature of these relationships between India and Russia it is necessary to know the origin and development of relations with the erstwhile Soviet Union.

### INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS

Soviet Union came into existence in 1917 as a result of Russian Revolution based on Marxian-Socialist ideology. In accordance with the socialist ideology, right from the beginning, Soviet Union condemned colonialism and supported freedom struggles including that of India. The process of planning adopted by Soviet Union made it a developed and a powerful State within a few years. India's leaders fighting against British imperialism, and facing the consequences of capitalist oppression were obviously appreciative of both the Soviet support for its freedom struggle and the achievements that country had made.

They, therefore, did not share Western country's apprehensions about communist expansionist designs.

At the time of independence, the expectation was for development of relationship of cooperation between the two countries, irrespective of differences of ideologies. Hope was strengthened with Soviet Union formally recognising India as a sovereign State in April 1947, that is four months before its independence, and establishment of diplomatic relations. However, at the time of India's independence Soviet Union was under control of Stalin, who was very rigid in his approach which included the perception that all those who were not communists were against the Soviet Union. India's joining Commonwealth after independence was projected as India's pro-western policy. Similarly, India's adoption of non-alignment and its independent stand on certain issues at that time did not please Soviet Union. As such, in 1947 Soviet Union was quite skeptical about India's independence and its future identity.

The situation, however, started changing from 1953 onwards. With the end of Stalin era new Soviet leadership began to look towards newly independent Afro-Asian countries as its natural allies. It, therefore, appreciated India's non-alignment. Soviet leadership realised that India was not suffering from any perceived threat of the spread of communism. In fact, India was resisting the expansion of Western influence into Asian region if it threatened self-

determination. India had adopted a policy of non-alignment to address its own security and national concerns. Above all Soviet Union realised India's importance as a strategic partner when in 1954 Pakistan joined SEATO and CENTO alliances and provided basis to America on Russian borders. As a consequence, the Soviet Union considered Pakistan as an American client State, advancing and nurturing the US military and strategic interests in the region. From this period onwards relations between India and Soviet Union started developing very cordially and friendly. One area in which Soviet Union has solidly stood by India was in regard to Kashmir. By 1955 Soviet Union had clearly taken a pro-India stand and declared unequivocally that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India. As has already been mentioned above in the discussion on Indo-US relations that some other events in international arena and country's responses to them further brought Soviet Union and India closer vis-à-vis Pakistan and the USA.

Along with strategic relations, gates were opened for trade and economic relations. The beginning was made with the Indo-Soviet Trade Agreement of 1953. It was followed by another agreement in 1955 for construction of Bhilai Steel Plant. India received economic aid from Soviet Union at low interest rates and on long-term basis. An important aspect of trade relations has been Rupee trade. It means that trade was regulated under the Rupee agreement under which

imports into India were to be paid through export commodities. Transactions involving free foreign exchange were eliminated and the rupee served as an account unit. The trade relations between India and the USSR developed enormously.

During the cold war, India's goal was to avoid being drawn into the sphere of influence of the major superpowers. At the same time, India required weapons for its defence, specially after the Chinese aggression in 1962. Indian defence procurement was limited due to budgetary constraints and a scarcity of foreign exchange. Under pressure from Pakistan and for its own strategic reasons, United State provided only limited weapons that too, under conditions prevailing immediately after Chinese aggression. But Soviet equipment was sold to India on concessional rates and lower rates of interest and on long-term schedules. During India's war with China, the Soviet Union generally supported India's position. During India-Pakistan war in 1965, Pakistan freely used American weapons, their sophisticated tanks and some of the Chinese weapons against India. Further, the United States' efforts to come closer to China and possibilities of US-China-Pakistan axis was also a matter of serious concern for India.

Impact of US-China-Pak axis became clear during Bangladesh crisis in 1971. It was in this situation that in August 1971 a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed between

India and the erstwhile Soviet Union. This treaty proved to be a deterrent and the USA did not intervene in the War. The 1971 treaty was the first political treaty concluded by India with one of the Super powers. Many critics observed that it was a deviation from non-alignment, but given the situation and America's direct threat, perhaps it was essential. In India the treaty was universally hailed. Hence, now onwards Indo-Soviet relations continued to develop under all governments in India. So much so that even at the time of clear indications of collapse of Soviet Union, the 1971 treaty, which was signed for 20 years, was renewed for another two decades in August 1991.

In general, India-Soviet Union relations were based on mutual benefit and certain common visions about international politics. Both believed in national freedom and social equality, support to national liberation movements and fight against colonialism, racial discrimination and oppression as a matter of principle. Of course the military and strategic interests of both the countries played a pivotal role in determining these relations. The same in many ways still continues as India-Russia Relations.

### **INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS**

By December 1991 not only the Communist system in Soviet Union collapsed but it also got disintegrated into 15 independent Republics. All these States have been recognised as sovereign States. Russian Federation

has been recognised by the international community as the successor State of USSR. It means rights and commitments of the USSR are now that of Russia. India also has recognised the 15 Republics as sovereign States and expressed its desire to establish friendly and cooperative relations with all. Its special interest, however, remain with Russia.

Both India and Russian federation have expressed the hope and commitment to maintain time-tested traditional relations between the two countries. However, in the early years of 1990s there were some constraints. Among the Russian leaderships there were three main trends with regard to Indo-Russian relations; (i) Proponents of traditional ties were pleading for a policy based on continuity; (ii) There were exponents of building new types of relations, devoid of any ideological preconception; (iii) There were blind supporter of the US course, intending to give strategic character to the US-Russian relations and thus keen to overlook the value of Indo-Russian ties. It seems that both the leadership and elite in the two countries were influenced by all the three trends partly. Therefore, in the first two years of establishment of Russia the traditional warmth in the bilateral relations of the two countries was not visible. However, starting with the visit of President Yeltsin of Russia to India in 1993, renewal of old ties became pronounced.

During the period 1994-96, several high-level visits were exchanged between the two countries. India was

assured of Russian support on Kashmir and continuation of supply of spare parts for defence equipments. At the same time, in the changed post cold war environment and markets taking over the economy, both Russia and India were looking for wider options. Russia was keen to develop its European entity rather than its Euroasian identity. It believed that its future prosperity and influence lay in forging a close alliance with the United States and Western Europe. It wanted to join the G-7, that is group of 7 highly industrialised and developed countries of the world. India also, in the changed situation and in need of more sophisticated arms, was looking for alternative options, in addition to Russia. As already mentioned in discussion on India-US relations, the USA was offering such options to India. Also, India's need for foreign investment was making it look towards West for trade and economic relations. And, in the meantime both India and Russia continued interacting with each other at various levels.

By early 1997, Russia started getting disillusioned from Western Powers. Its attempt to get entry into G-7 was not successful. The United States was expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to include several former communist East European countries. This was not appreciated by Russia, though ultimately Russia itself signed a NATO-Russian pact. All these events made Russia to reexamine its priorities. Though the basic pro-West orientation

of Russian foreign policy remained intact, Russia also started moving closer towards India, China and Japan.

The visit by Prime Minister of India, H.D. Deve Gowda to Moscow in March 1997 turned out to be a high watermark. Several agreements were signed between the two countries. The traditional relations shared by both the countries, reached its culmination with the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India on 3 October, 2000. The signing of the strategic partnership by President Putin and Prime Minister Vajpayee widened scope for continued political engagements and dialogue on defence matters by setting up of joint working groups. The Moscow Declaration signed by the Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on 5 November, 2001 is yet another milestone in cementing the close and friendly ties between India and the Russian Federation. As both the countries have been the victims of the scourge of international terrorism for more than a decade (Russia in the case of Chechnya and India in the case of Kashmir), there has been identity of views on the need and support to contain and eliminate terrorism. Both India and Russia while extending support for global effort, and in particular for the American initiative to eliminate terrorism, have expressed the view that there should not be any double standards in identifying terrorism and dealing with it.

The Moscow declaration also reiterates the desire of both the

countries for expanded economic relations in future. The two countries thus can look forward to better avenues for a wide range of trade and commerce activities. Leaders of both the countries have clearly indicated that they want to restore their relationship to its earlier high pedestal. Of course in the fast changing international situation nothing is certain; but at least for the present, the relations between India and Russia are poised for revival of the traditional Indo-Soviet friendship.

Indo-Soviet/Russian relations could be summed up, as Siddharath Vardarajan observes, in the following phases:

During the Stalin years, the USSR preferred to keep its distance from India as it considered Nehru's India to be a reactionary state beholden to Britain and the US. From Khrushchev till early years of Gorbachev, on the other hand relations were warm with close economic and military ties. The end of the cold war and a prolonged period of economic anarchy brought with it a certain cooling of relations between Russia and India with Yeltsin tending to follow the US lead. But now, with US-Russia relations entering a new and potentially unstable phase, Moscow is anxious to renew its friendship with New Delhi.

### EXERCISES

1. Examine Indo-American relationship.
2. Describe the process of normalisation of relationship between United States of America and India.
3. Explain the Indo-Soviet Union relationship up to 1990.
4. Discuss the nature of relationship between India and Russia.
5. Write short notes on the following :
  - (i) The US tilt towards Pakistan;
  - (ii) Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971;
  - (iii) Attitude of the USA and the USSR towards India at the time of 1971 Indo-Pak war;
  - (iv) Post-Cold War relationship between India and USA.

## **CHAPTER 19**

### **India and the United Nations**

**U**NITED Nations was founded on 24 October, 1945 after the Second World War with the purpose of saving the world from the fear of another world war, to reaffirm faith in human rights, dignity of human beings, equal rights of men and women and of nations. It also envisages to establish conditions under which justice and respect for treaties and international laws can be maintained. The aims, objectives and organisation of the United Nations (UN) are contained in the Charter of United Nations which was adopted at San Francisco on 25 June, 1945. India was a participant in the San Francisco Conference that drafted the Charter and was honoured with original membership of the organisation. Of course, at that time India was not an independent state.

#### **UNITED NATIONS GOALS, PRINCIPLES AND ORGANISATION**

The purposes, for which United Nations was established are: (i) to maintain international peace and security; (ii) to develop friendly relations among nations; (iii) to cooperate internationally in solving international economic,

social, cultural and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and (iv) to be a centre for harmonising the actions of nations in attaining these common ends. The basic principles of the United Nations are: (i) sovereign equality of all its members; (ii) fulfillment of obligations assumed by member states in accordance with the Charter; (iii) peaceful settlement of international disputes without endangering peace, security and justice; (iv) members to refrain from threat, or the use of force against the territorial integrity of other States; (v) members to give all possible assistance to the United Nations; (vi) to ensure that even non-members act in accordance with the principles of UN Charter; and (vii) United Nations not to interfere in domestic matters of any State.

The United Nations performs its functions through its principal organs and specialised agencies. According to the UN Charter there are six principal organs of the organisation. These are: The General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International

Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. General Assembly is the plenary organ of the United Nations. Every member country is represented in this on the basis of sovereign equality. Thus, every member country, irrespective of size or power, has one vote in the General Assembly. It meets at least once a year. It can discuss any matter within the scope of UN Charter and makes recommendations.

The primary responsibility of maintenance of international peace and security has been assigned to the Security Council. It consists of 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members. Permanent members are the USA, the UK, France, Russia and China. For any decision the consent of the 5 permanent members is essential. A negative vote by any permanent member means rejection of the proposal. This power to get any proposal rejected is known as veto power of the permanent members. Ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly for a two-years term. They don't have the veto power.

The Economic and Social Council consists of 54 members elected by the General Assembly. It is responsible for cooperation in socio-economic activities among the members. The Trusteeship Council was established to manage the affairs of territories detached from Japan and Italy after the Second World War or such territories not under the control of a country at that time. With the task of decolonisation having been almost completed the Trusteeship Council does not have much work to

do. International Court of Justice is made of 15 judges elected from member countries. The Court is called upon to find solutions to legal disputes between member countries. It interprets international law and also advises the General Assembly and the Security Council on legal matters.

The Secretariat is the permanent office of the United Nations. It is headed by the Secretary General. The Secretary General is elected by the General Assembly for a term of five years. He is also the chief executive functionary of the UN. Accordingly, he acts both as the Secretary General of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

Various specialised agencies of the United Nations are meant to work for cooperation in developmental activities. These include International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Health Organisation (WHO), Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), etc. India has remained an active participant in most of the UN agencies right from the day of its establishment.

### **INDIA'S ROLE IN THE UN**

As stated above India is one of the founder members of the UN. After independence, Indian leadership made a conscious effort to identify principles

of India's foreign policy totally with the collective goals of the UN Charter. Hence, a strong and effective United Nations was in harmony with India's national and larger interests. India, therefore, starting as a founding member of the UN has travelled a long way since independence and has earned a formidable reputation for its versatile experience and contributions in the UN activities.

You have already read that not only the visions of India's foreign policy were similar to the goals set by the UN but also the Constitution of India through Article 51 in the Chapter on Directive Principles of State Policy directs the government to promote international peace and seek peaceful settlement of international disputes. India's record in the UN, particularly in earlier decades, bears out that the positions India took on all key issues had been those which helped strengthening the United Nations as a non-partisan and effective organisation free from domination by any single power or group of powers. We can see this by looking at India's specific role in some of the major activities of the UN during all these years:

### **STRUGGLE AGAINST COLONIALISM**

In the frame work of pronounced goals of the UN charter for promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, the UN also strives for freedom from colonialism, racialism and discrimination. In 1945, when the UN Charter was signed, more than 750

million people lived under colonial rule. Now, this is almost over. India was in the forefront of the struggle against colonialism, apartheid, and racial discrimination — a struggle that has transformed the lives of millions of persons in Africa and Asia.

The provisions of the Charter on Non-Self Governing Territories were given a new thrust when the UN adopted the landmark declaration of 1960 on the Granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. The declaration solemnly proclaimed the necessity of bringing to a complete and unconditional end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. The following year, the special committee on the Implementation of the Declaration on Decolonisation was established to study, investigate and recommend action for ending colonialism. India was appointed the first Chairman of the Decolonisation Committee. As a member of the committee of 24, India has ceaselessly struggled for an end to colonialism. India also took up the decolonisation issue in Trusteeship Committee, the Special Committee on Non-Self Governing Territories. It also sponsored and supported numerous resolutions in the UN on decolonisation. India has raised this issue also at Non-Aligned and Commonwealth meetings. In the early years, it took up the cause of Indonesian freedom. It sought to protect the interest of the Arabs by taking a clear stand on the division of Palestine. India played a significant role in the freedom of the French colonies of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. India's



role in liberation of various African countries and struggle against racialism, particularly the apartheid, is well known.

By 1960s most of the colonies had achieved independence. Emergence of the new States as a result of independence increased the membership of the UN as also brought to the fore the issues of underdevelopment, poverty and unequal world order. India, in that situation, played a leading role in bringing newly independent countries together in the non-aligned movement and worked collectively for their freedom, development and stability. Till today India is representing in the UN, the interests of the developing countries in a very forceful manner. One aspect of this is the demand for reforms in the United Nations itself. We will discuss this later in this chapter.

### INDIA AND DISARMAMENT

In view of the disastrous experiences of the Second World War, particularly the use of nuclear arms, one of the major concerns of the United Nations was to control the arms race. In that India has consistently pursued the objective of global disarmament based on the principles of universality, non-discrimination and effective compliance. Given the horrific destructive capacity of nuclear weapons, India has always believed in the existence of a world free of nuclear weapons. In the United Nations, India pleaded the cause of disarmament and arms control in Eighteenth National Disarmament

Committee, special sessions of the UN General Assembly and in the conference on disarmament. We will discuss India's position and role in disarmament in some details in another chapter of this book.

### INDIA IN THE UN PEACE KEEPING OPERATIONS

As mentioned in the beginning, the United Nations was established primarily for maintenance of International Peace and Security. In regard to this, India believed that United Nations should emphasise on methods of peaceful settlement of disputes rather than on the use of force. During 1950s and 1960s a number of such disputes had emerged in various parts of the world. India, within United Nations and under United Nations, played a key role in easing several such critical situations through the process of peace-making and peace-keeping operations of the UN. Peace-keeping, though has not been used in the UN Charter, has evolved during the years as an internationally acceptable UN mechanism for resolving conflicts. In this, the UN controlled forces are sent to control and resolve conflicts between states or communities within states. So far about 40 peace-keeping operations have been organised by the UN.

Indian troops have taken part in some of the most difficult operations and have suffered casualties in the service of the UN. Professional

excellence of the Indian troops has won universal admiration. India has taken part in the UN peace-keeping operations in four continents. Its most significant contribution has been in maintaining peace and stability in Africa and Asia. It has demonstrated its unique capacity of sustaining large troops and commitments over prolonged periods. India is ranked as the second largest troop contributing country to the UN. India has also offered one brigade of troops to the UN stand-by arrangements.

India provided a paramedical unit to facilitate withdrawal of the sick and the wounded in Korea. After announcement of ceasefire in Korea in 1953, India was appointed the Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission. One brigade of the Indian Army participated in the operation in Korea, authorised by the UN General Assembly.

India also contributed to peace in the Middle East. The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was there in 1956 following cessation of hostilities between Egypt and Israel. India provided an infantry battalion which accounted for the bulk of the UN force. For over 11 years, from 1956 to 1967, more than 12,000 Indian troops took part in UNEF.

Pursuant to the Geneva Accord, an International Control Commission (ICC) for Indo-China was set up in 1954. India was the Chairman of the Commission, which implemented ceasefire agreement between Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and France. India

provided one infantry battalion and supporting staff until ICC was wound up in 1970.

The UN faced one of its worst crises when war between the government and the secessionist forces broke out in Congo in 1960. The UN operation in Congo, was unique in many ways. The operation involved heavy casualties. It was also for the first time that the UN undertook an operation in an intra-state rather an inter-state conflict. The operation upheld the national unity and territorial integrity of Congo. The performance of Indian troops was distinguished by their discipline, self-restraint and humanitarian concern.

Indian Army provided a Force Commander and observers for the Observer Mission in Yemen in 1960. India also participated in the UN operation in Cyprus. The UN set up a Military Observer Group to monitor the situation on Iran-Iraq border. Following the end of the Gulf War, the UN established an Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission. UN operation in Namibia is also considered one of the significant success stories of the United Nations. In this case again, the Force Commander was an Indian officer. Indian military observers in Namibia were responsible for the smooth withdrawal of foreign troops, elections and subsequent handing over of the authority to the government. In Mozambique the UN helped to restore peace and conduct elections. Here also, India provided a big contingent of staff officers, independent headquarters, and engineers. The operation ended successfully.

Countries which participate in UN Peace-keeping Operations have to provide not only the military expertise but also they have to be politically acceptable. The range of sensitive peace-keeping operations, India has participated in, is a testimony to India's political image in all parts of the world. India has risked the lives of its soldiers in peace-keeping efforts of the United Nations, not for any national gain, but for a noble cause of strengthening the world body. Therefore, India has not only provided armed forces in the UN peace-keeping operations but has also mastered the techniques of negotiation and diplomacy at United Nations. Indian contribution has been so enormous that a former UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold once said, the United Nations could not conceive of a single conflict situation which could be defused without the constructive cooperation from countries like India.

#### **AFRO-ASIAN SOLIDARITY**

Soon after the establishment of the United Nations, it became clear that it was to deal with diversity of issues and interests of various countries as well as groups of countries. Size of the membership was also increasing continuously. In this situation some informal group emerged within United Nations. These groups were formed on the basis of regional, ideological, functional, and other considerations. As you have already studied that even before independence Indian leaders had been stressing for solidarity between

newly emerging independent Afro-Asian Countries. It was in this context that in March 1947 India had hosted the Asian Regional Conference in New Delhi. Thereafter, it took lead in organising Bandung Conference leading to the establishment of Non-Aligned Movement.

Within United Nations, India took lead in organising an informal Afro-Asian group and has continued to represent the views of the group in various fora of the UN. In the earlier years membership of some newly independent Afro-Asian countries was blocked by one Super Power or the other. India not only supported the cause of their membership but also actively pleaded for that. This led to the admission of 16 countries in the UN. By 1960s most of the colonies had achieved independence and were under pressure from Super Powers for joining one or the other power bloc. Badly needed aid for development was being tied up with the support or opposition to one power or the other. In this situation, India along with Egypt, Yugoslavia, Indonesia, etc. provided the vision of non-alignment for newly independent Afro-Asian countries and worked as a NAM group in the UN to assert their views on issues of development and freedom.

India played an active role in the establishment of Group of 77 and G-15 and has continued to play a leadership role in the activities of these groups to protect and promote the interests of developing Afro-Asian groups. Of late African and Asian

groups have begin to meet and act separately on various issues. On certain issues they still remain together. In the context of globalisation, countries are also preferring bilateral agreements with developed industrialised countries. But it is increasingly becoming clear that various processes of globalisation, at present, are being directed by developed countries to promote their own economic and political interests. Recent WTO negotiations in July 2002 at Doha prominently manifested differences between the developed and developing countries. Similar is the case with the issue of democratisation and reforms of the United Nations. Importance of Afro-Asian unity and their collective voice in the UN, therefore, is important. India understands this and her role as a leader in that has been recognised by all.

### **REFORM PROCESS OF UNITED NATIONS**

At its inception, after the Second World War the United Nations had 51 founder member countries, mostly from Europe, North America and other independent countries. The main concern of the UN at that time was maintenance of peace, collective security and elimination of situations which lead to the devastating World Wars. Besides these, the UN was faced with the task of decolonisation and elimination of discrimination based on race, religion, region, etc. But, as it is generally observed that it was primarily an organisation of developed

independent nations. In due course of time, with the emergence of new states as a result of decolonisation, the membership of the UN kept on increasing. At present it is 190. The last country to join the UN as a member in 2002 is Switzerland. With the inclusion of the new nations underdeveloped, poor and suppressed for years, there also have come up new issues, challenges and aspirations. It is, therefore, felt that the United Nations requires reforms and improvements in its working.

There is a demand that UN should be more democratised. In the situation of the new political realities and challenges of global economic development, it should become a forum for all peoples and nations; it should be more representative of the world and its diversities and emerging aspirations. In any case, reform and improvements are an intrinsic part of any organisation which has to serve the purpose in changing environment. The United Nations is no exception.

India supports a strengthened and reformed United Nations with its various organs functioning within their mandates in accordance with the UN Charter. It supports an enhanced role for the United Nations in the development of various fields. India firmly believes that this development should be in conformity with the UN's agenda which is an indispensable prerequisite to the maintenance of international peace and security.

India actively supported the creation of the UN development programme,

establishment of UN Economic Programme and responsibility of the UN in socio-economic spheres of activities. India has also represented in the High Level Expert Committee established by the UN Secretary — General in the mid nineties on the finance of the UN. It played very constructive role in the discussions on the Agenda for Peace and Development. India is one of the Co-chairperson of the working Group on Strengthening of the United Nations.

India has been supportive of the UN Secretary General Kofi Anan's reform proposals. While some of these have been agreed and implemented, discussions continue on others. An important proposal is for holding of the Millennium Assembly. India believes that the Millennium Assembly must identify the goals for the promotion of development, cooperation, disarmament, etc; and it must also provide Developing Nations with the required resources to effectively tackle these challenges.

India shares the concerns for improving efficiency, avoidance of duplication and minimisation of bureaucracy in the functioning of the entire UN system. While efforts for these objectives need to be intensified, India believes that member States should pay their contributions unconditionally, in full and on time. Default in payments have caused an unprecedented financial crisis in the UN system. Financial reforms is the key to the future of this world body. Without sufficient resources, the activities and role of the UN would suffer.

The United Nations as a universal forum should have as its guiding principles transparency, non-discrimination, consensus and equal respect for the dignity of all individuals, societies and nations. Values like environment and development, resolution of the global debt crisis, or economic assistance to the poorest members of the world community, world trade, etc., are to become the touchstone at the New Global System.

A significant issue in UN reform agenda is with regard to UN Security Council. The composition of the Security Council has remained largely static, while the UN General Assembly membership has expanded considerably. This has undermined the representative character of the Security Council. There is a persistent demand for the expansion of the Security Council. There is opposition to it also. The opponents go on to argue that, for the United Nations to play an effective role for ensuring world peace, the Security Council, must be allowed to function smoothly. This is not possible without agreement among the veto-power holding Permanent Members. Increase in number of permanent members will make agreement difficult. The argument for expansion is that the role of the United Nations cannot be strengthened, if it is kept prisoner of the interests, compulsions or preferences of a few countries however, powerful they may be.

Indian view is that the key to strengthening the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of world

peace is necessity of restructuring the Security Council so that it embodies greater representative character and reflects changed realities.

In 1965, the membership of the Security Council was increased from 11-15. There was no change so far the number of permanent members is concerned. Since then, the size of the Council has remained frozen. Even more important, than the increase in the number of Member States of the UN, is the change in the composition of the General Assembly. The overwhelming majority of the General Assembly members today consists of Afro-Asian and Latin American developing countries. Most often, they are the objects of the Councils' actions. Now they must have role in taking those decisions which affect them. The present composition of the Security Council, particularly the permanent members category, is weighed heavily in favour of industrialised developed countries. This imbalance needs to be redressed by an expansion of the Council, by enhancing the representation of developing countries both in permanent and non-permanent categories.

India is of the firm opinion that any expansion of permanent members category must be based on transparent consultations. A resolution moved by India seeking equitable representation on, and increase in, the membership of the Security Council was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1992. By late 1993, the United States had reluctantly agreed two permanent

seats being given to Germany and Japan, the two emerging economic giants. But there are supporters also for India, Brazil and Nigeria. As yet no country has been elevated to the status of permanent members. India has always believed in a universal United Nations in terms of membership. Another course suggested in this direction is that the veto power must be done away with. India is in favour of this proposal also. Its stand on expansion of Security Council is on principles and not the motives of itself projecting as a candidate for permanent membership.

From the above discussion of India's role in the United Nations, it becomes clear that from the beginning India has been playing an active role in all spheres and activities of the United Nations. India has played a key role in easing several crisis situations from Korea to Congo. India, in many ways, has been able to build an image, larger than most of the powerful nations, by engaging in exercises of mediation and moderation. It also resisted efforts by any power bloc to direct the instrumentality of the United Nations against other blocs, threatening the very existence of the world body. As and when called, it has responded to the UN to the best of its efforts. India continues to believe that if there is hope in the world for a new dispensation that might lessen conflict and promote international justice, it would lie in the reconstructive efforts that the UN could undertake. Along with this belief India also is of the firm

opinion that in the changed situation and circumstances, the UN needs reform and these must be carried at the earliest and with consensus.

### EXERCISES

1. Describe the main objective for which the United Nations stand. How far they have been realised?
2. Examine the role of India in the United Nations.
3. What do you understand by peace-keeping operations? Describe the role played by India in these.
4. Why a demand for reforms in the Security Council is being made? What reforms are being suggested?
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Veto power;
  - (ii) Afro-Asian Solidarity;
  - (iii) Security Council;
  - (iv) Secretary General of the United Nations;
  - (v) International Court of Justice.

**CHAPTER 20****India and South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**

**T**HE South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is an organisation of seven countries of South Asia — Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. SAARC was established to promote the welfare of the people of the region through active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields. It was established on 8 December, 1985. From relatively modest beginnings, SAARC members have been gradually expanding their cooperation to cover new areas of common interest. India, as the largest and most populous country in the region, has been playing an important role in SAARC activities and tries to provide it with necessary direction for cooperation and development. The predominant position enjoyed by India has been at times viewed by some countries in the region, with suspicion. India, however, values SAARC cooperation as an enlarged dimension of her bilateral relationship with the neighbouring countries. To understand India's relations with and

its role in SAARC it is essential to know about the establishment, structure and objectives of the organisation.

**ESTABLISHMENT OF SAARC**

After the end of the Second World War there started a process of formation of schemes of regional cooperation, both for economic cooperation and security purposes. The movement began in Europe and subsequently spread the world over. The growth of regional economic groupings was mainly to overcome the obstacles of international trade and for allocation of resources. A growing awareness of interdependence among the independent states, realisation by nations that their individual interests are combined with those of other nations in similar conditions, etc., have stimulated the process of regional cooperation.

In the developing world, the process of the formation of regional cooperation groupings started very late. It started at the end of 1950s with the schemes of cooperation in Central and Latin America. As far as Asia is concerned it started with the emergence of the



Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1976 consisting of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Pakistan, Turkey and Iran had also established the 'Regional Cooperation for Development'. An agreement known as the Bangkok Agreement was signed in July 1975 by Bangladesh, India, Laos, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand for preferential trading arrangement.

In South Asia, though the countries shared many common values rooted in their social, ethnic, cultural and historical traditions, and had common tasks for rapid development, to begin with mutual trust was absent. It was for various reasons. These included divergent security interests of the countries, diverse political cultures, Indo-Pak conflict, and India's peculiar situation in the region. It was during the last years of 1970s that the then president of Bangladesh late Ziaur Rehman floated the idea that seven States of South Asia work out a cooperative arrangement to ameliorate the stark economic problems of the region. To initiate the process a document called 'Bangladesh working paper on South Asian Regional Cooperation' spelled out eleven broad areas for cooperation. These were Tele communication, Meteorology, Transport, Shipping, Tourism, Agricultural Research, Joint Ventures, Market Promotion, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, Educational and Cultural cooperation. The paper

expressed the hope that this cooperation would promote peace and stability in the region through adherence to the principles of the United Nations and Non-Alignment; there would be a determination to uphold respect for the principles of sovereignty, non interference in each others internal affairs, non-use of force and peaceful settlement of disputes.

After meetings and studies at different levels among seven countries of the region, in March 1983 it was decided to hold a foreign ministers' meeting in Delhi. In the Delhi meeting the foreign ministers of all the seven countries signed the South Asian Regional Cooperation agreement. The declaration stated that regional cooperation in South Asia is beneficial, desirable and necessary and it will help, promote the welfare and improve the quality of life of the people of the region. Finally, the first summit meeting of the Heads of the State or Government was held in Dacca; and the SAARC Charter was adopted on 8 December, 1985; and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was born. India played a vital role in the development of this organisation.

In February 1987, the SAARC Secretariat came into being with a Secretary General and four directors. SAARC has a four-tier structure. At the lowest level are the Technical committees of experts and officials formulating programmes of action and organising seminars and workshops. Next is the standing committee of Foreign Secretaries to review and

coordinate the recommendations of the Technical Committees, which meets at least once a year. Above this is the Foreign Ministers conference, also held at least once a year to grant political approval to the recommendations of the Standing Committee. At the apex is the Summit Meeting held annually to give political significance to SAARC. The SAARC secretariat has been established at Kathmandu in Nepal.

### THE SAARC OBJECTIVES

The Charter of the SAARC mentions the following objectives of the organisation:

- (i) to promote the welfare of the people in South Asian countries, and to improve their quality of life;
- (ii) to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development;
- (iii) to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance;
- (iv) to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of each others problems;
- (v) to promote mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific field;
- (vi) to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries;
- (vii) to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international fora;
- (viii) to cooperate with other regional and international organisations.

According to the SAARC Charter, the organisation's working principles are:

- (i) Regional cooperation through SAARC shall be based on mutual

respect for the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit;

- (ii) Such cooperation shall not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, but shall complement them;
- (iii) Such cooperation shall not be inconsistent with bilateral and multi lateral obligations.

From the declared objectives and principles of SAARC it is clear that the emphasis is on regional cooperation without interference either in bilateral or multilateral obligations, and without disregarding sovereign equality, or challenging territorial integrity and independence of its members. It needs to be kept in mind that SAARC is an organisation only for cooperation in development and welfare. It is not a strategic, defense or military alliance. The organisers of SAARC were also clear about keeping political issues out of SAARC. Therefore it was incorporated in the Charter that bilateral issues or disputes shall not be raised or discussed in the SAARC fora. In spite of this provision, occasionally, there have been attempts to bring issues of conflict or political differences between the two or more countries at SAARC meetings. Those who are in favour of getting such issues within the preview of SAARC say that it would evolve better regional trust and understanding. India, however, is firmly opposed to bringing bilateral and contentious political issues at SAARC meetings. However, the Summit

meetings provide occasions for informal political consultations. Such informal consultations are, by their very nature, unstructured. The Summit also provides opportunity for informal bilateral consultations in the bilateral meetings between SAARC leaders on the sidelines. The differences on expanding the organisation's agenda on political issues continues. In addition to conflicting security perceptions, such differences are causing a serious problem in the working of organisation. However, during more than two decades of its existence, SAARC has given opportunities to regional leaders to meet at regular intervals and has brought in some cooperation in developmental activities. Let us have a look on some aspects of this.

### SAARC IN ACTION AND INDIA

As already mentioned, SAARC was established primarily for cooperation in agriculture, rural development, science and technology, culture, health, population control, narcotics, and terrorism. From relatively modest beginnings, SAARC members have been gradually expanding their cooperation to cover new areas of common interest.

In the beginning, SAARC focused primarily on technical cooperation with the aim of creating common ground. Eleven Technical Committees have been set up under SAARC, covering Agriculture, Communications, Education, Culture and Sports, Environment and Meteorology, Health

and Population activities, Prevention of Drug Trafficking and Abuse, Rural Development, Science and Technology, Tourism, Transport and Women's Development. These Technical Committees draw up an Annual Calendar of activities for exchange of information, formulation of programmes and preparation of projects in their respective fields. These do not comprise the exclusive areas of cooperation, and SAARC activities and meetings take place on specific subjects of common interest, as and when required. Four SAARC Regional Centres have also been set up on Agricultural Information; (DHAKA), Tuberculosis Prevention, (Kathmandu), Meteorological Research, (Dhaka) and on Documentation of SAARC interests. India hosts the SAARC Documentation Centre. A fifth Regional Centre on Human Resource Development is proposed to be established in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Beginning in about 1990, the second stage of cooperation within SAARC was on the Social Agenda. Major initiatives have been taken on social issues such as eradication of poverty, promotion of literacy, and development of women and children. It was decided that the decade 2001-2010 would be designated as the "SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child". SAARC will also pay particular attention to the evil of trafficking in women and children. A Regional Convention on Prevention of Trafficking in women and children has been negotiated and signed at the Eleventh

Summit in Kathmandu. This Convention provides for extradition or prosecution under national laws of persons involved in trafficking. It also provides for assistance in investigations and for orderly repatriation of victims of trafficking.

Particular focus has been placed on the persistent problem of poverty in the region and the Heads of State or Government of SAARC countries have committed themselves to the eradication of poverty in South Asia, preferably by the year 2002 AD.

An agreement on establishing a SAARC Food Security Reserve was signed in 1987 and came into effect on the 12 August, 1988. This provided for a reserve of food grains for meeting emergencies in member countries. The reserve is to be maintained at a minimum level of 2,00,000 tonnes with India's share being 1,53,000 tonnes.

SAARC has also taken up the issue of environment. Four Ministerial Meetings on Environment have been held so far. The Third Meeting of SAARC Environment Ministers was held in Maldives in October 1997 to consider the recommendations of the two SAARC Studies on 'Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and Green House Effect and its Impact on the Region'. The meeting adopted an Environment Action Plan focussing on environmental impact, evaluation, exchange of information and development of human resources through training. A beginning has also been made to develop cooperation in the important field of information and media. The first

SAARC information Ministers Meeting which was held in Dhaka in April 1998 adopted an Action Plan for strengthening cooperation through, inter alia, greater interaction amongst media personnel, cooperation amongst news agencies, free flow of newspapers, journals and books within the region and reduction of hostile propaganda.

SAARC has also put in place institutional arrangements for cooperation in combating terrorism and trafficking in narcotics. Of course problems remain with regard to implementation of these conventions. The SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism was signed in November 1987 and came into effect on 22 August, 1988 after ratification by all Member States. Under its provisions, Member States are committed to extradite or prosecute alleged terrorists, thus preventing them from enjoying safe havens. Regional Cooperation is also envisaged in preventive action to combat terrorism. However, Pakistan and Bangladesh are still to enact the necessary domestic legislation to give effect to the Convention. 'The SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk' has been established in Colombo to collect, analyse and disseminate information on terrorist incidents. The SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was signed in November 1990 and came into force on 15 September, 1993 following ratification by all Member States. Most important issue on SAARC agenda is of cooperation in trade and core areas

of economy. In this context, operationalisation of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) has evoked much interest. Movement now is towards achievement of South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). We will discuss this in detail a bit later. Let us first have a look at India's role in SAARC.

In all the activities of SAARC India's participation and contribution has been significant. Certain aspects of India's relations within the subcontinent are conducted through SAARC. India developed many international treaties along with SAARC, and was the source of many of those ideas, some of which are: Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber, Wetlands, Desertification, etc. These treaties were implemented by other nations as well on the guidelines of India. The Indian contribution to SAARC was significant when its representatives were chosen as the chairpersons for two big events in SAARC, one of which was Agricultural programme (including forestry), and the other one being the Science and Technology (Energy Development) Programme. New Delhi hosted meetings for various programmes like Environment (1992 and 1997) and commerce (1996). The second SAARC summit was also held in Bangalore on 17 November, 1986. Some important outcomes of this summit were: it was

felt that in keeping with the view that the government should have people-to-people contact: some concrete steps should be taken to facilitate tourism in the region, including facilities for limited convertibility of national currencies for tourists from SAARC countries; A South Asian Broadcasting Programme covering both radio and television should be launched; The Heads of State or Government emphasised that in view of the importance they attach to students, scholars and researchers in their countries should have ready access to reliable and up-to-date information on technical, scientific and developmental matters. This need could be met by a SAARC Documentation Centre as the repository of such information; it was also felt that it is essential to promote increasing cross-fertilisation of ideas through greater interaction among students, scholars and academics in the SAARC countries. The Heads of the State or Government, therefore, directed that a concerted programme of exchange of scholars be formulated and action taken for an early institution of SAARC scholarships, SAARC Fellowships and SAARC Chairs; it was stressed that the idealism of youth must be harnessed for regional cooperative programme. It was also decided that an 'Organised Volunteers Programme' be established in SAARC under which volunteers from one country would be able to work in other countries in the fields of agriculture and forestry extension work.

The eighth summit of SAARC was held in New Delhi on 4 May, 1995. The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction on the achievements of the First Decade of SAARC and resolved to celebrate its completion of the First Decade both in the individual Member States and collectively. They endorsed the proposal of the Council of Ministers to convene a Commemorative Session of the Council on the theme "SAARC - Vision for the Second Decade" to identify the areas on which SAARC should focus in its Second Decade. They reaffirmed their commitment to the eradication of poverty in South Asia, preferably by the year 2002 AD through an agenda of action. They thus declared 1995 as the "SAARC Year of Poverty Eradication". The SAARC meet noted that subsequent to the signing of the Framework agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) during their Seventh Summit in Dhaka in April 1993, the first round of trade negotiations to exchange trade concessions among Member States has been completed. They directed that all necessary steps should be taken to facilitate ratification by all Member States and operationalise SAPTA by the end of 1995 as mandated. The eighth summit was the most significant as all the major topics were discussed in it, including the rights of women, children, disabled, etc. The literacy issue was taken up and many developments were introduced in it.

The SAARC Development Centre found its way in New Delhi in May 1994.

Thus, New Delhi was a major help to SAARC and without India, the community would have not been as profited as it had been.

### **SAARC ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND INDIA (SAPTA AND SAFTA)**

Cooperation in core areas of economic cooperation among SAARC countries is fairly recent. South Asia as a region is economically quite underdeveloped. Nearly 1/5th of the world's population lives in South Asia which is only 2.7 per cent of the world's land surface. All the economies of the region are predominantly rural and agricultural. The countries of this region are among the poorest in the world. The share of South Asia in world trade continues to be insignificant. India from the beginning has been insisting on free trade among SAARC countries. In this direction, the first step was taken in 1995 with the agreement on creation of South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA).

#### **SAPTA**

Though necessity for cooperation in trade among neighbouring countries have always been felt, the decade of 1990s gave it added importance. By this time with the emergence of new regional trading blocks across the world, the South Asian countries were faced with a tight position on the export front. Also, trading within SAARC region had become necessary as aid flow to this region was slowing down. With this background, initiative for preferential

trade, i.e. for SAPTA was taken at the SAARC summit at Colombo in December 1991. Later, on April 11 1993 a document to set up South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement was signed by the ministers of member countries during Summit Meetings at Dhaka. Finally, SAPTA was operationalised in December 1995, following ratification of the SAPTA agreement by all SAARC countries. Each country has offered items for trade under concessional tariffs.

A major boost to trade within the region was provided by the bold initiative taken by India to unilaterally lift all Quantitative Restrictions preferentially from SAARC countries from 1 August, 1998. Over 2000 products from the Restricted List have been placed on Open General List for SAARC countries, substantially enhancing their access to the Indian market. The Third Round of Trade Negotiations concluded on 23 November, 1998. A total of 34,556 tariff lines were covered under concessional tariffs and India offered more than half the concessions. India has also offered to conclude bilateral free trade agreements with those countries who are willing to move faster.

Sri Lanka has taken up the offer and negotiations are under way for a bilateral India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement. India already has Free Trade Agreements with Nepal and Bhutan. Infact the ultimate aim of SAPTA is to bring a South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

### SAFTA

A Free Trade Area means that trading among the countries of the area is free from custom restrictions and duties. It means there is free flow of goods. The SAPTA was to achieve this goal. It was expected that discussions would soon begin to replace SAPTA by South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) by the beginning of twenty-first century. The leaders at the Tenth SAARC Summit at Colombo decided to set up a committee of Experts to conclude a Treaty by 2001 on SAFTA. However, so far it has not come. This treaty has to spell out legally binding schedules for freeing trade and provide a predictable and transparent blueprint for achieving a free trade area in South Asia. It will also include special facilitative measures for the Least Developed countries. The Eleventh Summit meeting in Kathmandu in January 2002 laid stress on taking necessary measures towards attainment of this agreement. Differences between countries however remain to be sorted-out.

Apart from SAPTA and SAFTA, economic cooperation is being institutionalised by other means also. One of these is the meeting of Commerce Ministers of SAARC countries. The First SAARC Commerce Ministers Conference was held in New Delhi in January 1996, when the SAARC Trade Fair was also hosted by India. This has now become an annual feature along with a conference organised by the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Regional arrangements are also being considered for intra-regional investment promotion and protection, and avoidance of double taxation. A SAARC visa Exemption Scheme was initiated in 1988 with a view to promote closer and frequent contacts among the people of the SAARC region which became operational from 1 March, 1992. The scheme has been progressively expanded to cover twenty-one categories of persons eligible for visa free travel in the SAARC region. Thus, the organisation, with some built-in problems and diversity of interest among member countries, is moving ahead to achieve its aims.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that while regional cooperation through regional organisation has been coming up in a significant way in various parts of the world, in South Asia it began quite late. It was only in 1985 that SAARC was established as an organisation for cooperation in the region. The goals of SAARC have been kept development oriented. Conscious efforts have been made to entertain modest aims, excluding more or less contentions and bilateral issues. SAARC also suffers from built-in contradictions, conflict among States, diversity of problems, differences in security perceptions and absence of required political thrust.

India's position in SAARC is unique. It accounts for 72 per cent of the region's area, 77 per cent of its

population, and 78 per cent of its Gross National Product. Its armed forces account for about 50 per cent of the region's total armed strength. India shares borders with all other six countries. Thus being the largest nation, economy wise, area wise and population wise, India has the potential to contribute the most and provide leadership to the organisation. But the nature of conflicts in the region, particularly India-Pakistan, also creates apprehensions among smaller countries about domination by India. In view of this, India has been playing a very cautious role. It has contributed significantly in all the activities of SAARC but has not tried to behave as a leader of the organisation. Needless to say conflictual relationship between India and Pakistan is one of the major bottleneck in the development of SAARC. India has taken several steps and made suggestions to keep the developmental issues separate from political. Changes in the international political and economic situation demand a greater cooperation among the countries of the region. There are certain positive developments which raise hope for a better cooperation among SAARC countries. Most important of these is a realisation among the people of all the countries that peace, harmonious coexistence and cooperation are a must to survive with dignity in the present day competitive and fast moving world.



**EXERCISES**

1. Describe the background and efforts made for the establishment of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
2. What are objectives and principles of SAARC?
3. What important activities SAARC has taken up during its existence? What has been India's role in them?
4. What is the importance of cooperation in core economic areas? What lead India has taken towards such a cooperation in the region.
5. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Second SAARC Summit (1986);
  - (ii) Eighth SAARC Summit (1995);
  - (iii) SAPTA;
  - (iv) SAFTA.

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## CHAPTER 21

### India's Role in Non-Aligned Movement

IN one of the previous chapters you have read that one of the basic tenets of our foreign policy has been non-alignment. As an element of foreign policy non-alignment means independent of blocs, peaceful coexistence, global peace, disarmament, struggle against all manifestations of injustices like imperialism, colonialism, apartheid etc. After India's adoption of non-alignment as the core element of its foreign policy, it also became a model for other newly independent countries. Most of them adopted it as an instrument for independence in international relations. Soon non-alignment, in addition to a significant perspective of foreign policy, became a movement of solidarity and cooperation among the newly liberated countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was thus founded as a solidarity movement for giving voice to Third World Countries. Its essential purpose was to maintain equidistance in cold War rivalries and advocate principles for the promotion of world peace and cooperation. In due course of time, NAM became the largest membership

movement as also the largest peace movement in the history of humanity. In both, in its founding and later consolidation and development, India played a significant role. In fact, in many ways India has been considered as a non-formal leader of the NAM.

#### **BIRTH OF NAM**

The Non-Alignment as a movement was founded formally in 1961 at Belgrade in Yugoslavia, it called the first Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Nations. This Conference was sponsored by Egypt, India and Yugoslavia, seeking to enhance the international influence of the participants vis-à-vis the great powers and the existing military alliances. In this Conference 25 countries participated as member-states. The criteria for invitation to this Conference was composed of the following five points:

- (i) The country should have adopted an independent policy based on coexistence of states with different political and social systems and should be showing a trend in favour of Non-Aligned policy.

- (ii) The country concerned should be consistently supporting the movements for national independence.
- (iii) The country should not be a member of any multilateral military alliance concluded in the context of Great Power conflicts.
- (iv) If a country has a bilateral military agreement with a great power or is a member of a regional defence pact, the agreement or pact should not be one deliberately concluded in the context of great power conflicts.
- (v) If it has conceded military bases to a foreign power, the concession should not have been made in the context of great power conflicts.

### ORIGIN OF NAM AND INDIA'S ROLE

Though as a formal organised movement NAM started with the holding of the Belgrade Summit of Non-Aligned countries in 1961, its seeds were sown by India, particularly by Jawaharlal Nehru even before attainment of India's independence. It was in the broadcast made by Jawaharlal Nehru on 7 September, 1946, a week after the Indian Provisional government was formed. Nehru said:

"We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past two world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale. We seek no domination over others and we claim no privileged position over other people. But we do claim equal and honourable

treatment for our people wherever they may go, and we cannot accept any discrimination against them. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the denial of freedom anywhere must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war".

It is quite clear that Nehru was articulating the ideas of decolonisation, national independence, non-bloc politics, peaceful coexistence, eradication of racialism and the need for the developing countries to play an active role in international affairs. It was at the initiative of Jawaharlal Nehru that India became the venue of the first forum of the liberated nations, when representatives of 28 countries met in New Delhi in March 1947 (before formal declaration of independence of India) at the Conference on Regional Cooperation among the Asian Countries known as Asian Relations Conference. At this Conference Bandaranaike from Sri Lanka, both by the force of his conviction and under the influence of Nehru's ideas, declared: "I am convinced, and we all hope that this conference will lay the foundation of a broader cooperation between the free and equal States in Asia, lighting not only for their nation's future, but also in the name of humanity, peace and progress".

The Asian Relation Conference thus can truly be called the foundation stone for NAM. Nehru who had organised this Conference observed: "For too long we of Asia have been petitioners in the Western Courts and Chancelleries. That story now must belong to the past. We propose to stand on our own feet and

to cooperate with all others who are prepared to cooperate with us. We do not intend to be the play-thing of others."

### **BANDUNG CONFERENCE**

Along with Nehru some other leaders in the world were also projecting these perceptions of newly independent countries. President Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, President Gamel Abdul Nasser of Egypt (then called United Arab Republic), President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and President Ahmed Soekarno of Indonesia were prominent among these. Together with Nehru they evolved a coherent outlook and position on Non-Alignment. These leaders were largely instrumental in channelling the emerging changes towards the liberation of the people of the world and towards evolving a new vision of the world order. They rejected outright the notion that East-West relations alone constituted international affairs and asserted their own role in shaping these affairs.

On the initiative of these leaders the conference of Afro-Asian Nations was held in Bandung (Indonesia) in April 1955. The participants from 23 Asian and 6 African States represented mainly the people of young States which had been setup as a result of the new balance of forces of democracy and freedom on the one hand and of colonialism and oppression on the others. The states participating in the conference did not belong to any military or political blocs, and they had

taken clear and definite positions on the problems facing mankind. Despite their different perspectives, the countries represented at the Bandung Conference arrived at a common position in the larger interest of world peace.

One of the most important achievements of the Bandung Conference was the Declaration on World Peace and Cooperation. This declaration embodied the principles of *Panchsheel* which were first stated in the Preamble to the agreement between India and China in April 1954. These were five principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-belligerence, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual advantage, and peaceful coexistence.

The final communiqué of the Conference did not limit itself to the enumeration of the region's problems but also called for concrete steps to be taken for disarmament and safeguarding of peace in the world. The Conference served as the major support of the bridge linking the Afro-Asian, European and Latin American people and the role they intended to play in the New World Order. Nehru asserted at Bandung "There is no doubt that our influence will grow. It is growing in fact, and we do exercise some influence even today. But whether our influence is great or small, it must be exercised in the right direction."

The Bandung Conference was followed by a tripartite meeting in July 1956, between Nehru, Tito and Nasser at Brioni. In this meeting affirming the

Bandung principles, the three leaders, in a joint statement rejected the division of the world into rival power blocs as one which had the effect of perpetuating confrontation. They also asserted their conviction that the policy of Non-Alignment pursued by them had to a certain extent, contributed to the lessening of international tension and to the development of equal relations between nations. They reiterated their resolve to carry forward that policy and to evolve a collective framework for that purpose. The differences in their social and political systems hardly constituted an obstacle. The Brioni meeting was a landmark in the ongoing process of consultations which eventually led to the convening of the first Non-Aligned Summit at Belgrade in 1961, heralding the formal launching of the Non-Aligned Movement.

### INDIA'S PIVOTAL ROLE IN NAM

It is quite clear that in the founding of NAM India not only played an active role as one of the founders but in many ways it was the initiator of the Movement. As we have already seen non-alignment as a concept of global politics, as a foreign policy premise and as a perspective of maximising national interest of the newly liberated countries was a vision Indian national leadership had developed during its freedom struggle itself. The vision became the core element of India's foreign policy after independence and of other countries which attained independence from that period onwards. Soon, it became a movement of solidarity, cooperation and understanding among the newly independent countries: these countries are known as the Third World or Developing Countries. The non-aligned movement, thus, emerged from India's initiative for formulating an independent foreign policy. This independent foreign policy was based on a solid moral and sound political foundation. It was a non-partisan foreign policy. India's moral approach to international politics was further projected through the *Panchsheel* in 1954. Within three years, eighteen countries had endorsed the *Panchsheel* principles in joint communiqués with Indian leaders. These principles were practically incorporated in the Ten Principles declared at Bandung. In addition during its initial years of independence itself, India played a very active role in peaceful resolution of some complex international issues and persistently lobbied in United Nations for disarmament. All these made the idea of non-alignment, the initial basic tenet in India's foreign policy, a mechanism providing link between the coordinated actions of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial forces, as an assertion of independence in foreign affairs, as a process of weakening of power blocs, as a symbol of defiance against big power domination and as a diplomatic innovation in the phase of politics of confrontation and cold war. Over forty years of its existence the NAM has been developing a comprehensive political philosophy, a programme of action, and a new and positive system

of international economic and political relations. From its founding India has remained one of the most active members of NAM and has played a pivotal role in its various activities and developments.

### **NAM IN ACTION AND INDIA**

We have discussed above that the first Summit Conference of non-aligned countries in 1961 at Belgrade was the culmination of the process of development from an impulse to an idea, from an idea to a policy and from a policy to a movement. The summit was convened for the purpose of exchanging views on international problems with a view to contributing more effectively to world peace and security and peaceful cooperation among peoples. It was the first Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement under the stewardship of the leaders of the Asian, African and Latin American countries along with the lone European country, Yugoslavia. The agenda of the Summit listed exchange of views on the international situation, establishment and strengthening of International Peace and Security, Problems of Unequal Economic Development, Promotion of International Economic and Technical Cooperation which exhibited the deep understanding of the international problems by the leaders of the NAM. The leaders were very specific in their agenda with regard to the issue of strengthening international peace and security which was presented as under:

“Respect of the right of peoples and nations to self-determination, struggle against imperialism, liquidation of colonialism and neo-colonialism, respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of states; racial discrimination and apartheid; general and complete disarmament; banning of nuclear tests; problem of foreign military bases; peaceful coexistence among states with different political and social systems and role and structure of the United Nations and the implementation of its resolutions”.

India both in its foreign policy declarations and by its actions made it clear that Non-Alignment was to be different from the passive concepts of neutrality as well as isolationism. Non-Alignment was not intended to seek isolation from crucial world issues. On the contrary, it was a policy designed to secure an active engagement and involvement with international affairs. It signified independence of judgment on world issues. It called for freedom of opinion and of action. It was indeed throwing one's weight on the side of peace, equity, justice and human dignity. To quote Pandit Nehru:

“When there is a crisis involving the possibility of war, the very fact that we are unaligned should stir us to feel that more than ever it is up to us to do whatever we can to prevent such a calamity coming upon us”.

The two essential though inter-related constituents of the Non-Alignment's concept, as it evolved, are the primacy of national independence and active, peaceful coexistence.

The rejection of military alliances, refusal to be yes-men of this or that power and opposition to all forms of colonial domination and racial discrimination — all flowed from this irrepressible urge for independence. The second component of the Non-Alignment related to the struggle for a new structure on which to base relations amongst people and countries — relations characterised by equality, peace and cooperation rather than perilous confrontation.

The attainment of political independence was not the end of the story but the beginning of a new chapter in which the focus was on economic self-reliance. In this field too, India has played a pioneering role. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru lost no time in setting up a Planning Commission to draw up the blueprint of India's Five-Year Plans which allotted enough weightage to Public Sector. Many of the other newly independent countries established contacts with India in order to benefit from Indian experience. The World Bank, despite its strong bias for the private sector, began to advise developing countries which sought its assistance to have some kind of developmental plan, on the policy-planning pattern of India. In consequence, contacts between India and other developing countries were further strengthened.

After the UNCTAD came into existence, the developing countries organised themselves into a group known as the 'Group of 77'; at that time it was the number of the developing

countries in the UN. This name has continued even though the number of such countries has increased to over hundred. The 'Group of 77' certainly succeeded in getting a number of constructive ideas accepted in the UNCTAD.

In 1990, at Belgrade, the NAM decided to create G-15 as an interface with G-7 (the group of seven most industrialised States) realising correctly that economic issues had taken primacy over political-strategic ones. NAM rightly felt that its new role would be in creating South-South co operation, which would mean, by and large collaboration between and among the non-aligned nations and in defending the interests of these nations from the fast expanding economic and technological power of the North. India had been a member both of G-77 and G-15 and is playing a leadership role.

India's contribution as organiser of the seventh conference of NAM in 1983 at New Delhi was particularly appreciated in the use of its political prestige and strength to draw participants' attention to such issues as the struggle for averting nuclear war, putting an end to the arms race, and the need for disarmament, anti-colonialism and anti-racism. After this conference India, in its capacity of the chairperson of NAM, sponsored a proposal in the United Nations to freeze nuclear weapons and to conclude an international convention on banning the use of nuclear weapons. India also organised a Six Nations Disarmament Group to impress upon the nuclear

powers to stop the arms race. India has also played a very active role in defending the freedom of countries for use of nuclear energy. It has vociferously opposed the discriminatory attitude of nuclear powers, particularly on CTBT and NPT. India's refusal to allow the deeply faulted CTBT to go to the United Nations alerted USA and its allies; they felt that they can not take the leading powers of the South for granted. It imparted a sense of strength to NAM.

Right from the beginning a very important task before NAM had been to fight against racism. In this, India has played an outstanding role, particularly against apartheid. At the Harare NAM Summit in September 1986, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi proposed and successfully persuaded the member States to create Action for Resisting Invasion, Colonialism and Apartheid Fund (popularly known as Africa Fund). The main objectives of the Fund were to strengthen the economic and financial capabilities of the Frontline States to fight the apartheid regime of South Africa. The Harare Summit created the Fund and India was appointed the Chairman of the nine member AFRICA Fund Committee whose responsibility was to raise the fund. India herself contributed Rs 500 million by January 1987. It was primarily the efforts of NAM with very effective role of India in it that finally in 1994 apartheid ended in South Africa.

Thus on account of its steadfast support to NAM, India has all along

been a pillar of strength of its members. Today after the end of cold war and beginning of the process of globalisation when doubts on the very existence of NAM are being raised there is need that NAM is strengthened. India's stakes in this task are of considerable importance. India as a developed among the developing non-aligned countries has to concentrate on retaining the independent character of the Movement working for evolution of a just international order.

### **NAM IN POST-COLD WAR PERIOD AND ITS RELEVANCE**

From the period of the formation of its vision at Bandung in 1955 and first Summit at Belgrade in 1961, NAM has traveled a long and eventful path. Starting with a membership of 25 countries, its membership has grown to 114. There have also been shifts in its perspective and preoccupations necessitated by the change in international scenario. However, the changed perceptions that have come in the 1990s have placed NAM almost at Cross Roads.

With the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union and break up of Socialist bloc, there have emerged new global situations and issues. The process of globalisation has also begun. Humanitarian aid to the developing world has greatly been reduced. Greater conditions are being imposed on the aid to the South, such as allowing access to transnational companies. Most of the developed and



developing nations have adopted an open market policy. Again, these countries have formed an agenda of regional economic cooperation. The European Union has been established as a significant regional cooperation group. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has also made remarkable achievement in forming a formidable economic bloc. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has emerged as a strong economic bloc in North America and the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has also been progressing well in creating a consensus for economic cooperation in Asia and Pacific region. Most countries, even NAM members, have started taking decisions pragmatically and individually. In the context of these far-reaching developments there has started a debate about the relevance of NAM. It is being argued by some that in the changed situation, non-alignment and most of the policies associated with it have become irrelevant.

There is however, a significant opinion in favour of continuous relevance and role of NAM in the post-cold war world. India, as one of the active founder members of NAM is not only in the forefront of proclaiming non-alignment as the sheet anchor of its foreign policy but also advocating the continuous role of NAM with some changes in its perspectives and priorities. From the beginning of 1990s the Movement has realised the need to shift from an approach of confrontation to one of dialogue and cooperation

with industrial countries. Also circumstances, over which many member countries of NAM had no control, compelled them to develop a variety of relations with super powers and their allies. But these States have not deviated from the basic criterion of non-alignment, namely pursuit of policies that strengthened their existence as independent sovereign States, belief in the coexistence of States with different political and social systems and support for national liberation movements and movements against racism.

The end of cold war in many ways has vindicated the principles and policies of NAM. At the same time it is a fact that though the cold war is over, peace in the world is still threatened by forces of extremism, discord, aggressive nationalism, terrorism and piling up of large stocks of weapons of mass destruction. The dynamics of globalisation has thrown a whole range of new problems for the non-aligned developing countries. While the developing world is largely supportive of mutually beneficial global integration, it has major concerns which are not being addressed in the global agenda. These are: equitable balance between rights and obligations of investors particularly multinationals; extra-territorial application of domestic laws; intrusive and calculated invoking of human rights agenda; labour standards and intellectual property rights; and conditionalities of environmental protection and preservation and opening up of

national economies tied to grant of aid and trade concessions. Developing countries are increasingly exposed to pressures to conform to an agenda which is being defined and driven by others.

The need for the articulation of the viewpoint of the disadvantaged is as strong as ever. NAM provides platform to these countries for consulting and developing common positions and coordinated approaches to safeguard their rights and promote their interests. The imperatives that propelled founding fathers of NAM to get together to speak with one voice and collectively declare their determination, to assert their right to participate fully in the process of taking decisions on world issues in the light of their own national interests are still with us today.

Common to the most, if not all, NAM countries are problems of poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, illiteracy, rising foreign debts, deteriorating terms of trade, inflation and unemployment. Therefore, the most important task that confronts the NAM today is to find ways and means to overcome these problems.

The scenario, once again, places India in a special situation. Though its problems are stupendous as a poor country, there is a measure of buoyancy in its economy. Its food position is satisfactory and its foreign exchange reserves are comfortable. Its advancements in the field of science, technology and industry permit it to render economic and technological assistance to many countries of Asia and Africa. Its economy is now much

less vulnerable to external shocks or internal adverse factors. Thus, to a great extent India remains in a position to promote the ideal of collective self-reliance among non-aligned countries.

In 1977, in the 12th meeting of NAM Foreign Minister, the former Prime Minister of India, I.K. Gujral, highlighted the points responsible for the re-emergence of new imperialism of the West. He said : The G-7 are writing the global agenda, new labour laws and social clauses; selecting global investment regimes; preaching human rights, environmental conditionalities, protectionism, etc. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council are unwilling to give up the veto. Democratisation of the UN Security Council is blocked. Too many NAM countries are living on Western dole. In several countries treasured concepts of civilised behaviour have been abandoned. NAM, therefore, must deplore the fundamentalism of globalisation and the market and must not remain silent on fundamentalism being preached and practised at several places.

The use of World Trade Organisation (WTO) for forcing developing countries to reduce tariff walls and observe labour standards, is another case in point. This indicates another area of dominance by the developed countries in a period of recession in their economies. Unless the developing countries, who are also the members of NAM, put up united resistance against these onslaughts by the major allied powers, the world prospects of

peace, security, equality of status for nation-states and a voice for the underdeveloped world to procure foreign aid for development will remain a distant dream. At the Doha meeting of WTO in June 2002, India urged strongly on behalf of the developing countries.

Thus, even after the end of cold war and demise of power blocs, non-alignment both as an idea and a movement continues to be relevant. The efforts of NAM have to be geared towards achieving security, peaceful coexistence, international cooperation in political, economic and cultural fields and in opposing all types of domination, neo-colonialism, hegemonism, fundamentalism, etc. India has a stake in these and is likely to play the leadership role that it has played so far.

Non-alignment has first developed as a conceptual factor in its foreign policy by India as a means to its enlightened national interest in the context of bipolarisation of world politics and situation of cold war. Later on, non-alignment became a movement of nations which had suffered the same fate of colonialism and imperialism. Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, with the cooperation of President Tito of Yugoslavia, President Nasser of Egypt directed this movement towards peace in the world and also aimed at securing political and economic objectives of development. At the political level, the movement aimed at keeping intact the independence of the newly decolonised countries and

support the struggle for decolonisation of rest of the colonies. It sought to forge unity among anti-colonial, anti-racial forces and liberation movements and help them in achieving their objectives world wide.

The economic objective of the Non-Aligned Movement is aimed at keeping the markets of developing countries free from the domination of free market forces represented by Western capitalism and Multinational Corporations.

India remained in the forefront of the movement performing a leadership role as a founder member. In all the activities of NAM — struggle against colonialism and racism, and infavour of disarmament and cooperation for development, and dialogue with developed world, etc. — India not only provided policy inputs but has played an active role.

With the end of cold war and bloc-systems NAM has in no way become irrelevant. If the essence of non-alignment is the assertion of independence, then non-alignment does not become irrelevant at any time. Infact developing nations have no alternative but to strive for a just world order through the forum of NAM.

While the relevance of NAM in the present day world is not in doubt, it would serve its purpose if it focuses on the current problems that the developing countries are facing. In formulating its agenda for the future, NAM would have to incorporate in it both its traditional and emerging goals and objectives and take cognisance of

emerging issues and priorities on the international agenda. The NAM agenda has to be topical and flexible thereby

moving in steps with the realities of time. To usher in peace, security and prosperity NAM has to act in unison.

### EXERCISES

1. What role did India play in the origin of Non-Aligned Movement?
2. Examine India's role in the various activities carried on by NAM.
3. Explain NAM's role in the post-cold war period.
4. Assess India's role in the survival of NAM.
5. "NAM has become irrelevant in the present uni-polar world". Do you agree? Give arguments in favour of your answer.
6. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Bandung Conference;
  - (ii) Belgrade Summit;
  - (iii) Nehru and NAM.

**CHAPTER 22****India's Approach to Major World Issues  
Disarmament, Human Rights and Globalisation**

**T**HE world has entered the twenty-first century with new hopes and problems in the wake of scientific and technological developments. While our lives have become more comfortable, we are also facing challenges from degrading environment, rising fundamentalism and terrorism, violation of basic human rights, ever increasing threats of deadly chemical and nuclear weapons, spread of new diseases like HIV/AIDS and widening gaps between the rich and the poor countries, etc. The world of today has to face these challenges both locally and globally. The scientific and technological developments have brought the world closer and made it interdependent. As a result, all countries are affected by the events and developments that may be taking place anywhere. Therefore it is important for the international community to take note of emerging global issues and react to them. Of course different countries, depending on their national interests, ideological visions and perceptions, react differently to various issues though

there always is an emphasis on collective action. In this chapter we will study some of the major issues facing the world today and the views India has and role it is playing in this context.

**DISARMAMENT**

One of the most important global problems affecting both nations and individuals, today, is disarmament. Arms race has reached alarming proportions and is even spilling into outer space after having stationed weapons on the face of the earth and in the oceans. Therefore the focus in international relations is increasingly around the question of disarmament.

The arms race started in the wake of the Second World War and coincided with the Cold War which had divided the world into blocs. The Second World War, apart from widespread destruction also marked the beginning of the nuclear era with a destructive power quite unforeseen so far. Unfortunately, after the War

there emerged a competition among nations, to build up their weapons – stocks and remain ahead of others. Since then, this race for arms has been continuing at a galloping pace. The world today is threatened with a nuclear holocaust. The single bomb that destroyed Hiroshima left 71,379 dead with the toll mounting to another 200,000 within five years as a result of radiation and other after effects. Today several thousands of more powerful bombs than that, are in the nuclear arsenal of many countries.

Scientific studies have visualised a chilling scenario of a nuclear war. Estimates show that in the event of a universal nuclear war more than 1,500 million people will die and about 1,000 million would be wounded. The condition of those who survive the war will be pathetic. Primarily, they will not get adequate medical attention. They will be left without drinking water, gas, electricity and millions of cubic meters of highly toxic sewage will flood urban territories, fields, pastures and leak into rivers. Rains will result in concentration of radioactive substances and for many months drinking water will be unfit for consumption. Thus the humanity faces challenge to its very survival. The arms race because of its scope, destructive power and technological sophistication, has been posing the greatest danger ever known to mankind. According to a study made

by the UN experts, the global arms race makes heavy demand on the limited human and material sources of nations. Its cost is not only in economic terms, but even in social and psychological terms.

### **ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT**

As we know, at the end of the Second World War, United Nations was established to maintain peace, harmonious coexistence and welfare of human kind. From the very beginning United Nations took up the cause of regulating armaments on a world wide scale. This was mentioned in the United Nations (UN) Charter itself. The very first resolution approved by the UN General Assembly on 24 January, 1946, sought the elimination of atomic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. But during early years, progress was not made in this direction. In 1959, the General Assembly adopted, as a goal for the United Nations, General and Complete Disarmament under effective international control. Since then various steps have been taken and efforts made in the direction of Disarmament and Arms control. It may be mentioned here that Disarmament refers to reduction or abolition of existing weapons. In fact, in academic and policy discussions disarmament means control or reduction of existing weapons, whereas arms control means control of weapons in future. In this chapter

we are discussing the issue as one under the heading of disarmament. As mentioned above the UN General Assembly has set before itself the aim of Complete Disarmament.

In 1961 at the initiative of the Soviet Union and the United States a negotiating body called the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, was constituted. It was renamed in 1969 as the Conference Committee on Disarmament. Since 1979, the Geneva based body has been meeting as the Committee on Disarmament, with an enlarged (40 nation) membership to ensure better representation of different regions and view points.

Along with these efforts by the United Nations, negotiations among nations were also going on, particularly among nuclear powers, for control over nuclear weapons. In 1963 an agreement was reached on a Partial Test Ban Treaty. It prohibited all test explosions on the surface, in the atmosphere and under water. Only limited underground tests were allowed. The treaty was ratified by three original signatories i.e. UK, USA and USSR and 98 other member States of the UN including India and seven non-member States of the UN. Another treaty known as Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was formulated in 1968 and signed by UK, USA, USSR and 50 other countries. India refused to sign the treaty on the ground that it was discriminatory in nature.

The Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and subsequent agreements did not ban nuclear testing under the ground. Need for this prompted negotiations for comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty (CTBT). Such negotiations started in 1977. After many years of debate finally in 1996 there emerged a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). This treaty, however, was full of controversies, particularly in view of discriminatory treatment of nuclear weapon States and non-nuclear weapon States. Because of this India, which had been actively advocating for a comprehensive test ban since 1954, could not agree to sign the CTBT treaty. We will discuss this issue below. What is important to note here is that though it cannot claim full success in disarmament, the United Nations, since its inception has made repeated attempts to halt arms race. Efforts have also been made by other organizations like Commonwealth, NAM, and Regional bodies. India right from the beginning has not only been an active supporter for disarmament but has also been playing a leading role both in the UN and at other fora for this cause.

### **DISARMAMENT AND INDIA**

Since Independence, India has consistently pursued the objective of global disarmament based on principles of universality, non-discrimination and effective

compliance. India has always believed that a world free of nuclear weapons would enhance global security and India's own national security. Thus India has always been advocating that the highest priority be given to nuclear disarmament as a first step towards general and complete disarmament. As early as 1948, India called for limiting the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes only and elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments. India was the first country to call for stoppage of nuclear tests and made a formal proposal for total cessation of nuclear testing in the UN General Assembly.

In 1961, India and other Non-aligned countries tabled a resolution in the UN General Assembly which declared that the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons would be a direct violation of the UN Charter and any State using such a weapon would be acting contrary to the laws of humanity and committing a crime against mankind and civilization. In 1964, India suggested that "all proliferation of nuclear weapons, be it horizontal or vertical, should be stopped simultaneously and altogether, so that all nuclear facilities everywhere become peaceful and the problem of existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons could then be contained and tackled more effectively."

In December 1978, at the first special session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament, India

moved a resolution which declared the use of nuclear weapons would be a violation of the UN charter and demanded that pending nuclear disarmament, the use and threat of the use of nuclear weapons should be prohibited. This resolution was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in 1978. India also proposed negotiations for an international convention that would prohibit the use of nuclear weapons. This was followed by another initiative in 1982 calling for a nuclear free world, prohibition on the production of fissile material for weapons and on production of nuclear weapons, and their delivery systems.

The seventh conference of NAM, held in Delhi in March 1983, forcefully accentuated the danger of a nuclear war and the necessity to fight for peace. The conference proposed to ban the use of nuclear weapons immediately, to freeze and after that to reduce and to eliminate its arsenals, to prevent the use of outer space for military purposes, to conclude as soon as possible a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Subsequently, India has been making consistent efforts to bring nuclear arms race to a halt. At the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament India put forward a number of serious proposals including the 1988 'Comprehensive Plan for Total Elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction' in a phased manner. It



was a matter of great regret that the proposal put by India, along with several other countries, did not receive a positive response and instead a limited and distorted non-proliferation agenda, meant above all to perpetuate nuclear weapons was shaped. This compelled India not only not to sign the CTBT but also itself go nuclear in consideration of its national security and failure of big powers to agree on complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

### INDIA'S STAND ON CTBT

India's stand has been that the goal of disarmament can be none other than the achievement of general and complete disarmament. This means that disarmament has to be general, i.e. to cover all countries; to be complete, to apply to all weapons and has to be implemented under strict and effective international control. India has also made it clear, from the very beginning, that it wanted to keep its options open for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Against this background India did not sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968; She emphasised that it is an unequal and discriminatory treaty. While it imposes stringent restrictions and curbs on non-nuclear weapon States, it leaves the nuclear weapon powers free from any legal or time-bound obligation to stop proliferation and to take steps to reduce their nuclear arsenals. It also denies the right to

peaceful nuclear explosions by non-nuclear weapons States. Accordingly, in India's view, the treaty is discriminatory, unrealistic, ineffective and therefore unacceptable to India.

India's concerns have been two. One, freedom to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and two its national security. In terms of national security India was faced not only with the situation of nuclear proliferation world over, but also in its own neighbourhood — first in China and then in Pakistan. China conducted its first atomic explosion in October 1964. Before that, China had already waged a war on India in 1962. Having joined the nuclear club, China also started helping Pakistan's nuclear programme. At that time, both China and Pakistan were hostile to India and Western powers were also inclined towards Pakistan. All these factors posed a threat to India's security. Yet India continued to strictly adhere to the policy of using nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes.

On May 18, 1974 India carried out an underground nuclear experiment for peaceful purposes, and reiterated that the country was committed to its use for constructive purposes and that it had no intention of producing nuclear weapons. India, therefore, continued its efforts for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty with the aims of curbing nuclear arms race by stopping both horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. After the Nuclear

Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 1968, which India did not sign, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union in 1977 initiated negotiations on CTBT. Years of negotiations did not yield any result. India's position was clear that it believes in total nuclear disarmament, but it opposes any agreement that is discriminatory in nature. Despite India's strong objections against discrimination and not taking into account security interests of countries like India, the CTBT was pushed through. India refused to sign it. According to experts the Treaty (CTBT) will, in reality, legitimize a new qualitative arms race. This treaty like the NPT will be a license to proliferate vertically without effectively banning horizontal proliferation. Thus India, after having been actively engaged in the negotiations for two and a half years, could not become a party to CTBT precisely because the issues of non-proliferation, global disarmament and India's concerns for its national security and strategic autonomy were ignored.

In May 1998 India conducted three nuclear explosion tests some doubts were raised in international community about India's commitment to disarmament. India, however had made it clear that these tests were conducted in the context of national security and prevailing international situation. India has declared that it will maintain a minimum credible nuclear deterrent

and will not engage in an arms race. India has also declared a no-first-use of nuclear weapons. It believes that a global no-first use agreement can be the first step towards the delegitimation of nuclear weapons. It stands for Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which is non-discriminatory and universal. In other words, it should have three characteristics: (i) it should cover all States including the five nuclear weapon States; (ii) it should extend the prohibition on the testing of nuclear weapons to the underground environment also; and (iii) it should do so for all time. The verification system to be developed must be non-discriminatory.

From the above discussion it becomes quite clear that the world today, more than ever before, is aware of the menace of arms race with no end to the stockpiling, deployment and development of new and more destructive weapons, both conventional and nuclear. Disarmament has long been an agenda item in various global forums. In all these efforts India has been playing a significant active role.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

People is general, whether living in the developed, developing or under developed world, cherish the enjoyment of rights in one form or the other. The rights are the claims of the individual recognised by the society and enforced by the State. These

rights are moral, legal, political, economic in nature and a combination of all these rights is termed as human rights which all men and woman should enjoy. Today these basic rights are even recognised by the international community.

The Indian Constitution which was enforced in 1950 showed its full respect to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the third part of the Constitution, they have given the most elaborate description of the basic rights of the Indian citizens. In the remaining of this chapter, we will study about the India's role relating to human rights.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS AND INDIA**

We have read above that the concept of human rights in the existing form is of recent, post Second World War origin. In India concern for human dignity, opposition to exploitation and injustice and inequality has been a part of her civilisational traditions. We have a long tradition of acceptance of contrary view-points, tolerance towards others, non-violence, love and compassion, religious universalism and an emphasis on the brotherhood of all men. Colonial oppression and opposition to it and contact with the West in the modern period brought in India a new understanding of human rights. During this period while the social reformers led the intellectual movement and contributed to the human rights situation, the freedom movement produced great champions

of human rights. The British colonial rule in India affected the common man, children, women, labourers, workers, peasants, either directly or indirectly. The police and the security forces were used as basic tools to suppress the rights of the individuals. In this context the national movement in India incorporated in its values issues of democracy, universal franchise, freedom of the press, education, etc. It took these issues to the people and educated them about their political and economic rights. Infact national movement took up the battle for human rights in a variety of ways.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS AFTER INDEPENDENCE**

The leaders of the Nationalist movement, who now entered the Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution for India, were committed to the cause of the Human Rights. In the Constituent Assembly the moving spirit behind the rights was the adherence to the principle of human equality and dignity which was denied to Indians during the colonial rule. Also as a founder member of the United Nations India was in the forefront in accepting the principles of Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At the same time Framers of the Indian Constitution made a remarkable contribution by laying down an elaborate set of rights for the people. They sought to achieve a

delicate balance between, Civil and Political Rights on the one hand, and Social and Economic Rights on the other. The makers of the Constitution believed in giving equal importance to the two sets of rights as a cardinal tenet of philosophy underlying it. The Political and Civil Rights are made fundamental by the provisions of part III of the Constitution. This part assures the people equality and freedom. Rights in this part are judicially enforceable, even though subject to reasonable restrictions. The economic and social rights are also made basic to the governance of the country through provisions in part IV that is the Directive Principles of State Policy. This part seek to make these rights substantive by enjoining on future governments to bring in conditions of social and economic justice.

Apart from Constitutional Provisions and Statutes the Indian Government has also set up several institutions under different acts of Parliament to give effect to these provisions of human rights of all persons. Most important of these is the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

### **NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC)**

The Indian Government established the NHRC on 12 October, 1993. It has eight members -a chairperson (a former chief justice of India), a present

or a former judge of the Supreme Court, a present or a former chief justice of a high court, two members from among those persons who are knowledgeable in the area of human rights, and the chairpersons of the National Commission for women, National Commission for SCs and STs, and the National Commission for Minorities. NHRC has been assigned broad powers and functions. It can inquire on its own or on a petition presented to it by a victim or any person on his behalf into complaints of:

- (i) Violation of or abetment to violation of human rights;
- (ii) Negligence by a public servant in the prevention of such violation.

To perform its functions, the NHRC has been given the following authorities.

- It may intervene in any proceeding involving any allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court with the approval of such court.
- It may visit, under intimation to a state government, any jail or any other institution under the control of the state government concerned, where persons are detained or lodged for purposes of treatment, reformation or protection, to study the living conditions of the inmates and make recommendations thereon.
- It may review the safeguards provided by or under the Constitution or any law for the

time being in force for the protection of human rights and recommend measures for their effective implementation.

- It may review the factors, including acts of terrorism that inhibit the enjoyment of human rights and recommend appropriate remedial measures.
- It may study treaties and other international instruments on human rights and make recommendations for their effective implementation.
- It may undertake and promote research in the field of human rights; spread human rights literacy among various sections of society and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, the media, seminars and other available means.
- It may encourage the efforts of non-governmental organisations and institutions working in the field of human rights. It may also undertake such other functions as it may consider necessary for the promotion of human rights.

In addition to NHRC, there are also National Commissions for Women, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Minorities and other Backward Castes. Their functions include protection and promotion of rights of these specific categories and suggest measures for their welfare so that they can better exercise their rights.

## INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS AND ACTIVITIES

As already mentioned India is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has acceded to the two International Covenants i.e. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It has also accepted and ratified most other major conventions and covenants of the UN and its specialised agencies – like International Labour Organisation (ILO) India has also been participating in the UN Commission for Human Rights, both as a member and as an observer. It played a leading role in opposing violation of human rights on grounds of colour and race. You have already read in an earlier chapter India's contribution in struggle against colonialism, apartheid, racial discrimination, etc., which were gross violations of the basic values of human rights.

At the international level, there also has been debate with regard to importance of specific human rights. The Western thinking in general has been that civil and political rights are more important. India's position, however, is that Civil and Political rights and Social, Economic and Cultural Rights both are equally important. Equally important are rights of the people as a group and countries for example Right to Development. India, while wholeheartedly supporting the cause

of Human Rights, has always opposed the politicisation of Human Rights in international relations, where some powers have been trying to use the pretext of Human rights violation for interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.

From the above it becomes clear that India's response to the issue of Human rights has been one of commitment. Fundamental rights and Directive Principles of State Policy provided in the Constitution of India contain a number of rights provided in the Universal Declaration of Human rights. India is also a signatory to this Declaration as well as most of the International conventions and covenants. It has also joined hands with the international community in the task of promotion and protection of Human Rights throughout the World; it has played a leading role in the fight against colonialism, apartheid, racial discrimination and exploitation.

As far as implementation of commitment to Human Rights is concerned, India's record is better than compared to many other developing countries. Most significant aspect of this is continuation and consolidation of democracy. However, there are some violations of Human Rights by State machinery, police, security forces and non-state actors like terrorists and fundamentalists. As such, India, must evolve herself as a leading example for the developing countries in terms of respect for human rights.

## **GLOBALISATION**

The end of Cold War politics following the disintegration of Soviet Union, restructuring of Eastern European countries and weakening of communism as an ideological force in international politics, have paved a way for the emergence of a new world order characterised by globalisation. The process of globalisation began from the 1970s due to various developments in the field of science and technology. Since 1990s the term globalisation has gained wide currency. However there are significant differences among observers on the definition, purpose and consequences of globalisation.

### **GLOBALISATION: MEANING**

According to Anthony Giddens, Globalisation means "The intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa". Similarly another expert Robertson has defined globalisation as "a concept that refers to the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole". In general we can say that globalisation refers to a process by which the Planet Earth is considered to be one single unit or a global village where social and economic interactions among the people are based on interdependence. The world is supposed to be a global society with

global issues and problems which are to be tackled with global efforts and cooperation. Of course various developments in the field of science and technology have helped in this closeness of the world. The phenomena includes an enormous range of features of contemporary life involving diverse activities and interactions in the economic, political, technological, cultural and environmental field. Globalisation is manifest in the rapid flow of information, capital and goods. Under globalisation cultures and societies that were hitherto distinct have come face to face with each other. The world has become an inter-connected one.

While the "coming closer" of the world can be attributed to the phenomenal increase in the reach of electronic media and other means of communications, as a policy framework for economic, political and social interactions, the emergence of globalisation is a consequence of deliberate efforts of western liberal capitalist countries to bring the whole world under one market oriented economic order. Observers point out that the big Multi National Companies (MNCs) had always wanted to have free access to all markets in the world. They were, however, restricted by the protectionist policies of the various countries. They had been pressurising their powerful governments to get these artificial restrictions removed and facilitate free flow of capital and goods.

Their efforts got a big boost by the collapse of Socialism, revolution in communication technology and worsening economic situation of developing countries. New developments in the field of communications and rising debts and declining productions in developing countries helped developed countries to put pressure on these countries through international bodies like World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to integrate their economies with the market oriented world economy, make structural adjustments to accommodate the interests of the Multi-National Company and liberalise their own economies. Accordingly, a large number of developing countries, either per-force, or due to their needs of development have sought to integrate increasingly with the world economy. India also has not remained immune from the processes. It has accordingly, taken some measures to be a part of global community and also reacted to certain issues arising out of the process.

### GLOBALISATION AND INDIA

India began responding to globalisation from early 1980s by warmly welcoming the technological developments. In the beginning, its acceptance of the ideas of world market, world economy, unfettered market economy etc. was lukewarm. Of course, it started some processes towards liberalisation and globalisation in the middle of 1980s.

It was in the wake of the external repayment liability crisis of 1991 that government took a qualitative turn towards liberalisation. It involved the following major changes in policy.

- (i) Trade policy reform: This reform sought to dismantle the earlier import licensing system. It proposed reforms and heavy scaling down or removal of tariff on imports. Except on consumer goods non-tariff barriers were phased out.
- (ii) Industrial Policy Reform: It sought abolition of industrial licensing except for a few specified industries. Items reserved for public sector came to be highly restricted and it extended favourable treatment to FDI. Restrictions on investment by large industrial houses were abolished and a phased programme of disinvestments of public ownership in public sector undertakings was initiated. The Non-resident Indians (NRIs) were extended additional encouragement to invest and outward investment by Indian enterprises was liberalised.
- (iii) Exchange Rate Reform: The rupee was devalued in 1991. Partial convertibility of the rupee was done in 1992-93 and full convertibility on current account in 1994.
- (iv) Capital Market Reform: This was undertaken by setting up the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

- (v) Financial Reforms: Private sector banks including foreign joint venture banks came to be permitted to undertake and expand their operations. A policy regime for private non-banking finance companies came to be established.

In addition to the above, the government has attempted to build up competition in sectors where hitherto the public sector enjoyed a monopoly; thrown open the insurance sector for market competition; attempted to lay down a set of directives for disinvestments and removed tariffs on a large number of items in accordance with its agreement with the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In the context of globalisation, the above-mentioned liberalisation primarily means removal of controls and regulations at various levels of the economy facilitating market forces to determine its course and direction. It favours a competitive market solution to economic issues and a reduced role for the State in economic management. In a wider sense, the term is also used to mean creating conditions for the prevalence of civic and political rights, rule of law, accountability of power, periodic elections, multi-party system and an impartial judiciary. These conditions are seen as keeping public authority transparent and under scrutiny.

Summing up, liberalisation means freedom of trade and investment; creation of free trade areas; elimination of government control on allocation of



resources in the domestic economy; progressive removal of restrictions on external trade and payments; expansion of foreign investment, loans and aid and rapid technological progress. Liberalisation also advocates a balanced budget, reduction in progressive taxation, social security and welfare and a diminished role for the State in economic management. It does not favour subsidies and State protection and resource allocations through administrative means. It suggests that inefficiency, corruption and mismanagement are built into regimes with excessive State control.

### DIFFERENCE OF OPINIONS

There is a general view that globalisation is a reality which cannot be wished away. Yet there are differences of opinion, both at the international level and in India, with regard to impact of globalisation and its usefulness. Primarily there are two opinions, optimistic and pessimistic. The former point out the benefits of globalisation. According to them, the economic policies before liberalisation were not yielding positive results. The gap between the rich and the poor were constantly on the rise; due to lack of competition, the big business houses were selling average products at high prices. But liberalisation and globalisation has increased the scale and allocative efficiency of markets for goods and capital. It has released huge unutilised resources and has led to a great economic recovery.

Globalisation has greatly facilitated the movement of capital and lessened the dependence of the country on bilateral and multilateral agencies such as the IMF and World Bank. It has also been an important mechanism to upgrade their technology and get an access to the global markets.

It is also argued by the supporters of globalisation that it has helped in expansion of liberal democracy by strengthening accountability and transparency of power. It has created global electronic communication systems. They allow a diversity of alternative voices and opinions to be heard and accessed. These, in turn, have also led to the rise of new social movements such as of women, peasants, ethnic communities, displaced people etc. thereby mobilising more people. In the cultural field, globalisation has facilitated a phenomenal growth in the global circulation of cultural goods. These include printed matter, music, visual arts, cinema and photography, radio and television.

Critics of globalisation see it as a process of domination by advanced capitalist countries especially United States of America. According to them, it has further increased existing inequalities. There is evidence to suggest that the processes and policies of liberalisation and globalisation have contributed to a significant redistribution of income and wealth from the poor to the rich both nationally and internationally.

There is growing disparity within the developed nations, between the developed nations and the developing nations, and within the developing nations themselves. In the wake of globalisation there is substantial increase in unemployment.

There has been a cut in welfare measures, reduction in subsidies of goods of mass consumption and decline in real wages. There is an increase in the power of foreign investors and creditors. While a great deal of attention is paid to formulate rules for the expansion of global markets and capital flows, little attention is paid to objectives like labour standard, poverty reduction and human rights. It has greatly circumscribed the power of nation-state under pressure from multinational companies.

Neo-liberal ideology has emerged as the reigning ideology under globalisation with its stress on market freedom, private property and accumulation. There also is a process of cultural imposition and domination. Through Cable TV and Internet, the Multinational Corporations are successfully promoting consumerism and western values. The craze of Coke/ Pepsi or famous western brands of clothing, cosmetics, etc., are all creation of electronic media. The English language has emerged to a predominant position threatening the development of vernacular languages. Critics also point out the serious impact of globalisation on education. Now there is rapid commercialization of education and over-emphasis on

market-oriented courses. The undermining of Social Sciences and Humanities is already having a detrimental effect on society.

From the above, it becomes clear that globalisation is a process through which the world is becoming closer and distanceless. As a result of this, national economies are diminishing and they are becoming part of the international economic system. It has put limitations on State's sovereignty. India has become a part of this process and is trying to adapt itself to this new reality. Major challenge before it is to reap its benefits and avoid its adverse effects. There are a number of serious issues which developed countries are imposing on developing countries through international financial and trade organisations like World Trade Organisation (WTO). India is of the opinion that developing countries need to oppose these attempts. However, so far the necessary cooperation among the developing countries, required for this purpose, is lacking. Some of the developing countries are also working under pressure from the United States especially in regard to their extended debt liabilities. India has taken a number of initiatives at the international fora, to protect the interests of developing countries with regard to trade negotiations, subsidies and rights and responsibilities of different countries. At the same time, it has accepted and implemented Structural Adjustment programmes, opened up its economy and allowed foreign companies to operate. Both scholars

and political parties are deeply divided on the desirability and consequences of globalisation. Since globalisation now is a reality, the discussion on the desirability or otherwise of globalisation has now been replaced by discussion on the measures which can help the country derive more advantages from globalisation and minimise its disadvantages.

### EXERCISES

1. What do you understand by Disarmament? What efforts have been made by the United Nations towards Disarmament.
2. Describe the role played by India in achieving the objective of global disarmament.
3. Why has India not signed Non-Proferation Treaty (NPT) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).
4. Describe various measures adopted in India for implementation of Human Rights.
5. How has India responded to the process of globalisation.
6. Describe the two different opinions about effects of globalisation.
7. Write short notes on the following:
  - (i) Arms race and its effects
  - (ii) National Human Rights Commission
  - (iii) Meaning of Globalisation

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## Glossary

**Activist:** A person mobilising people for political action.

**Alternative Vote:** In this first method voters are asked to rank the candidates in preferential order. In this first stage of counting, only the first preferences are taken into consideration. If no candidate receives majority, the candidate with the least first preferences is eliminated, and the ballots of this candidate as first preference are redistributed according to second preferences and so on.

**Apartheid:** Refers to the South African system of racial segregation of the white, black and brown (i.e. Indian) population and the domination of the white minority over the black majority. A basic aspect of *apartheid* was the exclusion of the majority on the basis of their colour from participation in government.

**Aristocracy:** A government or a state ruled by a privileged class; a government composed of and ruled by the few, supposedly to be superior.

**Authoritarianism:** It is opposed to democracy. It is a form of government in which the authority is vested in the hands of a dictator, a military junta or an absolute monarch. The ruler is not accountable to the people nor he is bound by any constitution.

**Bourgeoisie:** Also known as the capitalist class that owns the means of production, employs wage labour, and has profit as its source of income.

**Capitalism:** It refers to an economic system where there is a combination of private property, a relatively free and competitive market, and a general assumption that the bulk of the workforce will be engaged in employment by private (non-governmental) employers engaged in producing whatever goods they can sell at a profit.

**Civil Liberties:** These are freedoms or rights which are thought to be especially valuable in themselves and vital to the functioning of a liberal and democratic society. Emphasis vary, but most lists of basic civil liberties will include freedom of speech, freedom of religion and thought, freedom of movement, freedom of association, the right to a fair trial and freedom of the person.

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