

PREFACE

In a bid to standardize higher education in the country, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) based on five types of courses viz. *core, discipline specific / generic elective, ability and skill enhancement* for graduate students of all programmes at Honours level. This brings in the semester pattern, which finds efficacy in sync with credit system, credit transfer, comprehensive and continuous assessments and a graded pattern of evaluation. The objective is to offer learners ample flexibility to choose from a wide gamut of courses, as also to provide them lateral mobility between various educational institutions in the country where they can carry their acquired credits. I am happy to note that the University has been recently accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India (NAAC) with grade "A".

UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020 have mandated compliance with CBCS for U.G. programmes of all the HEIs in this mode. Welcoming this paradigm shift in higher education, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) has resolved to adopt CBCS from the academic session 2021-22 at the Under Graduate Degree Programme level. The present syllabus, framed in the spirit of syllabi recommended by UGC, lays due stress on all aspects envisaged in the curricular framework of the apex body on higher education. It will be imparted to learners over the six semesters of the Programme.

Self Learning Materials (SLMs) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. From a logistic point of view, NSOU has embarked upon CBCS presently with SLMs in English / Bengali. Eventually, the English version SLMs will be translated into Bengali too, for the benefit of learners. As always, all of our teaching faculties contributed in this process. In addition to this, we have also requisitioned the services of best academics in each domain in preparation of the new SLMs. I am sure they will be of commendable academic support. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders who will participate in the teaching-learning based on these study materials. It has been a very challenging task well executed, and I congratulate all concerned in the preparation of these SLMs.

I wish the venture a grand success.

Prof. (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University

Under Graduate Degree Programme

Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)

Subject : Honours in Sociology (HSO)

Course : **Sociology of India – 02**

Course Code : **CC-SO-04**

First Print : December, 2021

Printed in accordance with the regulations of the
Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission.

Netaji Subhas Open University

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**Netaji Subhas
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**UG : Sociology (HSO)
Sociology of India – 02
Code : CC-SO-04**

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1.1 Objectives

- To learn about the roles played by Gandhi and Ambedkar in bringing social changes;
 - To understand the importance of equality and curbing down discriminations in Hindu society
 - To evaluate the significance of Gandhi and Ambedkar in present day Indian scenario.
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1.2 Introduction

Mankind has witnessed from time to time the emergence of great souls who have shown us the path of knowledge and taught us how to live an ideal life. Perhaps these two stalwarts, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) and Bhimrao Ramji

Ambedka(1891-1956) with their basic philosophy of the welfare of the poor and the down-trodden, are a part of the same Vedic heritage. Before their arrival on the scene, the Hindu social organization was based on the hierarchy of the four Varnas: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. This four-fold division of society was laid down by Manu and was generally called Chaturvarna. According to this system, the social and economic status of the Hindus was decided by their birth. There was no chance to choose their occupations by their own will. This decisive feature of the Hindu society had created a number of serious problems such as the feelings of high and low, superiority and inferiority, and inequality or unhappiness among the population. One section of the Hindu was treated by the other sections as second rate, third-rate citizens or slaves. The lower castes were suppressed, depressed and harassed.

1.2.1 Role of Social Reformers in Removal of Social Evils

In order to remove such social evils several worthy sons of India have engaged their energies and talents. Twenty five hundred years ago, Buddha made the first effort. Twelfth century Basava fought against the caste orthodoxy. Saints like Kabir, Chaitanya, Eknath and Tukaram spent their life time advising and reforming the various sections of the Hindu population in different parts of the country. The Brahmo Samaj of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and the Arya Samaj of Dayanand Saraswati showed the path of reform to the traditional Hindu society. Jyotirao Phule and Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda fought against the outmoded caste practices. The Theosophical Society, the Prarthana Society Samaj, Satyashodhak Samaj, Servants of India Society did vigorous movements to bring great reforms in India. The names of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar were mentionable in the line of such great reformers of the Indian society. Mahatma Gandhi's efforts were mainly spiritual and religious in character whereas Ambedkar's efforts were mainly political and legal in character.

The Hindus those who studied the liberal philosophy and democratic institutions of the western countries naturally began to revolt against the caste centric attitudes. The works of Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar highlighted the early impulses of social reformation in India.

Ambedkar was born in 1891. It was then the time of convulsive contradictions, confusions and conflicts existing in the Indian society. As Ambedkar was progressing through his early years, momentous revolutionary changes were sweeping across the land gradually. These restless decades were engaged into nationalist movements along with political ideology of deeper values restoring the traditional ethos of the Indian economy, society and culture. The pace of social change failed to satisfy the untouchables of the Indian society.

1.2.2 Ambedkar as the Emancipator of Depressed Class

Ambedkar was acknowledged as the emancipator of the depressed classes in the country. He dominated the Indian political scene during the most crucial time when India was going through a series of political crises. He secured the important rights and liberties for the under-privileged sections of our country and also won a compact package of political rights especially for the depressed population of the Shudras. Having secured the coveted degrees from the different renowned universities in the world, he was well armed with a formidable knowledge of various field of sciences, Constitutions and laws of different nations. He was an erudite scholar, a great legal luminary, a great Constitutional expert, a parliamentarian, a statesman, a powerful writer, a journalist, a jurist and above all, a savior of the depressed sections of the Indian population. Despite, these achievements, the stigma of untouchability was attached to him. After his advanced education, when he accepted the post of secretary in the military department of the Baroda government, peons used to fling files at him and did not allow him to drink water from the common pot. The humiliations he suffered at the hands of the caste Hindus made him to challenge the outmoded institutions of the Hindu religion. He studied the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas, Shrutis, and all important Vedic literatures concerning Hinduism. Whenever he found any fault he laid his finger on it. Till the last breath of his life, he fought against the oppressive practices of the depressed class.

His approach to any problem was comprehensive and aimed at examining and repairing the institutions which were in crises. He launched an aggressive campaign against Hinduism. He was anti-slavery, and anti-priest. He believed that unless people were awakened, it was not possible to do away with the various evils afflicting Hinduism. He did not believe in God or destiny. He believed that as long as the conscience of the slaves was not awakened against the hatred for slavery, there was no hope for salvation. Self-awakening, he believed, could provide them necessary strength to fight against evils in society. Self-help, self-elevation and self-respect were the prime ideas in his preaching. He said that all men were born equal and died equal. He held that the Hindu society should be reorganized on two main principles of equality and absence of casteism.

At school and college, Ambedkar had a hard time owing to the prevailing practice of untouchability. Mahatma Gandhi was free from such harassment while his studies were in progress. He was lucky belonging to an upper caste. This is why his school and college days meant opportunities for gaining knowledge, inspiration and joy.

1.3 Obstacles Faced by Ambedkar

Ambedkar faced numerous obstacles in his political career. When the British government proclaimed officially in 1932 that it would concede the demand for separate electorates for the untouchables, Gandhiji opposed the plan strongly on the ground that it would break up the Hindu community and announced his fast unto death if the scheme was not withdrawn. Ambedkar was equally determined to have it implemented. But Gandhiji 's fast forced him to accept a compromise. Thus, on humanitarian grounds, he signed the Poona Pact of 1932, to save Gandhi's life.

Ambedkar stood for an opposition to the ideas of Manu. Manu codified rules, norms and regulations designed to oppress two categories of human beings- the Shudras and women. It was alarming but true that, in accepting Buddhism, Ambedkar accepted a version of Hinduism which belonged to the Shudras and which went against the ideology and institutions of Brahminical Hinduism. We should also note that Buddha exercised an equally great influence on the life of Mahatma Gandhi.

1.3.1 Both are Patriots (Gandhi and Ambedkar)

Mahatma Gandhi was rightly hailed as the patriot monk and freedom fighter of India. When he saw that the Indian society was being afflicted with the various social evils, he launched a determined struggle for independence of the country and removal of the evils. He pleaded for a thorough reform of the rigid caste system and felt remorse for the bad situation of the country. Ambedkar was a great patriot too and therefore throughout his life he strove hard to restore unity and strength of the country and always came forward with practical solutions of the various problems emerging in the country. Ambedkar did recognize a myriad of other identities in India such as sub-castes, castes, groupings of castes. He, however, argued that identity should be within the bounds of rule of law, the demands of development, justice and participation. He stated that the most vital need of the day was to create consciousness among the masses. The sense of a common nationality, the feeling not that they were Indians first and Hindus, Mohammedans or Sindhis and Kanares afterwards, but that they were Indians first and Indians last. Ambedkar thus had practical ideas to overcome the divisive forces operating in a country like India. The means adopted by Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar was to improve the lot of the masses in India who were stimulated in different directions. It was by employing the principles of the humanistic philosophy, Mahatma Gandhi wanted to solve all problems and develop a united strong nation. Ambedkar did not agree to this solution, humanistic and man making philosophy preached that God pervaded and dwelt among the poor. But the high caste Hindus gave discriminatory treatment to the poor and the have nots. Mahatma Gandhi

argued that the Hindus should not give up religion but should encourage the society to grow. It indicated that casteism and untouchability must be vanished from our society. This was difficult, according to Ambedkar, because the followers of Hinduism continued to practice caste based ideas and doctrines in the social and political spheres.

1.4 Reformation of Hinduism

Whereas Gandhi carried on a lifelong campaign for the reform of the Hindu society, his self-description as an orthodox or *Sanatani* Hindu also expressed important meanings for our understanding of him, especially in view of fact that he was among the few leaders and thinkers of modern India who accepted and defended what may be described as popular Hinduism. Ambedkar also believed that any “ism” in the sense of religion which contained something that was not amenable to reason and was mainly based on belief which was erroneous. He observed that if a religion was based on principles, it could amend itself in the line with reason and logic. He did not believe that any existing religious opinions of Hinduism were amenable to reason or logic. This was one reason why *Sanatana* Hinduism had irrational prejudices. Ambedkar argued that initially Hinduism was a missionary religion, but gradually it developed the rigidity of the caste system which became the core of Hinduism and the missionary spirit of Hinduism was waned.

The 19th century witnessed the emergence of several reformist movements in India. Mahatma Gandhi’s Mission movement was the movement for the social and religious awakening of the Indian people. Mahatma Gandhi was the Hindu saint to proclaim that the religion of the Hindus was confined to their kitchen. He condemned the idea of untouchability and other social injustices and humiliations. Similar spirit of rebellion against injustice and restoring brotherhood of man guided Ambedkar in his life. Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar could be addressed as two radical and bold leaders of modern India.

They were the defenders of the poor and the down-trodden. Both were the champions of the underdog and the emancipators of the backward people. Both were heroic and symbols of revolt. If Gandhiji was a reformer and an ascetic, Ambedkar was a fighter and a revolutionary. Both of them were phenomenally active and influential. Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar grew up in their own different social set-up. The circumstances of the two were remarkably different.

Gandhiji’s personality was unique. He stood in the tradition of the ancient seer of the Vedas and Upanishads. Several great personalities, tried to highlight the various

qualities of Mahatma Gandhi, one of the stalwarts of modern India and abroad. They also paid similar rich tributes to his intellectual and modern outlook. Mahatma Gandhi's thirst for knowledge was virtually unquestionable. Very early in his life he perceived so many great things in his society. He was side by side introduced as one of the new currents in the eastern and western philosophies. He was a great humanist, an idealist, and an ascetic pilgrim of the city of God. With his knowledge and message, he wandered from place to place and inspired the people of this land and other lands. He believed, education was the realization of the best in man-body, soul and spirit. He maintained that education must be based on ethics and morality.

Ambedkar was neither born great nor his greatness thrust upon him. He achieved greatness by sheer sincere hard work. He faced endless troubles all his life. Ambedkar enthroned himself in the hearts of millions of Indians. He was considered as a second Buddha in India. His work as Constitutionalist, professor, political leader and socio-religious reformer had endeared him to the generations of Indians. Ambedkar's personality was multidimensional in nature. He was a great scholar and his writings covered with diverse fields of knowledge.

Both Gandhiji and Ambedkar sought to reform the existing society by questioning its basic presuppositions. They fought against various persistent evils of the Indian society, while both were rebels and reformers, they differed considerably in their principles and ideologies. Mahatma Gandhi tried to rebuild India mainly through spiritual and higher values of the glorious ideals of India's past. Ambedkar wanted to rebuild India with a complete rejection of India's past. While Gandhiji welcomed socialism in India but he didn't envisage the political, administrative and judicial institutions for the common people. Ambedkar had a vision of the plans, policies, the form of government and institutions for the development of the depressed castes in order to reduce the economic inequalities.

Ambedkar too, believed that religion was a foundation for human life and society and society could not be survived without morality. He argued that a system of moral values was necessary to promote harmonious life upholding equality and brotherhood and rejecting superstitious mysticism, irrationality and blind beliefs. As a humanist and a scientific thinker, he was a bitter critic of the Hindu social order. He hoped that Hinduism could be reformed if not revolutionized. When he considered the idea of abandoning Hinduism for some other religion, he found his answer in the message of Buddhism. Buddhism was one of Indian origins and was, according to him, superior to other religion including Hinduism. Hinduism haunted him all his life like a ghost; it was Buddhism that he finally found, his solace. Ambedkar had to face very bitter experiences right from his childhood till the independence (of the country) and even

later. The deliberate attempt was taken to harass him led to his mental torture and number of humiliations inflicted on his learning and the future works of him. The untouchables were made to suffer numerous social disabilities and they were told that this was their fate determined by their birth. Ambedkar observed that untouchables considered Hinduism as a veritable chamber of horrors ; the iron law of caste, the heartless law of the Karma and the senseless law of status by birth were veritable instruments of torture which Hinduism had forged against them. Ambedkar had to fight on two formidable fronts. To secure the social and religious rights, he had to face the opposition of the caste Hindus; he also had to struggle against the national parties and the British rule. Since no support was forthcoming from either of them, he was left with the only alternative of starting a separate organization for the upliftment of the untouchables. Thus he had to make heroic efforts to inspire the down-trodden classes to raise the banner of revolt against the oppressive ideas of an institution of Hinduism.

The rebel that he was in the sense, Ambedkar protested against the socio -economic oppression of the Hindu society. He fought for the political rights and the religious beliefs. He advocated the upliftment of the down-trodden through education, organization and agitation and separate electorate for the depressed classes.

Ambedkar embraced Buddhism and recommended it to his followers, but the followers themselves had not responded in any large numbers nor had they benefited from the conversion in any substantial measure. By their ideas and activities, both Gandhi and Ambedkar welcomed the rise and development of democratic institutions in India. Both these thinkers had sought to foster individual liberties and rights. On the other hand Gandhiji had gone to the extent of welcoming socialism for India and not into the details of the political, administrative and judicial institutions for the attainment of the common people. Dr. Ambedkar however spelt out the plans and policies and the form of government having different institutions for the constructive development of the depressed classes of people to reducing the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Ambedkar wanted to nationalize lands, so that the poor people could have some means of livelihood. Mahatma Gandhi encouraged the establishment of religious centers to train youths on socio-religious lines.

Ambedkar fought for the creation of government institutions and machineries for the protection of the poor people and provided some means for their livelihood. He upheld the principles of equitable distribution of national wealth so that the poor people could avoid starvation in the first instance. Dr. Ambedkar was quite against the system of Panchayati Raj. The Panchayat system was a council of the village elders, usually from the upper castes. They had traditionally promoted the wealth and well

being of the upper castes and denied opportunities to the lower castes. The Panchayat system was thus destructive to the upliftment and progress of the depressed classes and hence he opposed the Panchayat system bill in the Bombay legislative council and in the Indian constituent assembly later. Generally While Ambedkar favored the Buddhist philosophy of liberation and equality, Mahatma Gandhi was in line with monism or Advaita. From Ambedkar's point of view, monism or Advaita was not of much help. According to Ambedkar, Buddhism was practicable in a poverty-stricken society like that of India because it advocated compassion and love. Under monism, man became individualistic and heartless. Generally, it was engaged to exploit others. Thus, the poverty-stricken societies were exploitable and worst sufferer further more. Mahatma Gandhi came from a high caste and therefore he had not faced such caste related trouble and he did not refer to convert any one to other religion.

Although both Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar were comparatively great patriots, both of them were very active and energetic till the end of their lives and served for the welfare of the people. Mahatma Gandhi inspired and guided several active and prominent Indians who created various institutions and ashrams, schools and hospitals and spread his message across the Indian subcontinent and across the world. Since Mahatma Gandhi came from an upper caste background, he had no hurdles to cross or humiliations to suffer unlike Ambedkar. Mahatma Gandhi had another natural advantage. He got the backing of the educated upper caste people who had money, property, social and political high positions and connections to build and run various institutions. They could easily give and collect donations. Even they could build publishing houses to publish the works by and on Mahatma Gandhi. They could easily get the support from the government or administrative agencies or offices. When the disciples of Mahatma Gandhi held meetings or discussions, they could get audience of students and citizens. Mahatma Gandhi was a revolutionary but he was a philosophical and social revolutionary too.. He was viewed as a political revolutionary or a danger to the British Empire or the government of India. His resources and energies were not diverted for countering any unfavorable or hostile propoganda. He was wearing half necked clothes and this commanded instant reception and acceptance of his personality and mission.

People listened to his lessons attentively and followed his advice readily. He acquired disciples and adherents from all over India. Dr. Ambedkar had a great initial problem. His caste always raised many questions. Although the Maharaja of Baroda and the Maharaja of Kolhapur gave him much support and assistance for his education and employment, this was not enough. He had to fight everywhere. He became educated as an advocate and became a professor but it was not easy for him like the many

upper caste friends and supporters. Most of his followers and supporters came from the lower castes, specially the Mahars and others.

They did not have any privileged position in society. They were not the men of property or wealth also. They could of course follow Ambedkar sincerely. But they could not command or offer the advantages which the upper castes possessed. But on the other hand, much of the works of Mahatma Gandhi was carried out since his departure by most of his followers who belonged to the upper castes of Hindu generally. Dr. Ambedkar was not lucky to enjoy that type of advantage. However, in another sense, Ambedkar might be said to be more fortunate than Mahatma Gandhi as his programme was legal, socio-economic and political in nature. He was a minister of the government of India and influential member of the Parliament. He was in the privileged position in the constituent assembly. He was the chairman of the drafting committee. He was in a unique position to establish his own ideas into the Constitution and certainly influenced the proceedings or debates in the constituent assembly. Of course the Constitution was not up to his likings in all respects. There were many shortcomings in its framework to present to the country. But even as it was, the position he held and the powers he exercised were certainly great.

The educational work done by Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar had been remarkably comparable and significant in the educational history of India. Although a number of schools, colleges, hostels and ashramas were established following the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi. A large number of schools and colleges also were established by Ambedkar himself in his own lifetime, and also by his followers in the later years. Ambedkar's contribution to develop India's educational institutions was particularly great. His learning and scholarships had greatly impressed the scheduled caste as well as the other section of the people of India. The three Universities were named after him and the latest one was the Marathwada University at Aurangabad in Maharashtra. There are countless schools and colleges, including the technical and medical institutions had been named after him. Mahatma Gandhi established schools and colleges throughout the country and even outside but in case of Ambedkar, the concentration of the institutions was mainly in western and southern India. Mahatma Gandhi had a unified and universal vision. Ambedkar also had a similar vision but the intensity of his feelings for the scheduled castes was so great that it often appeared that his plans and programs were mostly for his people. He stood for all people. But obviously he gave priority to the interests and problems of his own people.

The present-day Indian politics might be followed to continue the philosophy and program of Ambedkar. Throughout his life he exhorted his followers to educate themselves, organize themselves at various levels and fight for their political and

other rights. He stood for winning various rights and liberties for his people and wanted to fight for them continuously. Many of the people in India had a misconception that Dr. Ambedkar fought only for reservation of his people. As a matter of fact, this was largely a strategy for the upper caste people. Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru, in the mid 40s, contemplated this policy of reservation. While these leaders were the initiator of the policy, which was really known as the Congress government policy and Mahatma Gandhi got the blessings of it. Gandhi aimed at the upliftment of the Harijans and their rehabilitation in the Hindu society with honor and happiness. He recommended self-reliance for all; he certainly favoured the idea of aiding the Harijans. He was not for charity. But he was certainly for help and assistance to the unfortunate sections of society. In his own way he had initiated several ideas and experiments to aid and assist Harijans. The Harijan Seva Sangha was the organization which carried out valuable work for the improvement of the conditions of the Harijans. The most important thing to be noted here that Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress leaders and those leaders who became ministers after independence, had the common ideology and policy of treating Harijans as part of the Hindu society which meant that the presence of Hindu electorate at various levels was very natural. The later Congress leaders pursued this policy in a crude and rough-handed manner to create the vote banks of the Harijans for the Congress leaders, Harijan or non-Harijan. This policy continued to be followed in several respects even today. However Dr. Ambedkar was basically opposed to this philosophy and programme. He believed that the Hindu had no philosophy or programme to uplift the downtrodden scientifically or systematically but in a business-like way. They wanted to continue the same traditional philosophy of domination, exploitation and ill-treatment of the Harijans. Hence Ambedkar believed that any philosophy or programme which aimed at uplifting the Harijans had to be devised by the Harijans themselves. This is why he advised, his followers again and again to develop their own thinking, action plans and policies which could be pursued independently in the democratic framework and electoral politics.

1.4.1 Difference with Gandhi

Ambedkar registered his basic difference with Mahatma Gandhiji in the form of the Poona Pact of 1932 by which he gave a notice to the Congress men that the Harijans would develop their own leadership and power and programme and would like to exercise their own vote in their own electorate. This thinking and programme which was in defiance of the Congress policy and programme must be taken as separate and defiant even from Mahatma Gandhi's point of view. While Mahatma Gandhi was not averse to independent challenging approaches, he was for all practical purposes for a unified and coordinated approach to the country's problems of winning independence,

socio-economic and industrial modernisation. His ideas and plans seemed nearer to the plans and programmes of the Congress party than those for which Ambedkar stood for such as separate development, separate electorate, separate parties and policies for his people because he did not trust the mainstream, predominantly upper castes Hindu, Congress leadership. It is possible that if universally oriented and bold and broad-minded leader like Mahatma Gandhi was at the helm of affairs in the Congress party or government, they would have welcomed the challenging, parallel approach of bold leaders like Ambedkar. However, as the later history showed, the Congress party or government leaders were not so broad minded and business like enough to trust Ambedkar to try his independent programmes. The Congress leaders and ministers generally failed to take Ambedkar into confidence and make his ideas and experiments a part of the Congress policies and programmes. Some fault in this matter perhaps might be lied at the door of Ambedkar too. So, as a result, the Congress developed its own schedule caste policy and programmes and had its own brand and quota of schedule caste leaders so that Ambedkar could be side tracked and left to follow his own ideas and programmes without rocking the boat of the Congress government. The Questions may be raised that the Congress leaders did not come up to the standard of genuineness, honesty, earnestness, boldness and with the universality of Mahatma Gandhi and perhaps this was the reason why they could not come in forward with the bold and constructive initiatives launched by Ambedkar at various stages in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. In 1956 he left Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. In a way, this was the point of departure from the philosophy of Mahatma. who had advocated a religious policy of understanding, tolerance, coordination and integration. This was the essence of his dream of Swadeshi and Swaraj. The thrust of Mahatma Gandhi's religious philosophy was that each religion was adequate and satisfactory to its followers; there could be exchange of opinions and views; but there was no need for any religious conflicts or wars. Conversion was also needless unless one was genuinely interested or had serious or uniquely disturbing problems in one's own religion. Mahatma Gandhi had rebuked the Christian missionaries on the ground that they were converting the poor Hindus which they did not need and did not give them bread which they badly needed. From many Hindus' point of view, Ambedkar's conversion was not a sound step although it was tolerable in view of the fact that Buddhism was another form of Hinduism and in that sense the departure was not fundamental. Perhaps Mahatma Gandhi would have viewed Ambedkar's conversion in this light although perhaps he would have liked Ambedkar to be within Hinduism and from that position to make serious efforts to reform the whole structure and process so that none ever felt the need to desert Hinduism.

For about a hundred years now, Mahatma Gandhi has acted as a great source of

inspiration and guidance to the various sections of the Indian people. He has been a source of inspiration for the modernization and enlightenment to the whole subcontinent. His message has been delivered for the Hindus no doubt but also for the others unmistakable. In a way, Mahatma Gandhi has been quietly accepted and glorified and worshipped. He has not provoked any fierce opposition or controversy from any upper castes or lower castes and his message has been generally benign and progressive. It has been broad and umbrella like so that all groups of people with diverse opinions and preferences can be brought under his banner without anyone feeling small or uninvited. Gandhi's missions and institutions are accepted and functioned as spiritual and religious service and counsel to all those who care to go to these establishments. It may be said that most of the people who have taken advantage have been generally from the upper castes, but the important point is that no castes are specifically barred, much less as a policy or conscious strategy. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi and his disciples have been peacefully functioning in the midst of the generations of Indians in India and abroad.

But, unlike Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar could not leave behind any socio-spiritual or religious order or vast organization. From his point of view, he attained his salvation by going over to Buddhism. Years ago, he had taken a sort of vow to see that he would not die in Hinduism. That vow he kept. To his good fortune, lakhs of his followers embraced Buddhism at Nagpur in 1956 and periodically a few thousands had undergone conversion to Buddhism over there. But there had been no great or well financed and efficient organization to stabilize, consolidate and spread the message and philosophy of Ambedkar.

As we have said earlier that Ambedkar is rather unfortunate in having his followers who are largely poor and disadvantaged and who stand in need of various types of help. From this viewpoint, the credit has been given to the Indian people and leaders at the central as well as state level. Although Ambedkar's followers have gone over to Buddhism from time to time but since 1956, they have not been deprived of the socio-economic or other help of reservation resulting to their conversion to Buddhism.

By and large, Ambedkar's followers, whether Hindu or Buddhist, have continued to obtain different types of help and concessions as deserving socio-economically backward people, so much so that, on this analogy, backward people of other communities like the Muslims and Christians have been rightly asking for such help and concessions. Thus, Ambedkar has triggered a lot of socio-economic and political changes. Ambedkar has turned into a symbol of the resurgence of the various suppressed people in the various parts of the country. Mahatma Gandhi coming from an upper caste background has been quietly accepted and assimilated by the Indians. But Ambedkar has been embraced vigorously by the backward people, the suppressed people, and the well understanding upper caste people. They have accepted him as

a great leader of their country; they cannot pretend to feel that his ideas and plans have been to their liking in all respects. Ambedkar has gone a long way in symbolizing self-respect and dignity and identity to the millions of the lower castes in the country. The upper caste followers of Mahatma Gandhi have not taken much trouble to think that they are the heir to great civilization; the people do not find it difficult and do assert their identity. For the lower caste millions of the people, the problem of identity and respectable socio-economic and political status is important and urgent. Here Ambedkar is looked upon as a savior. Not only several Universities, colleges and schools have been established in the different parts of the country, as we have referred to earlier, but more and more statues are erected to perpetuate his memory. This is not only to express our gratitude to Ambedkar but also to meet at least partially the growing demand of the lower castes to assert their identity and plant their symbol in the prominent places everywhere.

1.4.2 Present Day Scenario

In the current climate of privatization and entry into the multinational companies in India, the chances of the backward castes getting employment or other opportunities are not very bright. The main reason behind is that the better qualified and socially forward castes, with their established contacts and influence, will snap up the opportunities and positions that become available. This has been happening in different parts of the country. In this case, what needs to be done by the backward castes is to take their leader's advice very seriously.

Long back Dr. Ambedkar had repeatedly advised his followers that they should take education seriously and improve their awareness and skills constantly. They should be on the lookout for opportunities and its end results. He advised them to be a part of the Indian mainstream and not keep away grumbling and complaining all the time. He also motivated them to adopt a positive approach to life, politics and social affairs. This was a challenging task for the people and society together.

The question of such vow was not arising in case of the upper castes, the mainstream followers of Gandhi, because they had been generally keeping up with the latest trends in business, education, industry, employment, and so on. As a result, they would have been solving their problems and saving themselves from the various types of deprivation.

The followers of Ambedkar, especially those who were the leaders and ministers at the central and state levels, did many welfare works for improving the lot of the backward castes. This was however being done gradually and indirectly. There were mostly the backward castes leaders in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They had launched many policies which were generally favorable to the backward castes including Harijans. Since India's socio-political, economic and industrial system were more

capitalistic and less socialistic in nature, so it would help promote the progress of the well off and well educated upper castes and inversely it would slow down the progress and advancement of the lower castes. Mahatma Gandhi had advocated the philosophy of socialism for the welfare of the poor and the depressed. The poor and the depressed would be treated equally and be kept better under socialism than capitalism. Under socialism, the government is usually anxious to meet the basic needs of the citizens regardless of the differences of caste, religion etc. This advantage will not be available automatically with the progressive disappearance of the socialist ideas and practices on the economic and industrial fronts.

Socialism of course had its own demerits where Ambedkar was not solely one of the admirers of socialism or communism. He strongly opposed communism and he was generally in favor of a democratic system of parliamentary type under which minorities and lower castes would be comparatively safer by means of the use of vote, political parties and an independent judiciary.

Ambedkar was also put off by the lack of religion or opposition to religion implied by a communist system. Therefore, generally Ambedkar was in favor of continuing a democratic system of parliamentary type under which the poor and backward castes would be able to secure a reasonable protection of their rights and freedom and means of livelihood. Mahatma Gandhi on the whole had a constructive and even forgiving attitude towards the past history, traditions and intellectual heritage, including the ancient literature and epics and others. He certainly argued that wholesale acceptance of these sources or philosophies was insulting to human intelligence. He did emphasize a rigorous examination of the various ideas and ideals recommended by the Vedas, Shastras and the Rishis or Seers of the past. However, over all, he had an admiring attitude and he emphasized a consistent and systematic use of these sources and ideas for nursing the vision of modern India. He felt no difficulty in accepting and commending these intellectual treasures. His attitude was scientific and critical and he was of course against any blind belief and acceptance of any philosopher or hero of the past. To Ambedkar, several aspects, ideas or ideals of the past were revolting. Ambedkar rightly revolted against the exploitative tradition of the Hindus and their discriminatory caste system. He went to some length to trace the origin of the Shudras and their place in the Hindu society. Several of his criticisms appeared to be bitter and unacceptable to the old-fashioned and conservative Hindus. Some of his bold statements aroused controversies and debates. His book on the 'Annihilation of Caste' is a clear example of his bold attitude and philosophy.

While some critics believed that this hurt the sentiments of the Hindus, others defended Ambedkar, saying that, as a scholar and intellectual, he had every right to study and draw his own conclusions regarding the epic heroes. The constructive critics held that those who did not agree with Ambedkar had the freedom to offer their own analysis,

criticism and views to rebut those of Ambedkar. The other dimension of the controversy was whether or not the Maharashtra government was right in bringing out the concerned publication containing Ambedkar's views. Some people felt that the government should not spend public money on such public criticism on the people's heroes like Ram. Of course this view was not accepted. Constructive critics also pointed out that there was nothing wrong if the government published the literature or books of a great leader like Ambedkar although some part of it had contained a criticism of some popular heroes or epics. Public funds were well used and the cause of freedom of expression was well served by undertaking the publication. Suppression of criticism or views even in such basic or sensitive matters was not desirable. This was the overall reaction of the people at large in regard to the issue of Ambedkar's books and arguments. In case of Gandhi, such a situation never arose because his views and arguments, however pungent, were not seen in such a light. Besides, in case of Gandhi most of the books were largely published by private publishers or institutions and the question of criticizing by any government did not arise.

It can be stated that both in his training and in his vision of life, Ambedkar was deeply aware of the larger dynamics of the world, its complexity and differential bearing on social groups, localities and nations. He was pragmatic in his approach although not in his concerns.

1.5 Conclusion

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi considered the 'Father of the Nation', is renowned as the leader of the nationalist movement against British rule in India. He is very eminent for his doctrine of Satyagraha (non-violent protest). On the other hand is Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution of India, who worked very hard for the rights of the Dalits. These two men are highly respected as well as critiqued by many across the world.

1.6 Summary

They not only helped India gain its freedom but also made efforts to eradicate the social problems that existed back then. Both of them identified the problems faced by the lower castes and helped them get empowered. They tried to bring about changes in the systems that existed and led India towards development. Though they both identified the evil of untouchability as the biggest curse of the social order, they differed in their approaches towards its removal. They also paved a way for India after independence.

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1.8 Exercise

1. Discuss critically the roles of Gandhi and Ambedkar in present day scenario.
 2. Briefly discuss the significance of Poona Act in the history of India.
 3. Evaluate the role of social reformers in bringing social changes during the second half of 19th century India.
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1.9 Glossary

Ahimsa- Non-violence

Brahmacharya- Self-disciplined conduct, including celibacy

Charkha- Spinning wheel; wheel of life Dharma- Religion, moral practice, duty

Harijans - Gandhi's term for the untouchables of the Indian caste system

Himsa- Violence

Satyagraha- Holding fast to Truth; used by Gandhi to describe actions of nonviolent or passive resistance

Swadeshi- National self-reliance; used by Gandhi to label his movement for the boycott of foreign goods

Swaraj- Indian independence, self-rule

Dalit- includes those who are designated in administrative parlance as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes.

Unit 2 □ Gandhi on Harijans

Structure

2.1 Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.2.1 Coining of the Term ‘Harijans’

2.3. Gandhi and Untouchables

2.3.1 Gandhi’s Contribution

2.3.2 Serving Nation by Removal of Untouchability

2.4 Strategies for Eradication of Untouchability

2.4.1 Role of Ambedkar in Removal of Untouchability

2.4.2 Formation of Harijan Sevak Sangh

2.5 Present Day Scenario

2.6 Conclusion

2.7 Summary

2.8 Questions

2.9 Suggested Readings

2.1 Objectives

- To understand the concept of Harijans
- To learn about Gandhi’s contribution towards untouchables
- To develop a view about the current situations on untouchability

2.2 Introduction

In India, according to the last Census, 101 million people belong to the scheduled castes. This vast group thus, comprises 15 percent of the population but is not concentrated in one area and is widely dispersed in different parts of the country. The members of the group have been diversely known at different times. In the Gupta time they have been described as living apart from village settlements and known as ‘Chandala’. The Manusmriti marks off this group as its touch pollutes; it also lays

down elaborate regulations to perpetuate their segregation from the rest of the population. Some of these regulations are extant even now in the form of disabilities for these people. They are said to be outside of the pale of the Hindu Varna vyavastha. In fact they have been described as 'a-Varna' or without Varna. This idea led the Census Superintendent for Assam in 1931 to suggest the term and throughout his report, it was said to be an improvement on earlier times like depressed classes or outcastes.

These groups have been relegated by Hindu custom to such unclean and polluting professions as scavenging, sweeping, leather working and washing clothes. For thousands of years, they are forced to live apart, work apart, eat separately and worship apart. Even in death and after, the distinction lingers. They are excluded from using the common cremation ground. As late as 1946, the Mahajans of Navasari in Gujarat had to be persuaded with great effort to permit the body of an old member of a Scheduled Caste to be cremated on the common ground. Even when they give up their traditional and ritually unclean occupations or take up such respectable roles as cultivators or servants, they continue to suffer the disabilities of their caste status. In certain areas, besides being untouchables, they have been regarded as unapproachable. At one place in the south, these people had to keep away from different levels of upper caste people -33 feet from the lowest group, 66 feet from the second middling caste group, and 99 feet from the Brahmins. Rules ordained that an untouchable had to shout a warning before entering a street so that his contaminating shadow might not fall on the ritually cleaner persons. What style of dress or ornaments he could wear and what not, was prescribed by custom. He could not enjoy music at weddings. Nor could he enter a house belonging to a caste Hindu, or any Hindu temple or draw water from a common well. Disregard of these prohibitions had led to serious consequences. Chamars had been beaten for dressing like Rajputs and mounting of a horse by an untouchable bridegroom for his bridal procession had led to the boycott of the caste in question by higher caste neighbors. In 1931, the Kallar of Ramnad in Tamil Nadu framed ten prohibitions for the exterior castes, viz:

1. Adi-dravidas and Devendrakula Velalars should not wear clothes below their knees.
2. These men and women should not wear gold ornaments.
3. Their women should carry water in pitchers and not in copper or brass vessels.
4. Their children should not read.
5. Their children should only attend the cattle of Mirasdaras.

6. They should not cultivate the land.
7. They must sell their land to Mirasdars at cheap rates.
8. They must work as coolies for a mere pittance.
9. They should not use Indian music in their marriage ceremonies and other festivities.
10. They must stop the practice of going on a palanquin or a horse in a marriage procession.

2.2.1 Coining of the term ‘Harijans’

The word harijan was used by the poet Narsi Mehta much before Gandhi used it. Mehta himself was a Nagar Brahmin but he was very close to the harijans. Shailendra Mahato, one of the prominent leaders of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, had come out with a new finding that poet Valmiki was the first to use the term harijan. Perhaps Valmiki himself belonged to an untouchable caste. Mahato had accused Ambedkar of being anti-advasi. He put them in the category of Scheduled Tribes, just to obliterate their separate identity. Sometime back the Indigenous People’s Conference was held in Geneva, which vehemently opposed the categorization of the advasi as the “Scheduled Tribes.” Mahato also said that Ambedkar never wanted the advasis to have their own representation in the Indian legislatures on account of his minness. It was Gandhi who fought for the rights of all categories of the deprived people including the harijans and others.

2.2.2 Untouchables in different parts of India

The untouchables in different parts of India do not form one solid mass. They are split up into hundreds of castes and sub-castes. There are about 1100 such groups. Some of these are spread out in different states and regions and share a common identity and sometimes a common name. Even if they are listed in terms of certain common characteristics and similarities there will still be some 400 separate groups. Each untouchable community has a name, a separate occupation, its own set of rules and more often than not, its own mechanism for social control. These groups practise untouchability amongst themselves. They would not eat together or accept water from the hands of any other untouchable nor do they allow inter-marriage among different groups. The untouchables of Uttar Pradesh consider the untouchables of Punjab lower than themselves. They not only do not inter- marry with them but even do not drink from the same vessel. This shows how strong the notion of untouchability is in the Indian mind. Even though the untouchables are suffering from a number of disabilities on account of this notion, they are unable to give it up even among themselves.

2.3 Gandhi and Untouchables

Having brought up in an orthodox Vaishnava family in a region where untouchability is strong even today, Gandhiji realized the heavy odds against which he had to contend in the campaign for the removal of untouchability. Although he sincerely believed that uplift of the untouchables was an end in itself, there was no doubt that he realized its wide socio-political ramifications. In the unceasing efforts that he made for the attainment of this objective, he did not fail to bring in political and psychological arguments besides the religious. Sociologists have sometimes failed to reconcile Gandhiji's ideas on Varna and caste. Varna, according to Gandhiji, had nothing to do with caste. To him caste was a caricature of Varna and a source of shame to Hinduism and to India. He praised Varna for a number of reasons : it ensured hereditary skill and limited competition, released men for happiness and spiritual pursuits and rejected the idea of superiority and inferiority. The large number of castes and sub-castes together with their elaborate ceremonials did not signify any religious system or order for Gandhiji. Swami Vivekananda held that caste was simply a crystallized social institution and not a religious institution. Gandhiji stoutly denied that there was any sanction for untouchability in the Hindu scriptures. The Bhagwad Gita nowhere shows that the chandala is in any sense inferior to the Brahmin. To him untouchability was a sin. He regarded practice of untouchability as satanic activity. Confronted by a series of quotations from Manu, Brihaspati and Baudhyana , he pleaded literary ignorance of the Shastras but claimed to understand the secret o Hinduism. It was for these reasons that he regarded it is an excrescence of Hinduism. He was however, opposed to the destruction of caste although it sanctioned untouchability. It would be as wrong to do so as to destroy the body because of an ugly truth. Gandhi saw that Hindu society was sharply divided into the caste Hindus and the untouchables. This would be a serious problem for national integration. It was necessary to put up a united front against British imperialism. Removal of untouchability could be an eminently suitable step to defeat the policy of divide and rule employed by the British. It is for this reason that he advanced the argument that Indians could not claim equality to millions of their own countrymen. On one occasion he compared the atrocities committed towards the untouchables by caste Hindus to atrocities committed by the British rulers in Punjab in 1919. His heart was so much grieved at the disabilities and humiliations heaped on the untouchables that he expressed a desire to be reborn an untouchable in the next life so that he might share the sorrow, sufferings and affronts leveled at them. It was essential for religious people to embrace the untouchables as love was the root of religion and the lowly should be raised to one's heart.

Another plea he advocated that exploitation of the untouchables was the root cause of India's slavery. Gandhiji wanted the end of exploitation of one country by another, and of one person by another. He wanted the end of hatred between one community and another as he thought hate to be considered as one form of violence. Swaraj to him had no meaning unless it meant the removal of untouchability and also of its attendant disabilities. There was indeed a more dire need of Swaraj for the untouchables than for others. As he observed: 'I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatever'.

Although Gandhiji was speaking and writing against untouchability long before his epic fast in 1932, it was then for the first time that Indians and the British realized his passion for the work. When new reforms were on the anvil, separate electorate was proposed for the untouchables. He opposed this on the ground that it would perpetuate the segregation of the Harijans and thus make the institution permanent. Dr. Ambedkar favored separate electorate as the best means to give the Scheduled Castes the power to redress the wrongs. Gandhiji embarked on a fast unto death in Yervada prison. Through his fast Gandhiji wanted to throw in the scale of justice. On the sixth day of the fast the British Government relented and the Poona Pact was signed. It signified the abandonment of the scheme of separate electorate and doubled the representation of Scheduled Castes in the state legislatures. On breaking his fast he declared: 'They may hold my life as hostage for its due fulfillment'.

2.3.1 Gandhi's Contribution

Gandhi has drawn a comprehensive programme for rendering service to the harijans; though he is fully convinced that one cannot achieve liberation through others. One has to work for it. He believes that unless one eats, he cannot have full stomach or one cannot see heaven unless one meets his death.

Basically, his programme for the harijan liberation was for changing the hearts and minds of the caste Hindus. To that end, he and his ashram inmates engaged themselves in daily scavenging work in the ashram and even sometimes in the surrounding areas. He was firmly of the opinion that as part of their atonement for the oppressions of harijans by their ancestors for centuries, the members of the upper caste must serve them in all earnestness. He did believe that the untouchables were true harijans—the children of God. These children of God often made dirty their hands and bodies so that people of other sections of the society could lead a clean and healthy life. If the untouchables failed to perform their work, how could Brahmins lead a life of purity and cleanliness? But all this must change and even the upper caste people would have to undertake their own scavenging work. Hence, he prayed for the day when sweepers would hold the Bhagavad Gita in their hands, and the Brahmins would have

broomstick in their hands. It is only through such change of social roles that a new social order based on equity and justice could be established.

Of late a very clever question has been raised by the people with vested interests. If harijans are the children of God, then are all others the children of Satan? This question itself is based on bad logic. All that Gandhi has meant that the untouchables are as much the children of God as others. Harijans may be the special children of God as they serve his creation with their all strength and sincerity. But he moves further while replying to the above question. He asserts that when the caste Hindus will give up the practice of untouchability voluntarily, only then all “touchable” people will deserve to be truly called harijans. And in such a situation alone the grace of God will come over them. Gandhi has worked for a society free from the scourge of untouchability based on equity, equality and justice.

He described himself as a scavenger, weaver, peasant and worker. In the course of his trial, he described his profession as that of a scavenger. He turned himself into a scavenger on his own volition. We should not forget that the word “mehatar” (scavenger) is a derivative of the word mahatar (greater)”. He looked at the elimination of untouchability as his life’s work and for that he was willing to sacrifice his life. We knew that the aim of his life was to attain moksha (salvation). But he asserted that if at all he would have rebirth, he would prefer to be born as an untouchable so that he could feel their pain and suffering in his own persona. During a meeting at Ahmedabad in 1916 he said with all sincerity and seriousness at his command that he was even willing to offer his head in the course of his effort to eliminate the scourge of untouchability in the society.

2.3.2 Serving nation by removal of untouchability

For Gandhi broomstick was a symbol of revolution. He was of the opinion that society devoid of equality and brotherhood could never reach the state of revolution. Such a society could never fight against slavery. He believed that the Valmikis were the most downtrodden even among the Dalits. They occupied the same place in the society which the mother occupied in the family. He said: ‘By treating removal of untouchability as an Ashram observance, we assert our belief, that untouchability is not only not a part and parcel of Hinduism, but a plague, which it is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat. Removal of untouchability spells the breaking down of barriers between man and man, ultimately leading to unity of all beings. We find such barriers erected everywhere in the world, but here we have been mainly concerned with the untouchability which has received religious sanction in India, and reduced crores of human beings to a state bordering on slavery.’

It was Gandhiji's practice to attack evils from both ends. Thus, for the eradication of untouchability and uplift of Harijans, the latter had to play a positive role and not to remain silent beneficiaries. He asked them to lead pure lives and adopt clean habits. They should give up beef and carrion eating. They should also give up drinking and abandon untouchability amongst themselves. They were advised not to be violent. They were bound to triumph if they bore their persecution patiently. In case of persecution, they should migrate to other villages. In fact, he approved of the emigration of Scheduled Castes from village Kavitha after intense persecution by caste Hindus. Creating dissatisfaction among them would only tend to perpetuate a vicious division amongst the Hindus.

2.4 Strategies for eradication of untouchability

A number of practical steps were recommended for the removal of untouchability. All public schools, temples and roads that were open to other non-Brahmins should be open to them also. Caste Hindus were asked to open schools for harijan children, to dig wells for them and to render them all personal service that they may need. Propaganda for temperance and hygiene would have to be made among them. On the removal of untouchability, the harijans would have the same status as that enjoyed by others. Gandhiji held that education and reform among the harijans should not be a precondition for removal of untouchability. He believed that unless untouchability was removed, no reform could take place.

Removal of untouchability was not an easy task and Harijan Sevaks had to contend against severe opposition. In the village of Kavitha, Rajputs mercilessly attacked helpless harijans for daring to send their children to public school. In Kathiawar, harijans were persecuted by caste Hindus as they were held to be responsible for the outbreak of epidemic among cattle. The most stubborn opposition was to the programme of temple entry by the harijans. Gandhiji insisted on it because he regarded it as one spiritual act that would constitute the method of freedom to the untouchables and assure them that they were not outcasts before God. Some of his impatient and over enthusiastic workers wanted to stage a Satyagraha at the entrance of temples along with harijans to prevent orthodox persons from entering temples. As this would have amounted to compulsion, Gandhiji did not permit it. No one can be purified against his will. The orthodox should be converted to the belief that it was wrong to prevent harijans from entering temples. The Government of Travancore by a proclamation threw upon the door of its state temples to harijans in 1936. Two years earlier, the Temple Entry Bill introduced in the Madras Assembly by a private member

could not be passed due to stiff opposition of orthodox Hindus and apathy of the Government. Gandhiji's work gave self-respect to the rising generation of Scheduled Castes. B.S.Murthy, a harijan leader from Andhra, once observed: 'The first lesson I learnt from Mahatma Gandhi fifteen years ago is that no one can suppress or depress me except myself'.

Gandhi stood for sarvodaya but the journey must start with antodaya. He was never moved by the feeling of pity rather he was driven by a strong sense of duty. That was also true of his work for the harijans. That is why in his scheme of constructive programme, Harijan seva occupied a central position. In Gandhian perspective, both Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. were the real messiahs of the poor and the downtrodden. Dr. King always underlined the fact that unless the mind of the Whites had been pure and compassionate, the problems of the Blacks could not be solved. Gandhi exhorted the caste Hindus to undertake Harijan seva as a matter of their self-assigned duty so that they could undergo a genuine change of heart and could reach a state of purity and piety.

2.4.1 Role of Ambedkar in removal of untouchability

The works done by Gandhi and Ambedkar were complementary to each other. Gandhi wanted to bring back the Dalits to the mainstream of the society through service and elimination of untouchability, primarily through a movement for the change of heart of the caste Hindu. On the other hand, Ambedkar wanted to achieve the same goal through getting them involved in a struggle for their liberation. But many people forget that without Gandhi's support, Ambedkar would not have become the Law Minister of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to bring foreign experts for the making of the Indian Constitution. It was on Gandhi's initiative that Ambedkar was made the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly. Gandhi wanted Ambedkar to work as a representative of all sections of the Indian society, instead of remaining just a representative of his own community. Thus, transcending different castes and sub-castes, through the works of Gandhi and Ambedkar, a collective identity of the entire harijan community emerged. That was no small contribution. Gandhi's commitment and contribution to the harijan could be also illustrated by the fact that towards the end of his life he refused to bless any married couple if one of them was not from the untouchable community. On the other hand, we must take into account what Ambedkar said on 25 September 1932 after signing the Poona Pact with Gandhi. He said: 'I must confess that I was surprised, immensely surprised when I met him, that there was so much in common between him and me. In fact, whenever any disputes were carried to him.... I was astounded to see that the man who held such divergent views from mine at the Round Table Conference came

immediately to my rescue. I am very grateful to Mahatmaji for having extricated me from what might have been a very difficult situation' (The Life of Mahatma Gandhi, by Louis Fischer, Bhavan's eighth edition, 2003, p. 407). Gandhi tried to make caste Hindus to get rid of the feeling and practice of untouchability. Ambedkar, on the other hand, worked to organize Dalits to make them struggle to have their own dignity of life and identity. Thus, their movements, taking to different paths had the same goal—a new sense of dignity and identity for Dalits.

As stated earlier, their movements were complementary to each other. It was on account of such movements that a national consensus emerged which led to the abolition of untouchability as provided under Article 17 of our Constitution. It was also made a cognizable offence. It was for the same cause that the Mahatma treated himself as harijan for all practical purposes. He identified himself entirely with them. Among the fundamental duties ascribed under our Constitution, it became the sacred duty of every Indian to work towards the spread of unity and brotherhood among the Indian people, transcending all differences and distinctions based on religion, language, region and class. That idea was also one of the major contributions of Gandhi who not only had perceived such a dream for India, but also had worked tirelessly to that end.

2.4.2 Formation of Harijan Sevak Sangh

For the uplift of the harijans and for preaching the message for the removal of untouchability, Gandhi established in 1933 the Harijan Sevak Sangha. By strenuous efforts he collected large sums for its use. When some harijans demanded that the Sangha be manned only by themselves, Gandhi insisted that caste Hindus should be engaged in this work as they had to atone for their past sins against the harijans. He asked his followers to proceed with the work with utmost patience. Once Gandhi's enthusiastic followers attacked Swami Lal Nath, leader of the orthodox group, as he attempted to make a speech. Pained at this, he undertook a seven day fast to atone for the mistake of his followers. He declared that it was impossible by violence to wean millions of caste Hindus from the evil of untouchability which they had hitherto been taught to regard as an article of faith. He said that a sacred cause cannot be served by a satanic method. He held that means was as important as the end. He asked the caste Hindus not only to show silent sympathy for the cause but to help it actively. If they did not do anything to defend the helpless and downtrodden and remained spectators, they might become abettors to the crime. He knew that untouchability could not be removed through legislation but believed that the aid of law could be invoked when it acted as hinders or interferes with the progress of reform.

Critics of Gandhi held that the harijan Movement was essentially political in nature. It was motivated by his concern for the solidarity of Hinduism and by his anxiety not to allow the harijans to go out of the Hindu fold. This allegation was promptly denied by Gandhi. The Anti- Untouchability idea had dawned upon him at the age of twelve. It was not without protest that he performed ablutions at his mother's bidding on touching a scavenger called Uka in his school. He was an ardent believer in Advaita philosophy. His passion for the untouchability work was an integral part of his life. So close was his identification with the harijans that he regarded himself as a Bhangi, a scavenger, a weaver and a labourer.

2.5 Present Day Scenario

The power seekers and power brokers hardly engage themselves in creating a new social order. Rather they are ever engaged in vitiating, dividing and even destroying the social fabric. We firmly believe that the mind, social fabric and the culture of our country have been built up by our saints and sages. Even the mind of Indian society has been built brick by brick by ardent and high-minded social reformers and spiritualists. But presently a number of political parties have undertaken the task of vitiating its social and cultural mind. It is also a part of such conspiracy that a faceless and mindless assertion is being made to say that Mahatma Gandhi is an anti-Dalit and he even has heaped insults on them by calling them harijans. This is nothing but a shameless attempt to promote their own interests by making caste Hindus and the rest (particularly the Dalit) to fight each other. There is no intention of doing any good to any section of the society, at least of all to the Dalits in the entire game. This is just an attempt to butter their own bread. There is a saying in Vidarbha that which of the bulls engaged in a fierce duel wins is hardly of any concern or consequence to the plot owner. The plot in any case, would be destroyed in the process. This is an undeniable truth. We should never forget that Mahatma Gandhi belongs to all of us, indeed to all humanity. He does not belong to any particular province or caste or language. One who belongs to all, in fact belongs to none. Hence everyone has the freedom to criticize or even condemn him without any rhyme or reason. Power seekers are hardly interested in any objective study of history. They pick up some stray points or incidents out of their historical context to support their allegation even against an innocent and pure person like Mahatma. But they could not change the glaring and truthful facts of history. It is much easier to attack Gandhi without making a close study of our freedom struggle or even his life and teachings. But such attempts confuse the common man. That could be a serious cause for worry. Kusumagraj, a leading poet, has a poem called Akherchi Kamai—the last earning. It

depicts a scene where five phantoms sit together in a city place and engage each other in a kind of dialogue.

2.6 Conclusion

Banishment of untouchability by law alone does not solve the problem. It has to be admitted that untouchability has not been banished from the hearts of millions of people and the hands of law cannot reach all the nooks and corners of the country where petty injustices and discriminations are practised against the untouchables. Shri Jagjivan Ram, who had been a Union Minister for more than two decades, had always been talking of social revolution and held that most harijans still live in 'Psychological cages'. Murthy has observed : 'life is more than law and law cannot solve problems of fundamental human attitudes. The mind of the so-called upper castes has changed very considerably. The change is, however, not yet complete'. This is corroborated by the annual reports published by the Commissioner of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. In the year 1966-67, 2,981 complaints were received at the headquarters and in the regional offices of the Commissioner dealing with the practices of untouchability, harassment, land and housing problems, service matters and matters relating to education, drinking water, allotment of shops, etc. While untouchability is not generally met with in towns, it is still rampant in the countryside. At frequent intervals we read news about oppressions heaped on harijan women and children. Sometimes cases of burning of harijans are also reported.

2.7 Summary

Progress in this regard is naturally slow. Mental attitudes take time to change. Education, economic betterment, technological development and social mobility are hastening the pace of change and a recent study by Sunanda Patwardhan on the Scheduled Casts of Maharashtra reveals the rapid strides made by them in western India. The twin processes of westernization and sanskritization are at work among them. With a frail body but indomitable will, Gandhiji throws himself in this work, sets its tone and directs it. It is for the present generation to carry the work forward with revolutionary fervor and establish social equality and banish discrimination based on caste. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that he lived and died for that cause. Ignoring all this, those who create unnecessary controversy by putting our leaders against each other are failing from their primary duty enshrined under our Constitution out of their mean mindedness and selfish interests. Nay, they are also

committing a crime against our society and against all Indian people. The whole country should realize this truth in the depth of its being.

2.8 Suggested Readings

1. Gandhi M.K., Ashram Observances in Action (Ahmedabad,1955) p.76
2. Gandhi M.K., Removal of Untouchability (Ahmedabad,1954)p.192.
3. Harper E.B., Social Consequences of an Unsuccessful low Caste Movement, in Social Mobility In The Caste System In India (The Hague,1968),p.36.
4. Pyarelal, The Epic Fast(Ahmedabad,1952)p.144
5. Sachidananda, Social Change In Village India,1988
6. Tendulkar D.G., Mahatma(Bombay,1952)p.235

2.8 Questions

1. Discuss in brief the role of Gandhiji in banishment of untouchability.
2. Discuss in details the factors responsible for the formation of Harijan Seva Sangh.
3. Critically analyze the role of Ambedkar in removal of untouchability
4. Evaluate the current situation of untouchables in India today.
5. Discuss the sociological significance of untouchables in Indian context.
6. Point out the importance of the position of untouchables as mentioned in ancient scripts.

Unit 3 □ Ambedkar : Dalit and Hindu Society

Structure

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Who are Dalits?
- 3.4 Gandhi – Ambedkar Debate
- 3.5 Dalit Identity
- 3.6 Ambedkar on Hindu society
- 3.7 Dalit Movement
- 3.8 Contemporary issues on Dalit
- 3.9 Conclusion
- 3.10 Summary
- 3.11 Questions
- 3.12 Suggested Readings
- 3.13 Glossary

3.1 Objectives

1

- To understand the views and contributions of B.R Ambedkar on the issues of depressed class especially Dalits, their rights and position in the mainstream society along with an extensive study on the Dalit movements.
- To understand the renowned debates between Gandhi and Ambedkar on the various issues related to untouchability, Dalits, conversion of religion, caste system prevailing in the structure of Hindu society.
- To understand the idea of the identity formation and its usage in the processes of our structural society.
- To understand the social livings of the Dalits, their various movements, the transition of their identity from the colonial to post colonial period.

3.2 Introduction

“In the Hindu religion, one can[not] have freedom of speech. A Hindu must surrender his freedom of speech. He must act according to the Vedas. If the

Vedas do not support the actions, instructions must be sought from the Smritis, and if the Smritis fail to provide any such instructions, he must follow in the footsteps of the great men. He is not supposed to reason. Hence, so long as you are in the Hindu religion, you cannot expect to have freedom of thought”

—**B.R. Ambedkar (Firstpost 2018)**

There is a divisional as well as hierarchical differentiation in each and every society. The masses are categorized on the basis of various determinant factors which are rigidly integrated in the structure of our society. From a sociological perspective we always tend to see such divisions as oppressor and the oppressed which is the operating principle in this society. Thereby a new deliberation is needed in order to make the academic world more sensitive and responsive towards the issues and concerns of the subaltern-oppressed communities. Amongst these, the Dalits, who constitute 15% of India’s population, their struggle for moral equality, justice, rights and position have always been a heated debate.

B.R Ambedkar was an icon who was remembered principally as the chief drafts man of the Indian Constitution. Also he was a valiant fighter for finding out the suitable place for the Dalits in the existing caste structure. He himself belonged to Mahar caste of Maharone of the lowest caste of Maharashtra. His strategies to achieve the goal of empowering Dalits might be shifted with changing contexts but the goal always remained same i.e., attaining equality with caste Hindus in all spheres of life. Ambedkar, himself, strongly advocated for abolishing the caste system and supported Dalit struggles.

Ambedkar was not just a political figure but adored by a large mass of India as a prophetic icon. For the Dalits, their transformation from having non existential identity into right bearing citizens was mostly due to his socio-political struggles. His presence provided the Dalits as an inspiration and momentum to new social movements. He inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and also campaigned against social discrimination towards the untouchables (Dalits).

3.3 Who are Dalits?

In simple terms Dalit means ‘oppressed’ ‘broken/ scattered’ in Sanskrit and Hindi. Dalit is mostly used for the ethnic groups in India that have been kept repressed. Dalits are excluded from the four fold Varna system of Hinduism and are seen as forming a fifth Varna, also known by the name of Panchanama. They are considered impure and polluting and are therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated

from the rest of society. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) are officially designated groups of historically disadvantaged people in India. In modern literature, the Scheduled Castes are referred to as 'Dalit' which has been popularized by B.R. Ambedkar. They are also known as 'Untouchables' who are members of the lowest social group in the Hindu caste system.

3.4 Gandhi – Ambedkar Debate

Gandhi is deeply religious minded in nature. He rejects untouchability, but in Smriti text preached for untouchability. He supports Varna divisions as they are occupational categories. He does not think of them as ascriptive in nature. He believes that religion is about a person's identity. Values and beliefs are attached to it and therefore one cannot change religion by which conversion is not right.

On the other hand, Ambedkar argues that Hinduism should be abolished. It is not a religion but is a class ethic. It preaches inequality. There is little hope and space given to the depressed castes, therefore he has recommended change of religion or conversion to other religion.

Gandhi argues that upper castes can wash their sins through inter - caste marriages. Ambedkar too recommends inter-caste marriages, but he argues that the upper castes section will never allow doing the same. While seeking solution to the problems of these depressed class called Dalits in one hand, Dr. Ambedkar has inferred from the whole ongoing situation that only the untouchables can lead untouchables towards the assertion of rights in the Hindu structural society. He never observes the support of any caste Hindu led groups for his mission for Dalits, namely, social justice and equality. It is very significant to mention that when he has launched his Satyagraha to establish equality among the Hindus by asking the people to allow the Harijans to enter the temples, he has not been supported by either Gandhiji or Hindu leaders or the Indian National Congress. After independence, while quitting the Nehru Cabinet in 1951, he has achieved the realization that the conversion of the Harijans into Buddhism is the only alternative to escape from the dominance of Hinduism (i.e. Brahmanism) and from the curse of untouchability, so as to enjoy an equal status and to live with pride and self-respect on par with others in the Hindu community. It has been the Satyagraha for the human rights as untouchables are denied the use of natural water like the caste Hindus everywhere in the country. They have been prevented to fetch water from the Chavadar tank of Mahad. This Satyagraha helps unite the untouchables to fight for their human rights.

It is true that Gandhiji himself denounces the practice of untouchability which has been operating in the Hindu society and therefore he has launched the anti-untouchability campaign for awakening the consciousness of the Hindus to the wrongs inflicted on the Harijan community. He has also helped Harijans to raise their rights and status. But Dr. Ambedkar has not been satisfied with the political approach of Gandhiji and his bona fides. Consequently, Dr. Ambedkar has emerged as a prominent leader of the Harijan community specially at the time of the Poona Pact in Sept. 1932. He vehemently has criticised the way of handling the problems of the Harijans by Gandhiji. In fact, Gandhiji has viewed untouchability as a political problem and not as a social problem. But Dr. Ambedkar has been afraid that the Gandhian approach in dealing with the problem of untouchability adheres to make caste Hindus more powerful and untouchables weaker. There has been raised deep hostility between Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar over the upliftment of untouchables.

It was then the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1931, in which Gandhi vehemently opposed Ambedkar's demand for separate electorates for the Dalits. The intense feelings of the Dalits against Gandhi were manifested by black flag demonstrations against him on his return to Bombay. In 1932, the Communal Award of the British government granted separate electorates for the depressed classes. M.K. Gandhi took upon fast unto death in his prison cell in Poona, protesting that separate electorates were a device which would separate the untouchables from the Hindu society for ever. As Gandhi weakened, Dr. Ambedkar capitulated, but it was only when some Hindu leaders pledged their help in the removal of untouchability, and agreed that the untouchables would have seats in all elected bodies. Dr. Ambedkar, however, never reconciled himself to this outcome. According to him, it forced the Dalits to agree to live at the mercy of the Hindus.

On the contrary, the impact of the evil still persists, even forty six years after independence. According to the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, there are many areas where these weaker sections are denied even common access to drinking water. There has been a sharp increase in the atrocities on them, and their socio-economic conditions are deteriorating, despite the Dalit movements.

3.5 Dalit Identity

Sunita Reddy Bharati in her article "Dalit : A Term Asserting Unity" has stated that the term Dalit is a socially constructed identity. She has also stated that the subaltern communities who have been discriminated all these years identify themselves with Dalits. Therefore, they have come together and united in opposition to other groups of the Hindu social order.

The word Dalit was not first used by B.R Ambedkar, rather this term was used in 1930's in Hindi and Marathi translation of 'depressed classes' by the British who called as Scheduled Castes. Sunita Reddy Bharati argued that the 'Dalit Panthers' revived the term in their 1973 manifesto and explained its usage of the term to include several sections or groups such as the Scheduled Tribes, Neo-Buddhists, working people, landless and poor peasant women and all those being exploited politically, economically, and were also discriminated on the grounds of religion.

"The clearest definition of Dalit in its contemporary usage comes from a letter written to Zelliott by Gangadhar Pantawane, a professor of Marathi at Milind College, now at Marathwada University in Aurangabad, and founder editor of Asmitadarsh (Mirror of Identity), the chief organ of Dalit literature:" To me ,Dalit is not the caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. He does not believe in God, rebirth, soul, holy books teaching separatism, fate and heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution" (Bharati: 2002)

Dalit identity is a term which is used as a label to identify and provide a platform for Dalits in asserting their stand and rights in the mainstream societal structure.

3.6 Ambedkar on Hindu Society

For Ambedkar the Hindu code based caste system was the most ancient concept , more than the Vedas based on ascription and dominance. He argued that this form of Hindu fold caste system was the most exploitative, discriminative and rigid structure of the Indian society. He viewed caste as inhuman, undemocratic and authoritarian. His firm belief was that the caste system would hamper the fabric of social unity in the society and generate caste conflicts and wars challenging the basic structure and roots of democracy. He therefore preferred to follow the political approach in dealing with the problems of untouchables and identified their interests, by taking affirmative actions of safeguards and reservations as a solution.

His ideas about religion is more of a function of a true religion which is to uplift the individual. For that purpose it should teach the virtues of fellow-feeling, equality and liberty. Religion should mainly be concerned with principles only. It cannot be a matter of rules. The moment it degenerates into rules, it ceases to be religion as it kills responsibility which is the essence of a truly religious act. Religion is for man and not man for religion (Bardia: 2009).

He criticised Hinduism, its injustice, Tyranny and humbug. Ultimately Ambedkar renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. Since 1935, he preached his philosophy

to renounce Hinduism. As mentioned in the earlier section that Ambedkar recommended change of religion or conversion to other religion so that there would be a space for the Dalits to rise to equal position in the mainstream society.

While explaining the foundation of Buddha's religion, Ambedkar said that "Buddhism denies the existence of God and soul. The real basis of Buddhism is rational way to eradicate suffering. "There is said Buddha 'suffering in the world, suffering wide spread'. Ninety percent people were afflicted with suffering or misery of some kind or the other. The main object of Buddhism is to emancipate the suffering humanity."(Bardia:2009). Ambedkar was a great admirer of Buddhism. He embraced Buddhism because Buddhism instructed people how they should behave with one another and to do his duty towards each other. The relation with God would be revealed in the light of equality, fraternity and liberty. For him, Buddhism was based on morality.

Ambedkar, in his historic speech in Nagpur on October 15, 1956, a day after he had embraced Buddhism, said, "The movement to leave the Hindu religion was taken in hand by us in 1955, when a resolution was made in Yeola. Even though I was born in the Hindu religion, I will not die in the Hindu religion. This oath I made earlier; yesterday, I proved it true. I am happy; I am ecstatic! I have left hell — this is how I feel. I do not want any blind followers. Those who come into the Buddhist religion should come with an understanding; they should consciously accept that religion"(Times of India,2019)

3.7 Dalit Movement

The Indian society is segmentally divided on the basis of caste. The status of a person is determined on his caste in which he or she is born. In traditional caste system, the lowest caste lies at the bottom of the social ladder and the upper caste at the top. People belonging to lower caste have to be subjected to various caste disabilities. Amongst these low castes there belong to the Dalits who are also called untouchables and not allowed to change their caste occupation. The extent of disabilities is so high that they are not even allowed to stay in the mainstream society rather they would have to live in the peripheries or the outskirts of villages and towns. These oppressed Dalits have been raised with various struggles to fight against the social exploitation in all forms. It has become evident that there are factors which have made deep impact on caste system which has also brought social upheaval and an awakening among Dalits. Firstly, the impact of western ideas and its values such as liberality of thought, individual freedom and equality which have started making inroads into the traditional matrix of the Hindu social system and the caste and other institutions.

Secondly, the British administration with its rational and modern concepts such as equality before law and introduction of modern technology created the necessary intellectual and psychological climate for the emergence of social reforms movements.

The Scheduled Castes are known as Harijans i.e., the children of God coined by Mahatma Gandhi in 1933. There are many studies on Dalits and its socio-political condition but there are only a few systematic empirically sound studies on their movements. The Mahar movement of Maharashtra has been considered as an all India movement. There has been many contributions by various proponents such as Gail Omvedt, Bharat Patankar, Ghanshyam Shah who have given an overview of the Dalit liberation in India. The former deals with the colonial period whereas the latter looks at both the colonial and the post colonial periods. The study by Verba, Ahmad and Bhatt (1972) on the Blacks and the Harijans has given us a comparative picture of the movements of these communities in the USA and India.

The main issues around which most of the Dalit movements have been centered in the colonial and post colonial periods are confined to the problem of untouchability. There have been various movements started for maintaining or increasing reservations in political offices, government jobs and welfare programmes.

Ghanshyam Shah classifies the Dalit movements into reformative and alternative movements. The former tries to reform the caste system to solve the problem of untouchability. The alternative movement attempts to create an alternative socio-cultural structure by conversion to some other religion or by acquiring education, economic status and political power. Both these above types of movements use political means and sources to attain their objectives. The reformative movements are further divided into Bhakti movements, neo-Vedantik movements and Sanskritisation movements. Patankar and Omvedt classify the Dalit movement into caste based and class based movements.

Bhakti movement in 15th century has developed two traditions of saguna and nirguna. The former believes in the form of God mostly Vishnu or Shiv relating to the Vaishnavite or Shaivaite traditions. It preaches equality among all castes though it subscribes to the Varnashram dharma and the caste social order. The devotees of Nirguna believe in formless universal God. Ravidas and Kabir are the major figures of this tradition. It becomes more popular among the Dalits in urban areas in the early 20th century as it opens the possibility of salvation for all. It says about social equality.

Neo-Vedantik movement was initiated by Hindu religious and social reformers. These movements attempted to remove untouchability by taking them into the fold of the

caste system. Dayanand Saraswati who was the founder of Arya Samaj believed that the caste system was a political institution created by the rulers for the common good of society and not a natural or religious distinction.

Satish Kumar Sharma's book on "Social Movements and Social Change" examines the relationship between the Arya Samaj and the untouchables. The study is confined to Punjab only but some of the observations are relevant for other part of the country as well. Arya Samaj has fought against the political movements of the untouchables. It goes against any move initiated by the untouchables for their solidarity and integration.

The neo-Vedantic movements and non-Brahmin movements have played an important catalytic role in developing anti-caste or anti Hinduism Dalit movements in some parts of the country. The Satyashodhak Samaj and the self-respect movements in Maharashtra and the Tamil Nadu, the Adhi Dharma and Adi Andhra movement in Bengal and Adi-Hindu movement in Uttar Pradesh are important anti-untouchability movements which have been launched in the last quarter of the 19th and the early part of 20th century.

There were scattered references to the Adi-Andhra, the Adi-Hindu and the Namashudra movements. Mark Juergensmeyer's book on "Religion as Social Vision" dealt with the Adi Dharma movement against untouchability in 20th century Punjab. The main plea of the movement was that the untouchables constituted a distinct religious community similar to those of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslim communities. Nandini Gooptu in her study on UP in the early 20th century briefly analysed the emergence of the Adi-Hindu movement in the urban areas of the region. Like Adi-Dharma, the leaders of the Adi-Hindu movement believed that the present form of Hinduism was imposed on them by the Aryan invaders. The movement did not pose a direct threat to the caste system. It was in essence, conceived as and remained a protest against the attribution of stigmatised roles and functions to the untouchable by means of a claim not to be Aryan Hindus; it was not developed into a full blown, direct attack on the caste system.

A section of untouchables who could improve their economic condition either by abandoning or continuing their traditional occupations launched struggles for higher status in the caste hierarchy. They followed Sanskritic norms and rituals. They tried to justify their claim to a higher social status in the caste hierarchy by inventing suitable mythologies.

The Shanars or Nadars of Tamil Nadu however crossed the boundary of untouchability. The Iravas of Kerala also blurred if not completely destroyed, the line of untouchability. The Nadars had organized movements in the late 19th century

against the civic disabilities which they suffered. They formed their caste organization in 1903 called SNDP Yogam. According to it the low social status of the Iravas was due to their low social and religious practices. The association launched activities for Sanskritising the norms and customs of the Iravas. They launched a Satyagraha for temple entry in the 1920s. They bargained with the then government for economic opportunities and political positions.

A major anti-touchability movement was launched by Dr Ambedkar in the 1920s in Maharashtra. He saw the opportunity and possibility of advancement for the untouchables through the use of political means to achieve social and economic equality with the highest classes in modern society. He organized the independent labour party on secular lines for protecting the interests of the laboring classes. It was dominated by Mahars.

The Dalits demanded a separate electorate in the 1930s which led to a conflict between Ambedkar and Gandhi. In the early 1930s Ambedkar concluded that the only way of improving the status of the untouchables was to renounce the Hindu religion. He found that Buddhism was appropriate as an alternative religion for the untouchables. He preferred Buddhism because it was an indigenous Indian religion of equality; a religion which was anti-caste and anti Brahmin. Ambedkar and his followers were converted to Buddhism in 1956. The movement for conversion to Buddhism had spread Dalit consciousness irrespective of whether Dalits became Buddhist or not. The Dalits of Maharashtra launched the Dalit Panther Movement in the early 1970s. Initially it was confined to the urban areas of Maharashtra and it was not spread in Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and other states.

Assertion for Dalit identity has almost become a central issue of Dalit movement. This involves local level collective action against discrimination and atrocities. Statues of Dr Ambedkar are found not only in urban Dalit localities but also in many villages where their number is fairly large. Dalits contribute to installing Ambedkar statues in their neighbourhood. They have to struggle to get a piece of land from local authorities to install the statue. The statues and photos of Dr Ambedkar are an expression of Dalit consciousness and their assertion for identity.

There are several local movements in which Dalits as a mass have to migrate from their villages protesting against discrimination and atrocities. In 1980s there are five such incidents. In protest against torture and beating among the Dalits, the village Sambarda has undertaken hijarat en mass migration like refugees from their native village and camped in the open before the district collector office for 131 days in 1989. Their demand stands for alternative settlement where their life and dignity will be secured. They want to get a concrete solution: alternative land to protect their

dignity. They are able to reach their mission against all odds and collusion between the ruling elite and vested interests. At last the village level movements have been succeeded in mobilizing Dalits in different parts of Gujarat.

The Dalit movements are dominated by their middle class raising issues related to identity and reservations of government jobs and political positions. There is widespread local level assertion against the practice of untouchability and discrimination. Their struggles have brought Dalits on the agenda of mainstream politics. In academic circles the movements have forced a section of intellectuals to critically review not only Indian traditions and culture but also the paradigms of modernity and Marxism. They have exploded number of myths created by Brahminical ideology. The Dalit movements have also successfully built up a good deal of pressure on the ruling classes. However several scholars and activists feel that Dalits have been reduced to a pressure group within the mainstream politics. Gail Omvedt observes that the post-Ambedkar Dalit movement has been ironically only that in the end, a movement of Dalits, challenging some of the deepest aspects of oppression and exploitation but failing to show the way to transformation.

3.8 Contemporary Issues on Dalit

The whole issue on the condition of Dalit in our country is still not solved rather it is a data sheet of tragedies. According to a report by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes, a crime is committed against a Dalit every 18 minutes. Every day, on an average, Dalit women are raped, murdered, Dalit houses are burnt. Dalits live below the poverty line, they are undernourished and 45 percent of the population are illiterate. The data also show that Dalits are prevented from entering police stations in 28 percent of Indian villages. They are also denied access to water sources in 48 percent of our villages because untouchability remains a stark reality even though it has been abolished in 1955.

As written in the Constitution –

“ The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

— Article 46 of the Indian Constitution

Even after more than 70 years of independence, Dalits continue to face the violence and discrimination from the contemporary society. One of the recent incident is the

tragic suicide of Rohit Verma, a Ph D student in the Hyderabad Central University who hanged himself, blaming his birth as a “fatal accident” in a final note which portrays the failure of Constitution in providing free and fair India.

Even after all such incidents there has been no creation of new laws for the protection and upliftment of Dalits. The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, prescribe punishments for crimes against Dalits that are much stringent than corresponding offences under the IPC. Special courts have been established in major states for speedy trial of cases registered exclusively under these acts. In 2006, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh even equated the practice of “untouchability” to that of “apartheid” and racial segregation in South Africa.

In December 2015, the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, passed by Parliament, made several critical changes. New activities were added to the list of offences. Among them were the preventing SCs/ STs from using common property resources, from entering any places of public worship, and from entering an education or health institution. In case of any violation, the new law said that the courts would presume unless proved otherwise that the accused non- SC/ ST person was aware of the caste or tribal identity of the victim.

3.9 Conclusion

The term Dalit represents a broader social category of people. With changing time and context, in more recent years, it has become a nationwide phenomenon and is widely used by all untouchables irrespective of traditional and rigid caste distinctions. It has also become a symbol of their social identity. We may be democratic republic, but justice, equality, liberty and fraternity, the four basic tenets promised in the Preamble of our Constitution are clearly not available to all. Dalits continue to be oppressed and discriminate in many villages, in educational institutions, in the job sector, etc., leaving them behind in acquiring a position as equal as others in the mainstream society.

3.11 Summary

There is always a question as to why violent incidents still have never decreased but has been always on news even after such protection laws. Chandra Bhan Prasad in his co-authored book “Defying the Odds: The Rise of Dalit Entrepreneurs” he has said that caste is not simply a law and order problem. Caste violence can only be

eradicated with the birth of a new social order. He has also argued that the upward mobility of some Dalits has been caused by market reforms post-1991, ironically this leads to higher incidence of atrocities in the form of a backlash.

3.11 Questions

● Multiple choice questions:

- 1) Who launched the Dalit Panther movement in the early 1970's?
 - a) Dalits of Maharashtra
 - b) Dalits of North-east
 - c) Dalits of Andhra Pradesh
 - d) Dalits of Uttar Pradesh
- 2) The book 'Annihilation of Caste' was written by-
 - a) Mahatma Gandhi
 - b) B.R Ambedkar
 - c) Partha chatterjee
 - d) Amartya Sen
- 3) The term 'Harijan' was coined by-
 - (a) M.Gandhi,
 - b) B.R Ambedkar,
 - (c) Gail Omvedt,
 - (d) J. Nehru

● Answer the following questions:

- 1) Why are Dalits considered Untouchable?
- 2) Compare and contrast the views on Dalit's position in the structure of Hindu society?
- 3) Discuss the issues and causes of the Dalit movement?
- 4) Enlist the various reforms and measures taken for the discrimination against the Dalit?

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3.13 Glossary

- **Subaltern** : This describes the lower social classes and other social groups displaced to the margins of society.
- **Depressed class** : The Depressed Classes, presently known as the. ‘Scheduled Castes’ and ‘Harijans’, constitute a group of. castes of the Hindus in India. The population of these classes was around 64.5 millions i.e. about 15 per cent.
- **Harijan** : a member of the group formerly known as untouchables in India, a term used by Gandhiji.

Unit 4 □ Indological and Ethnographic Approaches

Structure

- 4.1 Objectives**
- 4.2 Introduction**
- 4.3 What is Indology?**
- 4.4 Orientalist Perspective**
- 4.5 Indological Perspective: G.S Ghurye**
- 4.6 Categorisation of Indology**
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- 4.8 Ethnography**
- 4.9 History of Ethnography**
- 4.10 Ethnographers in India**
- 4.11 Thick Description**
- 4.12 Advantages and Challenges in Doing Ethnography**
- 4.13 Conclusion**
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- 4.15 Questions**
- 4.16 Suggested Readings**
- 4.17 Glossary**

4.1 Objectives

- To understand the twin approaches i.e., the indological approach and ethnographic approach which have been used popularly by various scholars, sociologists and anthropologist to know Indian society.
- To understand in the upcoming sections, the usage of these approaches, its uses, its limitations and the challenges.
- To give an overview description of the process of studying societies through the key principle tools of indology and ethnography.

4.2 Introduction

The Indological perspective claims to understand Indian society through the concepts, theories and frameworks that are closely associated with Indian civilization. Ethnographic approach is a qualitative research method. Applying this approach an in-depth study is carried upon by the researcher to study particular group, communities, etc. In this method “fieldwork” plays an important role by which the researcher studies culture of a particular society through close interaction, participation, observation and engagement in the everyday life.

4.3 What is Indology?

Indology in literal terms means the study of Indian society and culture. In practice it is an approach to study Indian society with its culture, language, beliefs, ideas, customs, rituals, ceremonies, taboos, codes, institutions and related components which are guided by Indian societal values and civilization. These studies are considered different from the European society, as it has its own approach. Ideology, more specifically, deals with interpretation of ancient texts, and linguistic studies of problems of ancient Indian culture which is supplemented by archaeological, sociological, anthropological, numismatic and ethnographic evidences and vice versa. Historically, Indian society and culture are unique in itself, therefore the Indological approach rests on the assumption that the specificity of Indian social realities could be grasped better through the ‘texts’. It may also be viewed that Indological approach refers to the historical and comparative method based on Indian texts in the study of Indian society. Therefore, Indologists use ancient historical texts, epics, religious manuscripts and texts, archaeological evidences, etc., in the study of Indian social institutions. The texts are basically included the classical ancient literatures of ancient Indian society such as Vedas, Puranas, Manu Smriti, Ramayana, Mahabharata and others. Indologists study social phenomena by interpreting these above classical texts. Available data in each of these fields are to be augmented by a great deal of honest, competent and exhaustive field work. None of the various techniques can, by itself, lead to any valid conclusion about ancient India. Combined empirical operations are indispensable in this field study of Indology. Apart from Sanskrit scholars and Indologists, many sociologists have also used traditional texts in extensive way to study Indian society. Therefore, it is called as “textual view” or “textual perspective” of social phenomena as it depends upon texts. Thus, textual variety of such studies that emerged in the late 1970s marks a prominent shift from the European to the American tradition of social

anthropology. Indological studies generally have been conducted during this period covering a wide range of subjects like social structure, relationships, cultural values, kinship, ideology, etc.

Indology demands inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and cross disciplinary approaches. Indology is also older than sociology. It is antique owing its origin 1784 by Sir William Jones of Calcutta. It was in the year 1784 that Sir William Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in India to enhance and further the cause of “Oriental research”, in this case, research into India and the surrounding regions. One of the main activities of this organization was to collect the old manuscripts of India, of which there was enormous collection of Sanskrit manuscripts with society. It is the beginning of Indology in India, which has been followed by several other scholars.

The studies based on texts that have been conducted by many scholars, sociologist and indologists. Most of these studies are based on textual materials either drawn from epics, legends, myths, or from the folk traditions and other symbolic forms of culture. Most of these are also studied by Indian sociologists. A good number of studies following this method have been done by foreign-based scholars like B. Cohn and M.Singer also.

Many founding fathers of Indian Sociology are also influenced by Indology like B.K. Sarkar, G.S. Ghurye, R.K. Mukherjee, K.M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, P.H. Prabhu, Louis Dumont.

4.4 Orientalist Perspective

Within Indology there is the bifurcation of two studies. That is Indology or Indic studies and Oriental studies. Both of them have some commonalities and differences. Indology is a sympathetic and positive picture of non-European society of the East including Indian society and culture. Orientalism gives an unsympathetic and negative account of the Indian society. Indology is said to be the result of westerners' labour of love for the Indian wisdom. And Orientalism emerged as the ideological need of the British Empire. Indologist like William Jones, Louis Renou and Celestin Bougle in France and Wilson in British India are the reputed figures and the Orientalist include Max Muller, William Archard, Max Weber, Karl Marx. There is a general tendency among the Indologist to exaggerate the virtue of Indian culture.

Orientalist were trying to see negative aspect of Indian tradition and rationalize missionary activities and colonial legacy. Indologists had given over emphasized on Indian spiritualist and under emphasized the materialistic culture but the Orientalist did the reverse as they undermined spirituality and over emphasized on materialistic

culture. The Oriental Institute in Baroda was the second important Indological center in India founded in 1893 by Maharaja of Baroda. The major objective of the institute was to develop a well equipped library of rare and unpublished manuscript and reference books on Oriental and Indological studies.

Bernard S. Cohn had analysed orientalist's perspective to explain the textual view. The orientalist took a textual view of India offering a picture of its society as being static, timeless and space less. In this view of the Indian society, there was no regional variation and no questioning of the relationship between perspective, normative statements derived from the texts and the actual behaviour of groups. Indian society was seen as a set of rules, which every Hindu followed (Cohn and Singer, 1968: 8). Bernard S. Cohn further mentioned : "The orientalist tended to be better educated and from the upper classes of Great Britain; same as Sir William Jones were trained as scholars before their arrival in India and they wanted to treat Sanskrit and Persian learning with the same methods and respect as one would treat European learning..." (Cohn, 1998: 10-11).

When field studies in many areas of their interest in India became difficult, textual analysis, either of classics or ethnics or field notes from an earlier data, represented a fruitful basis for continued analysis of Indian structure and tradition in the 1970s and 1980s (Singh, 1986: 41).

An Indological approach has been the hallmark of several sociologists. They have hammered against the acceptance of theoretical and methodological orientations of the western countries. These scholars have emphasized the role of traditions, groups rather than individual as the basis of social relations and religion, ethnics and philosophy as the basis of social organization.

For example, R.N. Saxena (1965: 1-13) agrees with this Indological or scriptural basis of studying Indian society. He has stressed on the role of the concepts of Dharma, Artha, Kamma and Moksha. Dumont and Pocock (1957: 9-22) emphasize the utility of Indological formulations. They observe: "In principle, a sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of sociology and Indology". Indology is representative of people's behaviour or that guides people's behaviour in a significant way.

The use of the Indological approach during the early years of Indian sociology and social anthropology is seen in the works of S.V. Ketkar, B.N. Seal and B.K. Sarkar. G.S. Ghurye, Louis Dumont, K.M. Kapadia, P.H. Prabhu and Irawati Karve have tried to explore Hindu social institutions and practices, either with reference to religious texts or through the analysis of contemporary practices. Initially, Sir William Jones established the Asiatic Society of Bengal and also introduced the study of Sanskrit

and Indology. The knowledge of Sanskrit also helps to understand the great culture and philosophical tradition of India. The Indological writings dealing with the Indian philosophy, art, and culture are reflected in the works of Indian scholars like A.K. Coomarswamy, R.K. Mukerjee, D.P. Mukerji, G.S. Ghurye, L. Dumont and others who have used Indological approach in their research. They have tremendously enriched the field of Indian sociology.

4.5 Indological Perspective : G.S Ghurye

The salient features of Indological approach are described in this section exhaustively for better understanding of this approach . As Indian society is unique in itself and therefore can be studied through studying its values and cultures which are different from western society. Indologist emphasizes more on understanding Indian society rather than providing solution to the problems. This perspective seldom uses field view to understand heterogeneity which broadens the perspective and opens up new vistas to study Indian society. He is pioneer in the field of modern indology and he has improved a lot upon the narrow view of Indian society taken by Classical Indologists. His general view of society underlies that Indian society is unique and it should be understood in terms of concept and theories particular to Indian society. According to him, Indian society is a ‘Hindu Society’ and that cannot be understood without understanding Hindu tradition. He has also emphasized on understanding of order and change in society. Order is understood in terms of specific aspects of society like — caste, religion, village, tribe, urbanization etc. He has taken into consideration a dynamic view of Indian society, not only in terms of continuities from the past, but also in terms of understanding the process of change in terms of British influence. The process of change is understood in terms of changing Hindu tradition and he refrains from mentioning any great modernizing influence of British rule.

He has understood caste in terms of its various features and he has mentioned six features of caste as follows:

1. Division of labor
2. Principle of purity and pollution
3. Hierarchy
4. Civil and religious disabilities
5. Hereditary nature
6. Endogamy

4.6 Categorisation of Indology

Indological perspective changes with time and space and with nature of study which is broadly categorized as —

1. Classical Indology

It was prevalent before 1920 and was mostly dominated by British Intellectuals. It was purely a book view approach in which Sanskrit texts were translated. Some of the profound proponents were William Jones who established Asiatic Society in Calcutta, Max Muller who wrote the famous book ‘Sacred Books of the East’ and translated Vedas and other sacred texts. The primary source for their study and understanding Indian society was ancient religious, historical and archaeological evidences. Western scholars had very narrow and critical view about Indian society which was continuously falsified by Indian scholars. India was considered as a land of villages which were self-sufficient, isolated, static and orthodox according to western scholars’ viewpoint. Religion was considered central to understanding of other social institutions. Social relationships were guided by traditionalism and caste system. Caste system was considered as closed and a symbol of feudal and backward character of Indian society. Gradually, joint families, Panchayat system and Jajmani system etc., were considered other elements of Indian social structure.

2. Modern Indology

With the establishment of sociology as a discipline, the task of understanding society came within its purview. Classical Indology was modified by combining it with various sociological perspectives leading to development of Modern Indology which was sometimes also referred as ‘Social Indology’. Modern Indology was used by academicians in contrast to scholars and officials of Classical Indology. G S Ghurye was considered as ‘father of Modern Indology’. He synthesized Classical Indological approach with anthropological diffusionist approach. After independence, the use of Indology was continued, but other perspectives remained predominant. Modern Indological perspective criticized orthodox picture of Indian society. Villages were not seen as isolated or static or self-sufficient. Religion was considered the central institution, but nowhere as hindrance to dynamism of Indian society. The present changes on account of colonial rule were also studied. The relevance of joint family, Panchayat systems etc., was emphasized with an Indological approach.

4.7 Subalternative Perspective

Subaltern perspective brought new genre to the analysis of Indian nationalism. This school of thought adopted the “history from below” approach (like European Marxist scholars) for the analysis of Indian nationalism. It was the Antonio Gramsci who used the word ‘subaltern’ for the subordinate class in terms of class, gender, race, language and culture. Such perspective limits the understanding of Indian society.

“In the context of India, Ranjit Guha, in his book *Elementary Aspect of Peasants insurgency in Colonial India* highlighted the “autonomous domain” of peasant’s struggle, which is independent from the elite. According to Guha, elitist historiographies were “unable to put the peasants’ conditions and their insurgency in correct perspective as they could not go beyond limitations that were existed in colonial India.” Elitist historiography had the view that Indian nationalism is the product of elite. Guha questioned the interpretation of elitist historiography of Indian nationalism on two counts: first, elitist role in the construction of Indian consciousness and second, the making of India as a nation. Subaltern historiographies also question the Marxist school of thought for being tendency of merging into the “nationalist ideology of modernity and progress”. Subaltern believed that Marxist school of thought ignored the “ideology of caste and religion” as a factor in Indian history. According to this subaltern school, by ignoring the ideology of caste and religion, somewhere Marxist also followed the same path like the elitists . Therefore, subaltern historiography tried to establish the voice and contribution of marginalized sections of Indian society by adopting the method of looking ‘history from below’.

Colonialist scholars believed that British rulers, administrators as well as policies, institutions and cultures created the India as a modern nation. On the other hand, nationalist scholars had the view that the personalities of Indian elites with the existing structure developed the ideas to counter the colonial narratives, ultimately shaped the Indian nationalism. According to Ranjit Guha, these two elitist historiographies could be understood primarily as a function of “stimulus and response”.

Guha argued that rather than guided by idealism or altruism, Indian nationalist tried to get the reward in “form of share of wealth, power and prestige created by and associated with the colonial rulers.” For this, there were an interplay of “competition and collaboration” between colonial masters and native elites. Guha had the view that the whole natives’ venture of Indian nationalism was guided by idealism in which “Indian elite led to the people from subjugation to freedom.” In other words, if one sees the whole arguments of elitist interpretation of Indian nationalism then see

that it highlights the contribution made by the elites only either 'colonial' or 'native bourgeois'. This elitist historiography has ignored the contribution made by the people on their own, which is independent from elite.

Now, if you try to see that later generation of Indian sociologists who had basically adopted or have been trained in the craft of Indology, Ghurye definitely had taken care of the fieldwork traditions along with the issue of the use of the ancient texts. His certain imperial works were still relevant to the social anthropology. So the contribution of Ghurye as an Indologist was very significant to learn the society and culture of Indian society.

4.8 Ethnography

The term ethnography comes from the Greek words 'ethnos' (which means people or nation) and 'grapho' (which means 'I write') . Ethnography is a research method which is initially distinctive to social anthropology and later it has been used in sociology and adopted by sociologists, which has emerged to address this specific subject matter. The ethnographic method is a qualitative methodology that involves the practice of "fieldwork" in which the researcher studies, social interactions through participation , observation and engagement in the everyday life culture of a particular society through close interaction,. Thus, the information or the account that is produced from these observations is known as ethnography.

When we talk about scientific research or approach it is more of systematic investigation of scientific theories and hypothesis, on the other hand the naturalist approach deals with researcher's own interpretation of the society. For Ethnographers these approaches are seen as a failure in understanding the various aspects of human behavior in a particular setting. The aim of ethnography is to give an analytical description of other cultures doing exploration of a particular phenomenon. This is done by the researcher using observation, exploration, description and explanation through the unstructured accounts and analysis of a particular phenomenon.

There are certain techniques that are associated with the practice of fieldwork. The technique of observation is predominantly used as an ethnographic method, in which the researcher observes and records her or his observations of a culture and writes an account. The method of participant observation is commonly followed by ethnographers from the twentieth century onwards, which dates back to the work of Malinowski. In this method the researcher is not just an observer and scientist, but also a fellow person who participates in the life of the society or culture in which he gets immersed for an extended period as one belonging to them and find out the

hidden facts. Learning the language of a culture is often thought as a central prerequisite for ethnographic fieldwork. Establishing rapport with the ‘natives’ of a field is a technique that ethnographers follow. The ability to understand a culture with such participation and showing the account to readers who are alien to the culture is an important skill and integral part to ethnographic writings. Ethnography is linked to the lived experience of the ethnographer (Berry, 2011).

4.9 History of Ethnography

The zoologist Alfred Cort Haddon who turned as an anthropologist was one of the first scientists who collected ethnographic material from the Torres Straits Islands. The concept of “anthropological fieldwork” was most likely introduced by Haddon from the discourse of naturalists (Stocking 1985: 80). Collections of empirical data and observation were a long tradition among missionaries and administrators of the European colonies in the nineteenth century. Among many anthropologists Lewis Henry Morgan, who was an American Lawyer began the discourse on the development of formal ethnography from the nineteenth century. Morgan used some of the techniques associated with ethnography to investigate the kinship systems among some native American groups with the aim of comparing it with those of the European-Americans.

Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish born functionalist anthropologist who was often considered to be the founder of contemporary ethnography. Participant observation was one of the key methods in ethnography and his work was one of the most significant one in the field of ethnography.

Malinowski spent six years from 1914-1920 in the Trobriand Islands, making three expeditions to his field and writing accounts work on the systems of exchange of the Trobriand Islanders. Bronislaw Malinowski also learned the language of the Trobriand Islanders instead of relying on native interpreters as his forbears had done. This had become the earliest example of a researcher’s immersion in the field to produce an ethnographic account. His work was one of the most influential ethnographic works until now.

In the Preface of “Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea”, James George Frazer writes-

“In the Trobriand Islands, to the east of New Guinea, to which he next turned his attention, Dr. Malinowski lived as a native among the natives for many months together, watching them daily at work and at play, conversing with them in their own

tongue, and deriving all his information from the surest sources - personal observation and statements made to him directly by the natives in their own language without the intervention of an interpreter” (Frazer in Malinowski 2005: v).

This became the standard procedure of ethnographic fieldwork. This work set the parameters for the ethnographic method not only in Britain, but also in various debates among anthropologists in the United States of America, across Europe and indirectly it influenced future generations of social anthropologists in India.

Another example of an ethnographic study is about William Foote Whyte (June 27, 1914 – July 16, 2000) who was a sociologist profoundly known for his ethnography study in urban sociology, i.e., “*Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*”, the book which was published in 1943. He was a pioneer in participant observation, where he lived for four years in an Italian community in Boston. Street corner society described and studied various groups and communities within the district. He gave a detailed account of how local gangs were formed and organized, also described the relations of social structure, politics and racketeering in the particular district. Whyte differentiated between “corner boys” whose lives revolved around street corners and nearby shops and “college boys” who were educated with definite aims how to place them in the social ladder in his study.

4.10 Ethnographers in India

In the Indian context, some of the earliest ethnographies of the twentieth century emerged from fieldwork in the Indian villages. While this was a break from earlier studies of caste practices based on texts like the Manusmriti, it also differed from anthropological accounts of Europeans, and also the ‘native’ anthropologists began to interrogate and provide accounts of their ‘own’ cultures. M.N. Srinivas’ ethnography of the village of Rampura in the Mysore District, which was published in 1976 as “*The Remembered Village*” was a canonical text in this regard (Srinivas 1988). This work was significant as it pointed to a shift in the objective of ethnography in the second half of the twentieth century, and because it opened up the debate of how, even a racially and linguistically “native” ethnographer of all intents and purposes, remained an outsider to her/his field. M.N. Srinivas who did his fieldwork in the village of Rampura was a classic example in understanding ethnography. Srinivas spoke the same language as those in Rampura and was by all accounts believed to be more of a native to the village in Mysore state than a British anthropologist would be. At the same time his urban upbringing, his education in other states in India and abroad, his Brahmin identity and his class background set him apart from the villagers in Rampura, a position that is reflected in his ethnography.

4.11 Thick Descriptions

The approach of ‘thick description’ in writing ethnography was popularised by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz in the 1970s. Geertz wrote about thick description in “The Interpretation of Cultures” borrowing the concept from Gilbert Ryle.

Thick description as an ethnographic technique is still predominant. It also implies that the observer should interpret culture and not just record actions as “facts”. According to Geertz, an ethnographer must present a thick description which is composed not only of facts but also of interpretations. Thick description specifies conceptual structures and meanings, and is opposed to thin description which is a factual account without any interpretation. In his book “Interpretation of Cultures” he outlines the role of an ethnographer and analyses a culture by interpreting signs to understand the deeper meanings within its context. He explains it by giving an example of ‘winking’ i.e., how a winking can have different meanings and its action can itself be interpreted.

4.12 Advantages and Challenges in Doing Ethnography

The knowledge produced by ethnographic fieldwork of different cultures is different from that of archival research. It allows the researcher to record first hand observations about cultures instead of relying only on textual and other secondary materials that provide a rich source of visual data and help to reveal unarticulated needs.

“In the Indian context, the interest in ethnographies of villages in the mid twentieth century emerged in the context of the nationalist imagination. They provided information of local caste practices, social transformations etc., in the villages as opposed to earlier works of indologists who primarily relied on textual sources and on informants. The shift in perspectives arising from the use of different sources of data had been identified as the shift from the “book view” to the “field view” (Srinivas 1996: 200). Ethnography thus helps in understanding the culture, traditions, everyday life of a particular group through ethnographer’s lens.

Researchers have to be careful so as not to romanticise the culture being observed. Bronislaw Malinowski (1930) cautioned against a tendency of ethnographers to notice and write about the sensational, and of treating customs and beliefs of a culture as a collector might treat savage “curios” (*ibid*:217). The researcher must not just record observations made in the field, but also try and understand the meanings attached to

the various actions and practices of the natives in the field. Researcher must be familiar in the language spoken in the field. The linguistic requisite sometimes restricts ethnographer to English speaking sites in a transcultural multi-sited Ethnography. The researcher must conform to a code of ethics so as not to harm or breach the confidence of anyone. Doing fieldwork and immersion in a field of a culture, which is different from the researcher's own culture, is challenging. But an ethnographer can face different kinds of challenges when the field is not too far away from "home", particularly in a discipline where the tradition of a faraway "other" culture has been a model for ethnography (Robben & Sluka 2011).

One of the key principal challenges faced by ethnographers is on "returning" from the "field", from the break of their everyday life is how to order the diffuse and varied materials collected in the field and write it accordingly in an arranged order.

4.13 Conclusion

Both the above approaches, the Indological method and the ethnographic method are significant and have been key tools for many sociologist, anthropologists, etc., in understanding the in-depth study of a particular group, community, culture, etc. Indology may be said to have come into being when European scholarship discovered Sanskrit. This is generally believed to have happened in the closing years of the 18th century. Likewise if we talk about ethnography, collection of empirical data and observation has been a long tradition among the missionaries and administrators of the European colonies in the nineteenth century.

4.14 Summary

Still in the contemporary period, these approaches are used and crafted by contemporary sociologists and anthropologist. These methods have become indispensable in development of research. It helps with getting detailed accounts of everyday life of a particular group through using of scriptural texts or first hand observations.

4.15 Questions

1. Write a short note on Indological perspective of G.S Ghurye?
2. Who is one of the most influential ethnographers whose work has defined the parameters of the ethnographic method in Anthropology?

3. What is one of the central challenges of doing ethnographic fieldwork in another culture?
4. Discuss the Indological approach and ethnographic approach in understanding a particular group?
5. Write a short note on Thick description ?

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4.17 Glossary

- **Indological approach** : It claims to understand Indian society through the concepts, theories and frameworks that are closely associated with Indian civilization. Indologists make sense of India through lens of Indian culture.
- **Orientalist approach**: In art history, literature and cultural studies, Orientalism is the imitation or depiction of aspects in the Eastern world. These depictions are usually done by writers, designers, and artists from the West.
- **Subaltern** : This describes the lower social classes and other social groups displaced to the margins of society
- **Textual View** : Indologists analyse social phenomena by interpreting the classical texts. Apart from Sanskrit scholars and Indologists, many sociologists have also used extensively traditional texts to study Indian society. Therefore, it is called as “textual view” or “textual perspective” of social phenomena as it depends upon texts.
- **Field View**: Field theory examines how individuals construct social fields, and how they are affected by such fields. Social fields are environments in which competition between individuals and between groups take place, such as markets, academic disciplines, musical genres, etc.

Unit 5 □ Dalit Politics

Structure

- 5.1 Objectives**
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- 5.3 Understanding Caste and the Dalit Status**
- 5.4 Early Roots of Dalit Politics**
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- 5.9 Rise of the Bsp and Beyond**
- 5.10 Dalit Civil Society and the Struggles for Dalit Human Rights**
- 5.11 The Formation and Role of Ncdhr**
- 5.12 Emergence of the Nacdor**
- 5.13 Dalit Solidarity Networks**
- 5.14 Recent Trends in Dalit Politics**
- 5.15 Problems Afflicting Dalit Politics**
- 5.16 Conclusion**
- 5.17 Summary**
- 5.18 Questions**
- 5.19 Suggested Readings**

5.1 Objectives

- Who is a Dalit?
- The early evolution of dalit resistance
- Ambedkar's contribution to the development of the dalit struggles
- Trends in Dalit struggles in the post-independence period till the 1980s
- Emerging trends in dalit struggles since the 1980s
- The role played by civil society organizations in promoting dalit human rights
- The problems of dalit politics

5.2 Introduction

Dalits have been socially and economically marginalized for centuries. In their efforts to seek social justice, since the early twentieth century they have increasingly engaged with politics, though the roots of the struggles go further back into the past being embedded in their religious and social protest movements. Since the days of British rule they have tried to use the political channel to seek social justice and remedy their conditions. However, the Dalits' engagements with politics were never unilinear; there have been different political attachments, different ideological orientations – often not only diverse but conflicting, and different priorities. Patterns and extent of struggles were largely conditioned by regional social diversities and nature of leadership. The unfurling of the struggles were again impacted upon by the nuances of wider national politics.

5.3 Understanding Caste and the Dalit Status

To understand the 'Dalit' and the Dalit situation in India, we need to first understand caste and caste-based stratification as it exists in the country.

Casta is not an Indian word; it is a word drawn from Portuguese word 'Casta', meaning pure breed. The corresponding terms used in the Indian languages are '*varna*' and '*Jati*'. *Varna* refers to the notional four-fold hierarchic division of society into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and the Sudras. *Jati* refers to the numerous endogamous groups, rather localized and having a regional base.

Caste position has remained an indicator of both economic power and social status for centuries. Those who are at the top of the caste hierarchy have remained the main beneficiaries of goods and services, while those positioned at the lower end suffer denial. Inter-caste disparities are evident in standards of living, educational attainments, health parameters and economic levels. At the same time, the struggles for changing the balance are equally visible.

Etymologically, the word "Dalit" is derived from Sanskrit word "Dalita" - means "oppressed." In the Indian socio-cultural context, they were untouchables located at the lowest end of the caste hierarchy. In ancient times, the untouchables were referred as "Chandala" or "Avarna". The official term used for this section of the population is Scheduled Caste. Today, the untouchable castes are frequently referred to as Dalits. Socio-cultural and economic factors have for thousands of years entrenched the marginalisation of the 'untouchable castes' that form the core of the Dalit population.

Caste stratification, rooted in Hindu religion, made for the inhuman degradation of a section of the population stigmatizing them as polluting and hence untouchable, leading to their persistent exclusion from goods and services. The products of their labour, of course, were not ostracized. In fact, their stigmatization formed the basis of the surplus extraction of their labour. Marked out as an identity group on the basis of their caste, they were doomed to perform certain demeaning jobs which were essentially labour-intensive, physically hazardous, and of low remunerative value.

Aspirations for wealth, power and status were cut at the roots in the name of god and the god-stipulated caste norms, as members of the low castes were prohibited by religious stipulations from accumulating the fruits of their labour. This Brahminical order of society developed from the later Vedic period and crystallized over time into a rigid stratification system. Time and again, ritual power and state authority joined hands to ensure the smooth continuance of the order.

The very idea of purity and pollution that stands at the centre of hierarchical caste stratification is violence entrenched. Overt and covert violence takes, *inter alia*, the form of limiting the social and economic space of the Dalits and has clearly dysfunctional effects in multiple senses. The freedom of socially interacting and inter-marrying is firmly circumscribed by caste norms, just as are the possibilities of economic betterment of the low castes.

5.4 Early Roots of Dalit Politics

History abounds with the tales of struggles of the oppressed people. In fact, the struggles for social justice have such a long history in India that its roots are almost as old as the caste system itself. The early struggles were largely articulated in terms of religious discourse and debates, challenging the basics of the Brahminical order and positing more democratic and egalitarian alternatives. Buddhism, Jainism, the Bhakti Movement at a later period of time and numerous village deities or *gram devatas* were just some of the examples of the alternative non-Brahminical stream searching for a more egalitarian order.

By the 1920s the autonomous anti-caste tradition had clearly begun to take shape in India. The Adi movements, unfolding in different parts of the country, were seen to be challenging Hinduism and the Hindus on racial grounds and could be regarded amongst the forerunners of the Dalit movement.

In Punjab the Adi Dharm Movement, also referred to as the Ravidasi Movement, developed since the mid-1920s. It had mainly a Chamar following and rested on the preachings of the sixteenth century Bhakti poet named Ravidas. The Ravidasis

considered themselves to be the original inhabitants of India and regarded their religion as the Adi Dharm. In their opinion, the Hindus had come from outside India and enslaved them.

While the first attempts to unite the untouchables could be seen in the formation of the caste federations since the early twentieth century, it was the Adi movements across the country that sought to emphasise separate identity in relation to the Hindu community.

At an organizational level we find that in the 1930s three 'pan India' organizations had emerged to deal with caste issues. These early social organizations were not formally organized at an all India level but were linked to political parties through nationwide networks. Interestingly, they revealed three completely different ideological directions and represented three altogether different lines in terms of all India politics. These three organizations were [i] The Depressed Classes Federation. It was an Ambedkarite body which was connected with Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party. [ii] The Depressed Classes League or the Harijan League. It was Gandhian and connected with the Congress party. [iii] The Depressed Classes Association. This organization was linked with right wing Hindus of the Hindu Mahasabha.

5.5 Ambedkar's Struggles

Ambedkar (1891-1956) is often referred to as the father of Dalit politics. On a pan-Indian scale, drawing Dalits and Dalit issues into the political arena was done by Ambedkar. B.R. Ambedkar an untouchable Mahar by birth, was born in MHOW near Indore. He has been one of the greatest votaries of social justice and democracy to have come up in modern India.

With the arrival of Dr B.R. Ambedkar on India's political scene in 1919, the untouchables' demands for justice came to be articulated in terms of the modern language of politics. His struggle revolved around the vision of 'annihilation of caste'. He was seen to be carving out space for his movement for the emancipation of the untouchables in the crevices left by the contradictions between various Indian political parties and groups on the one hand, and the colonial power on the other. He struggled hard to maximise this space, an effort that eventually led to the placing of the Dalit issue on the national political agenda. At the centre of his struggles was his uncompromising commitment to social justice and his condemnation of the Hindu Brahminical social structure.

Ambedkar's academic acumen, extensive knowledge of both Indian and western philosophical thought, his expertise in economics and law placed him in an

undoubtedly strong position in bargaining for the rights of the untouchables, also called the Depressed Classes. He was a member of the untouchable Mahar caste. His personal experiences as a member of an untouchable caste, the associated pain and the trauma, stimulated his determination to take up their cause for social justice. This he did with firm determination and unmatched skill. For the first time in modern Indian history, the untouchables began learning the use of political tools for protecting their rights. Dr Ambedkar's able leadership was reflected in his presentations before the Simon Commission in 1928, at the Round Table Conferences between 1930-32 as well as in the Constituent Assembly debates where he was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee and subsequently as first law minister of independent India.

By the mid-1930s Ambedkar was convinced of the necessity of breaking from the Hindu folds. After long years of thought on the matter, he finally decided to accept Buddhism. His conversion to Buddhism in 1956 shortly before his death was not simply a matter of religious choice; it was essentially a social choice and was inextricably linked to his political struggle.

5.6 Post-Ambedkar Dalit Struggles

Ambedkar's followers range across a wide social and political spectrum. To them, Ambedkar is virtually an icon. The untouchable castes, who are today widely known as Dalits, see in Ambedkar the vision of freedom and justice, a dream to be pursued. They do not rally under any single banner, but Ambedkar remains the father figure; each and every political and social stream espousing the cause of the dalits, claim to bear the legacy. From the purely political claims to the Ambedkarite legacy as manifest in the struggles of the Republican Party or the Bahujan Samaj Party, to the neo-Buddhist converts in search for an alternative identity of dignity, the entire spectrum of Ambedkarite following is indeed fascinating.

5.7 The Republican Party of India

On 30 September 1956, B. R. Ambedkar had announced the establishment of the "Republican Party of India", but before the formation of the party, he passed away on 6 December 1956. However, his followers and activists planned to go ahead and form the party. As such, it was formally established in 1957. Its founder was N. Sivaraj, who remained its President till 1964. Several of its leaders including B.K. Gaikwad, B.C. Kamble, Dighe, G.K. Mane, Hariharrao Sonule, Datta Katti, were elected to the Parliament in 1957.

In Uttar Pradesh the Republican Party of India (RPI) was the first relatively successful attempt on the part of the Scheduled Castes to escape the political dominance of the upper castes. It was led by the more prosperous members of the Scheduled Castes in Uttar Pradesh and enjoyed a brief period of organisational coherence and electoral success in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Over the years however, the Party suffered from internal discord and several splinter groups emerged to claim the name of Republican Party of India.

From the 1960s the Republican Party weakened as it suffered several splits. It was an ongoing story of splits, unity and more splits. The whole history of splits, reunions and renewed splits in the RPI had hardly any ideological basis; clash of personalities and personal political ambitions seemed to play the dominant role.

5.8 The Dalit Panthers

As the Republican Party of India split following factional feuds, the Dalit Panthers emerged to fill the vacuum. In the early 1970s, the Dalit Panther Movement emerged in Maharashtra. It was, in fact, part of the country-wide wave of radical politics. The Panthers relied on the teachings of both Marx and Ambedkar and also drew inspiration from the Black Panther Movement in the USA. They attempted to build up a grand war against the varna-jati system. Their tools were both political and cultural. However, the long-lasting impact of the Panthers in the field of Dalit culture was perhaps more than in the field of politics. Through their efforts there emerged an altogether new genre of protest literature. Dalits, associated with and inspired by the movement, articulated their interests through a wide range of creations – stories, novels poetry, music and drama. In fact, it would not be an overstatement to say that since the seventies Marathi literature virtually underwent a revolution. Forceful writings came from poets like Daya Pawar, Waman Nimbalkar, Arjun Dangle, Namdeo Dhasal and J.V. Pawar, as also short story writers like Tarachandra Khandekar, Yogiraj Waghmare, Avinash Dolas, Yogendra Meshram and others.

However, differences within the Panthers surfaced by the eighties. The major contentious issues were, inter alia, whether or not to include non-Dalit poor and non-buddhist Dalits; whether to give primacy to cultural or economic struggles. And then of course, there were the clashes between personalities, for example, between Raja Dhale and Namdeo Dhasal. Soon splits began to take place and different factions aligned with different political parties.

5.9 Rise of the BSP and Beyond

By the end of the 1980s, Dalit pressure groups and political parties had risen to prominence. Particularly noticeable was the rise of the DS 4, and from it the Bahujan Samaj Party with assertive leaders like Kanshi Ram and Mayawati. The Backward and Minorities Employees Federation (BAMCEF) had been formed by Kanshi Ram in 1973 to further the cause of the marginalized sections. In 1981 Kanshi Ram tried to extend this activity in a political direction, while preserving the “apolitical” status of BAMCEF, by founding another organisation DS-4. The DS 4 was an abbreviation of Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti. It was founded on 6 December 1981 by Kanshi Ram to organise Dalits and other oppressed groups of India.

Subsequently, Kanshi Ram opted for a political party as a means of engaging with formal politics. And, as such, the BSP was formed in 1984 under the initiative of Kanshi Ram.

Here, the movement of Kanshi Ram markedly reflected a different strategy with the focus on the ‘Bahujan’ identity encompassing all the SCs, STs, BCs, OBCs and religious minorities rather than ‘Dalit’ only. It may be noted that in many respects, the BSP inherited the political tradition of the Republican Party of India in northern India. In 2001, Mayawati took the reins of the party from Kanshi Ram. She served four separate terms as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Her meteoric rise since the early 1990s was clearly visible. In course of time, the party’s base was sought to be expanded from *bahujan samaj* to *sarvajan samaj* by drawing in the Brahmins.

But, Mayawati’s success was followed by successive setbacks over the past several years. By 2017, Mayawati was left with little more than her Jatav base. Brahmins had long abandoned her, seeing more gains elsewhere; Muslims were dismayed at her inactivity in the face of repeated communal clashes.

Mayawati had painstakingly built the BSP and mobilised her constituency to produce a winning formula at the polls. But disinclination to delegate and decentralise, and distrust of competent subordinates, besides failure to meet the aspirations of young Dalits, amongst other factors, brought the BSP to a state of stagnation.

For a while, the baton of Ambedkarite politics appeared to be passing on to agitationists such as the Bhim Army, and young protestors like those in Bhima Koregaon. A felt need to re-assert Dalit identity gave birth to the Bhim Army in 2015. Bhim Army and its founder Chandrashekhar shot to national prominence after a caste conflict broke out in Saharanpur. It was after the riots and the subsequent arrest of Chandrashekhar that the organisation came into national headlines. Even as its rise to prominence was

hardly sustained, it did throw up certain major questions and challenges for the existing Dalit leadership.

The assertiveness of the Dalits evident in agitations spearheaded by the Bhim Army was, in a sense, replicated a few years later at Bhima Koregaon as hundreds and thousands of Mahars poured into the streets to protest attacks from upper castes on the occasion of the commemoration of the 1818 Battle of Koregaon that is considered to be of legendary importance for the Dalits.

5.10 Dalit Civil Society and the Struggles for Dalit Human Rights

From the 1980s and 1990s a visible shift in the nature of social and political mobilizations of Dalits was evident. This was primarily through the rise of the so-called 'New Social Movements'. The issue of caste began to be articulated in terms of identity politics by Dalit groups across the country. Almost everywhere Dalits became more conscious and assertive of their political, legal and constitutional rights. Further, they began to increasingly structure their demands within the wider international human rights discourse.

5.11 The Formation and Role of NCDHR

The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, known in brief as the NCDHR, was formed in 1998. Its base is in New Delhi.

A significant role has been played by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights or NCDHR in promoting the struggle for Dalit human rights. In its first phase, it undertook interventions for raising the visibility of Dalit issues at various levels - state, national and international.

In phase two, NCDHR's work was instrumental in bringing international attention and media coverage, that drew widespread attention to the injustices and oppression faced by Dalits. To name just a few, the NCHDR was involved in events such as the World Conference Against Racism in South Africa (2001), the World Social Forums, the historic 40-day Dalit Swadhikar Rally across India converging into World Social Forum in Mumbai ('04), the first ever public hearing on *The Situation of the Dalits in India*, at the European Parliament in Brussels (Dec '06), and the first International Conference on the Human Rights of Dalit Women at the Hague (Nov 2006).

In the third phase, NCDHR sought foremost to hold the state responsible for not

checking the 'impunity' being enjoyed by non-Dalits in the criminal justice administrative system. Specifically, we challenge the state and its justice delivery mechanism, including the Human Rights institutions that are in place, to actually implement and enforce its constitutional and legislative measures to safeguard, protect and promote the basic human rights of Dalits. During this phase, the emphasis was on grass-roots mobilization, linking and strengthening campaigns, alliance building, and systematic monitoring and advocacy of atrocities against Dalits to pressure the Criminal Justice system to act.

5.12 Emergence of the NACDOR

Initiated by **Centre for Alternative Dalit Media** (CADAM), the National Confederation of Dalit Organisations, NACDOR was launched at a three day national conference of Dalit organizations held between 8-10 December 2001 with the participation of about one hundred and fifty Dalit organisations from fifteen states. Since then, many other Dalit organisations approached and joined NACDOR. In less than five years, National Conference of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR) emerged as a powerful assertion of the Dalits. NACDOR on the occasion of India Social Forum in New Delhi, ensured the participation of more than three hundred partner Dalit Organisations.

5.13 Dalit Solidarity Networks

From the late 1990s, Dalit Solidarity Networks were set up in different countries to promote the cause of Dalit human rights. *Dalit Solidarity Networks* have formed in the US, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, France, Denmark and Sweden. They have brought under their folds individuals as well as concerned groups. Besides, they have linked up with international human rights organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch for the purpose. Seminars and workshops are organised, websites put up, signature campaigns and petitioning are undertaken.

In March 2000, the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) was formed. It is a network of national solidarity networks, groups from affected countries and international bodies concerned about caste discrimination. It aims at linking grass-root priorities with international mechanisms and institutions to establish 'dalit rights' as 'human rights'. Its work involves encouraging the U.N., E.U. and other bodies to recognise the fact that caste based discrimination must be treated as a central human rights concern.

5.14 Recent Trends in Dalit Politics

Today, alongside the earlier patterns of struggles, Dalits are increasingly attempting to articulate their demands in terms of the global human rights paradigm. A highly articulate Dalit elite, conscious of their rights, began to emerge in India from the first half of the twentieth century itself - thanks to Ambedkar's persistent efforts. Independence, subsequent legal administrative and political developments all acted as boosters in their own ways. Today, it is this Dalit elite which has come forth to assert 'Dalit rights as human rights'. The movement is not a grass-root movement, but the struggles are professedly for each and every Dalit. Those at the helm of the struggle are conscious of the many facets of Dalit oppression, understand the need to mobilise across the country and beyond; they speak of what the state had promised to give, yet failed to deliver over the years; they reprimand the state for its failure to protect Dalit human rights; and, remind the people of the democratic commitment of the state, its support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the long history of struggles against racism. 'Networking' is crucial to the present form of organising. This upcoming leadership is on the whole comfortable with modern technology and use these devices such as the internet, e-mail facilities for the purpose. This is not the rustic, illiterate, unsophisticated Dalit that we come by; it is a largely transformed, intellectually sophisticated Dalit coming into the fore in the process of an unfolding identity.

Collective identity, rather than icons have become significant. The 'Dalit' identity historically had reached significant levels in the seventies with the unfolding of the Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra. Today it is once more the collective identity which comes of age as in place of projecting individual leaders collective identity gets projected as in terms of the NCDHR or Dalit Solidarity Networks.

Activation of the Dalit diaspora is momentous. They have already come forth to organise several successful international conferences in different countries focusing on the demands of Dalit human rights. In bringing the issue to the attention of the global community their contributions remain far from insignificant.

Dalit struggles have today drawn forth the attention of several international human rights organisations including Amnesty International and the Human Rights Watch apart from a number of NGOs working in different countries.

Since the 1990s attention of UN bodies were forthcoming. The new mood and wide mobilisation on the question of Dalit human rights was sharply visible in the context of the U.N.'s 2001 Durban Conference on racism. For the first time the battle lines were elaborately drawn out at the level of the international fora on the question of Dalit human rights, and Dalit politics ascended to new heights.

Major issues that have come into focus in the course of the Dalits' struggles over the years have been questions related to educational access, land reforms, right to minimum wages, atrocities and discriminatory practices, representation in employment and implementation of reservation facilities. Today, in addition to these and encompassing these, is the question of recognition of the human rights of the Dalits.

At the national level, despite a growing visibility of their presence, Dalits have had limited success in making their mark in parliament. Political activism of the Dalits, centring around Ambedkar's philosophy, is prominent mainly among educated and employed middle-class Dalits, neo-Buddhists and castes like Mahars, Chamars, Jatavs. A large section of the Dalit community still remains politically rather inactive. Further, the BSP and the Republican Party have been frequently seen to enter into manipulative politics, building opportunistic alliances with upper caste parties. These apart, several Dalit leaders have got co-opted by the dominant ruling class and are unable to carry ahead the struggle for an alternative discourse.

However, the potential importance of the Dalit vote bank is hardly overlooked by mainstream political parties as we find the latter from across the spectrum attempting to reach out to the Dalits from different angles.

5.15 Problems Afflicting Dalit Politics

As the Dalit movement in India seeks to strengthen itself and gain momentum, it is not without its problems. Perhaps the biggest problem is that there is no single organizational frame within which the Dalits' struggles can be accommodated. Rather than speaking of a single movement we need to speak of multiple movements; some directly political, some indirectly so. Internal tensions within the movement are clearly visible. While there appears a common bonding amongst Dalit activists in their critique of the 'Hindu' Brahminical order and the acceptance of the iconic stature of Ambedkar evident in the ritualized celebrations of his birth and death anniversaries, tensions and conflicts reflect the fragmentation of the movement.

Further, networking between Dalit activists, both political and non-political, remains weak. While both the lines of struggles, the political and civil society based movements are committed to the cause of amelioration of the conditions of the Dalits, they proceed along distinctly different courses, seldom linking up.

Leadership is another major problem. Following Ambedkar, no leader of similar stature enjoying support of all Dalit categories, has emerged in the field of Dalit politics. Rather, there are many leaders vying with each other and competing for attention and support of the Dalit masses.

Not infrequently have Dalit political groups and parties got caught in the tangle of

vote bank politics and frequently shifting allegiances have increased their vulnerability to manipulations and criticisms .

The reservation issue has been one of the major issues in focus in the contemporary Dalit movement. Yet, its appeal has remained predominantly an urban appeal; the appeal to the rural populace seems weaker.

Moreover, as Dalits in their ongoing struggles critique the Brahminical system, they are yet to posit an alternative culture in opposition to it. The absence of a comprehensive alternative culture is a major weakness of the movement.

Further, there appears to be an overall lack of understanding of the totality of the Dalit question and the resultant inability to network with other related struggles of marginal people, such as the working classes- tribes- religious and other minorities etc.

5.16 Conclusion

The Dalit movement, despite its tremendous potential, has till now remained essentially fragmented. Major differences revolve around questions of targets, leadership, coordination, ‘graded inequality’, lack of awareness and understanding of the complexities of the issues; widespread illiteracy, the rural –urban divide , political fragmentation, differences along religious lines and on attitudes towards religion, class differences and lack of coordination of movements across regions are some of the visible hurdles. Even as significant advances are noticeable in the field of global networking for Dalit human rights, effective networking amongst Dalit groups have hardly developed at the grass-root levels within the country. At the grass-root levels, Dalit struggles are still waged largely along earlier lines focusing on questions of reservations, education, land rights, displacement, and citizenship rights (where relevant, as in West Bengal). What appears to be in focus at such a level is a fragmented rights approach rather than a holistic human rights perspective and a comprehensive political awareness.

5.17 Summary

Dalit politics is essentially structured around the demand for social justice for the most marginalized section of Indian society. While it has early roots in different forms of protest movements, the credit of raising it to the level of a pan-Indian political movement lies with B.R.Ambedkar. The imprint of Ambedkar’s struggles remain visible in the unfolding of post-Ambedkar Dalit politics, despite its many deviances. The many faces of Dalit politics as are evident today all claim to owe

allegiance to Ambedkar's legacy. Today, alongside the diverse lines of political struggles undertaken by different Dalit political parties, groups and organisations at the national level, civil society activists have stepped in to take the Dalit issues to the international audience, thus giving Dalit politics a new dimension. The struggles however suffer manifold weaknesses. The future success or otherwise of the Dalit struggles would depend on how soon and how effectively the problems are addressed.

5.18 Questions

Broad Questions [each question 18 marks]

1. How did Ambedkar's struggles impact upon dalit politics ?
2. Identify the recent trends in dalit politics.
3. What are the major weaknesses of dalit politics today ?

Medium length answers required [each question 12 marks]

1. Discuss in brief the importance of the Dalit Panther Movement.
2. Write a note on the politics of the BSP.
1. How have civil society organizations contributed to the dalit movement ?

Short questions [each question 6 marks]

1. Who is a dalit ?
2. Write a brief note on the Bhim Army.
3. Briefly discuss the role of the NCDHR in promoting dalit human rights.

5.19 Suggested Readings

- Chatterjee, Debi, *Ideas and Movements Against Caste in India: Ancient to Modern Times*, Abhijeet Publications, New Delhi, 2010, Deshpande, Ashwini, *Affirmative Action in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2013.
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Unit 6 □ Changing Nature of Dalit Politics: Caste & Religious Minorities

Structure

6.1 Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Conversion of Dalits from Hinduism to Other Religions: A Tool of Protest

6.4 Dalit Muslims' Political Mobilization

6.5 Dalit Christians' Struggles for Social Justice

6.6 Ambedkar's Conversion Movement and Navayana Buddhists

6.7 The Politics of Conversion and Re-conversion

6.8 Conclusion

6.9 Summary

6.10 Questions

6.11 Suggested Readings

6.1 Objectives

- How caste considerations have led to religious conversions.
- Ambedkar's conversion movement
- The plight of Dalits in minority communities.
- The mobilization attempts made by Dalits of minority communities to protect their human rights through conversions.
- The nature of responses to Dalit conversions

6.2 Introduction

India is a land of many religious denominations. Hindus comprise the majority of around eighty percent of the population today, while the minorities including the Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and others make up around twenty percent of the total population.

Stratification of Indian society along caste lines developed over time, with its origin going

back some thousands of years in history. Based on the Hindu Brahminical philosophy of *Varnashrama Dharma* it entrenched the socio-cultural and economic marginalisation of the low, 'untouchable castes', who, variedly termed, today form the core of the Dalit population.

This inegalitarian social order germinated in the late Vedic period. In course of time, through the Sutras and Shastras it got firmly structured, resulting in the social marginalisation of a vast section of the population. There were those who were low down in the caste hierarchy, those who were outside the system which included the tribals and those professing other religions referred to by the derogatory term 'Mlechchas', and of course there were the women of all castes and creeds who were deemed to be no superior than the low caste Sudras.

Historically speaking, members of the untouchable castes were victims of perpetual Brahminical oppression as they were stigmatized as polluting to the upper orders of society. They were relegated to perform demeaning tasks, socially humiliated, and educationally deprived, and all in the name of religion. Over and above all and subsuming all, they had been denied through generations the very basis of human rights - human dignity. Members of these castes were frequently abused, insulted, beaten up, and even massacred. It is they who form the core of India's Dalit population.

It may be noted that, the caste system in India is predominantly rooted in the Hindu religious discourse. Theoretically speaking, the minority religions do not subscribe to the norms of caste-based stratification of society. Yet, at the level of ground reality, the latter are hardly free from the impact of caste and the caste system. This is borne out by several facts. First, within the respective non-Hindu communities, stratification that is akin to caste stratification and influenced by it, is often evident. Secondly, those who have moved from the Hindu fold into these communities through conversion have hardly been free of their earlier caste burdens. Thirdly, many of the converted have come from low Hindu castes or Dalit categories and have been exposed to caste oppression within the new community and also from outside the community. Fourthly, mainstream caste based Hindu society tends to stereotype all religious minorities not simply as the 'other' but rather as the 'inferior other' and thereby relegate them to the virtual position of inferior castes. Under the circumstances mentioned above, post-independence India's democratization process has seen the most complex political interfaces involving caste and assertions of the marginalized, not only belonging to the Hindu fold but also outside.

6.3 Conversion of Dalits from Hinduism to Other Religions: A Tool of Protest

Conversion has long been a language of protest of the socially marginalized caste groups in India. In different parts of the country Dalits, as individuals or in groups, have from the ancient past till today sought solace in religions other than Hinduism. The history of conversion movements clearly shows that Dalits have not been converting to other religions simply because they have preferred to adhere to a different belief system. Most convert because they actively “reject” Hinduism and see conversion as a potent tool for challenging the hierarchies of caste. Sometimes the low castes have set up their own religious orders forming sects such as the Adi Dharm and Matua Dharma, at other times they have turned to alternative institutionalized religious options like Christianity and Islam. The major pre-existing institutionalized religions to which sizeable Dalit conversions have taken place over the years happen to be Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

Dalit converts to other religions are frequent victims of human rights violations. Economic marginalisation, social exclusion and humiliation continue to chase them. That is, neither have they been able to totally escape from the trappings of their earlier identity, nor could they find the anticipated human dignity within the new milieu. On the whole it seems that in many cases conversion to the otherwise egalitarian religions have failed to assure the measure of social justice which the Dalit converts had expected. Here, of course, the responses to conversion have not been uniform in all instances. Sometimes, discrimination is more overt than at other times. But, the humiliation seems to persist.

Marginalized as they are, the Dalit converts to other religions have persistently been struggling for their rights. The struggles have been essentially on two fronts. One, in terms of the wider social surroundings. The other is in terms of the non-Dalits within their own religious folds. Struggles of the Dalit converts thus revolve around different issues. Most importantly, they demand social justice and human rights in society at large, within their community and from the state. It is here that the question of reservation has repeatedly come up; and, for the converts, barring the neo-Buddhists, the state response has so far been negative.

6.4 Dalit Muslims’ Political Mobilization

In the face of caste- based oppression, sections of low caste Hindus converted to Islam at different points of time in history , with the expectation of redemption from caste oppression. However, their problems were hardly resolved as they continued to suffer from caste oppression.

The Quran upholds the equality of all Muslims. Yet, caste (zat, jati, biraderi) remains a defining feature of Indian Muslim society, with significant regional variations. While the severity of caste among the Indian Muslims is hardly as acute as among the Hindus, and the practice of untouchability is virtually absent, caste and associated notions of caste-based superiority and inferiority still do play an important role in Indian Muslim society. In most parts of India, Muslim society is based on the existence of numerous endogamous and generally occupationally specific caste groups, that have their own caste appellations.

Dalit and Backward Caste Indian Muslims are believed to be around 85% of the Muslim population and about 10% of India's population. Caste-like stratification is present amongst the Muslims. We find that Muslims are broadly divided into three categories – Ashrafs [noble born] , Ajlaf [mean and lowly] and Arzal [excluded]. Each of these in turn are subdivided into different occupational and endogamous groups. The lowest in the hierarchy suffer from discrimination within the community as well as from outside the community. An independent research study was commissioned by the National Commission for Minorities in April 2007. It was conducted by Professor Satish Despande of the Sociology Department of Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University over a period of eight months. The National Sample Survey's 61st Round survey data (2004-05) was the basis of the data source. It was found that the Muslim Dalits are generally worse off among all Dalits in terms of most economic and educational criteria.

Despite their lowly status , the caste-related problems of India's Dalit Muslims are rarely addressed. Contrary to the position of the Dalit Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, they are not classified in the 'Scheduled Caste' category; this, despite the fact that they often suffer similar types of discrimination as fellow Dalits of other religious backgrounds.

Apart from the lack of official classification as 'Scheduled Castes', the plight of Dalit Muslims suffer also because they receive less attention from their own society since the Muslims clerics consider the caste system , and the ensuing discrimination , as un-Islamic. They refuse to acknowledge that caste discrimination can take place among Muslims.

The 1980 Mandal Commission Report had recognized the problem of backwardness among Muslims . In the wake of the Mandal Report, the politics of low caste Muslims gained impetus since 1990s. The rise of a small articulate middle class amongst the low caste Muslims facilitated the process. The All India Backward Muslims Morcha [AIBMM] was set up in 1994 under the leadership of Azaz Ali. The main demand was the scrapping of the 1950 Presidential Order that excluded Dalit Muslims /Christians from the Scheduled Caste list and the demand for making them eligible for affirmative action and other welfare policies that Scheduled Castes are entitled to. Their priority was to gain recognition for Dalit Muslims as Scheduled Castes. Following a split in the organization in 1998, the All India Pasmada Muslim Mahaz [AIPMM] was formed in that same year. This was an

umbrella organization of a number of Dalit and backward Muslim organizations from states including Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Delhi.

In contemporary India, particularly in Bihar, Pashmanda movements have attempted to mobilize the low castes in support of their rights. With growing political consciousness, the Pasmanda organisations have been attempting to forge links with other low caste organizations across religions. They were seen to mobilize around Mahadalit – MBC- Pasmanda bloc . The rising political consciousness of Pasmanda Muslims was evident during the 2005 Assembly elections in Bihar.

6.5 Dalit Christians' Struggles for Social Justice

It is estimated that there are some sixteen million Dalit Christians in India. They comprise about sixty percent of the country's total Christian population. But, even as converts, their Dalit identity does not seem to leave them. They face discrimination from multiple sources, the most important being - non-Dalit Christians, upper caste Hindus, Dalit Hindus, the state and government and the clerical authorities in the Church. Looking at facts, it is clearly evident that on the whole the occupational patterns of the Dalit Christian are similar to that of the Hindu Dalits. Several studies and reports have highlighted that caste prejudices against Dalit Christians have remained more or less similar both inside and outside Christianity in most parts of the country, especially where the traditional social and occupational relations did not change significantly over time. Converted Dalits are very often still tied up with their caste and traditional occupations as agricultural workers in lands owned by upper castes in rural areas. This reinforces the local power relations which in a way propagate the existing caste practices. As a result, Dalit Christians often become subject to discrimination, slavery, bondage, atrocities and economic exploitation. Reports show that the incidences of atrocities on Christians in general and Dalit Christians in particular have increased in recent years mostly due to the re-emergence of Hindu nationalism and anti-conversion movements.

It has been alleged, that Indian-Christian theology tends to be exclusionary and non-dialogical by turning a deaf ear to the collective religious resources of the Dalits and, seeks to foster the hegemonic objectives of the caste communities. It may further be noted that in the works of several Indian-Christian theologians of the nineteenth century emphasis was placed on reconciling the meaning of the Hindu scriptures [the Vedas] with the Christian scriptures [the Bible] and on reinterpreting the incarnation and atonement of Christ through the symbolism of Vedanta. The result was a vision of a national Christian church which would be a haven for Hindu Christians, with the Hindu component being seen primarily along Brahminic lines. This has had a long-lasting impact.

Over the years, discrimination and marginalisation of the Dalit Christians has been evident within the frame of the Church in varying degrees. This has led to the emergence of the critical Dalit response from within its parameters and has been referred to as Dalit theology. Dalit theology began to take shape in the early 1980's when A.P. Nirmal, then a faculty member at the United Theological College, floated the idea of "Shudra Theology." But now, Dalit theology has come of age and it stands by its own uniqueness and creativity. A.P. Nirmal, James Massey, M.E. Prabhakar, M. Azariah, K. Wilson, V. Devasahayam and F.J. Balasundaram are some of the prominent persons who figure in this theological movement. As theology predominantly became a vehicle to serve the elite interests, marginalizing the Dalits' faith, Dalit theology manifested itself as a counter-theology movement. The attempt was to see Christ and Christianity from a Dalit perspective, carving out their own space within the Church.

With the setting up of the Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM) in south India the struggles of the Dalit Christians for equality and justice received a boost. In some of the northern states too efforts at bringing together the Dalit Christians have been under way. The DCLM submitted a Manifesto to the Tamil Nadu Bishops' conference which demanded inter alia that the Church authorities should enact necessary laws to declare the practice of untouchability within the church as a punishable offence. It also demanded that the authority structure in the catholic church should be decentralized and democratized to incorporate Dalit clergy and lay participation in the decision-making bodies such as parish councils, boards of trustees for education and multipurpose societies, etc.

The Bishops of Tamil Nadu , in 1990, acknowledged caste discrimination within the Church as violative of human rights. At the end of the meeting they issued a joint statement outlining certain measures for rectification of the situation. These included the following: that in places of worship and cemeteries, catholic Scheduled Castes should be treated equally; that in admissions to Catholic educational institutions, preference should be given to Catholic Scheduled Castes; in jobs in schools run by the dioceses and religious congregations Scheduled Castes Catholics should be given preference; and, funds mobilized through the joint action of Tamil Nadu Bishops and religious congregations for the higher education of eligible Scheduled Castes Catholics. Further, continuous efforts were to be made to secure the rights of the Christian Scheduled Castes from the Centre and state governments.

A National Conference on Human Rights was organised by the National Coordination Committee For Dalit Christians at YMCA in New Delhi on 27 November 1997. Bishops, Members of Parliament, Government officials, Commission Secretaries, Directors of various organisations, Theologians, Priests, Religious, Media Persons etc., participated in the meeting. On 3 October 1998, 7,000 people staged a rally in Delhi, the national capital, demanding the introduction of the long pending bill for constitutional rights for Dalit Christians. The

rally was attended by around three thousand young people sporting black bands. They came from every corner of India. The rally was inaugurated at the Sacred Heart cathedral by the Most Rev. Dr. Alan de Lastic, Archbishop of Delhi, President of the CBCI. Also present were religious superiors and Christian Dalit leaders. The delegates to the rally were welcomed by Bishop Chinnappa, Chairman Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) Commission for SC/ST/BC. In his speech, he criticized the government for delaying the extension of equal rights despite being fully aware of the inhuman conditions in which the Dalit Christians subsist. Loudly voicing their slogans in demand of change, the rally proceeded to parliament but they were blocked in front of the parliament street police station.

The Poor Christian Liberation Movement (PCLM) was established in 1990 and registered in March 2000, under Indian Public Trust Act, 1920, as a non-political, non-partisan and non-profit making organisation. The source of inspiration was stated to be Jesus Christ, Dr. Ambedkar and M.K. Gandhi. Interestingly, the PCLM submitted a Memorandum to Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on 27 August 2004 demanding that instead of meeting the demand of the Church leadership of including the converted Christians in the Scheduled Castes category, a Dalit Christians Finance and Development Board be constituted for the concerted welfare and development of converted Dalit Christians all over the country. They felt that inclusion of the Dalit Christians in the category of Scheduled Castes is not going to make any difference. This, however, seems to be a minority viewpoint amongst the Dalit Christians, as the more vocal opinion appears to be in favour of their demand for Scheduled Caste status.

Nonetheless, repeated appeals for recognition of their Scheduled Caste status seems to fall to deaf ears as the Dalit Christians remain denied of reservation facilities on the ground of their being Christians. Here, religion, rather than their socio-economic condition, becomes decisive.

6.6 Ambedkar's Conversion Movement and Navayana Buddhists

Ambedkar had systematically charted the course for mass conversion to Buddhism in protest against Brahminical oppression. It came at a particular phase of his struggle in continuation with the other facets of his political movement and was undoubtedly a political protest.

On 14th October 1956, Dr Ambedkar renounced Hinduism along with an estimated half a million other Dalits to embrace Buddhism. The ceremony was undertaken under the

auspices of a Buddhist monk, Sri Chandramani at Nagpur. There were three stages to the ceremony. In the first stage, Chandramani initiated Ambedkar to the Buddhist faith, the Pancha Shila i.e., the five Precepts namely abstention from killing, stealing, illicit sex, lying and taking intoxicants. This was followed by the Tri Sarana – taking refuge in the Buddha, the Sangha (Brotherhood of Monks) and the Dharma. The recitations were done in Pali, the language of the ancient Theravada literature. In the second stage, Ambedkar spoke in Marathi before the vast assembled crowd and committed himself to twenty two oaths which he had formulated. Of these, the last dozen comprised of his dedication to Buddhism, including his own rendering of the Pancha Shila. The first ten, by contrast, were devoted to a careful set of rejections of Brahminical Hinduism. In the third part of the ceremony, Ambedkar led the masses through the conversion process through a repetition of his twenty two oaths. Here, too, the proceedings were in Marathi. It may be noted that the Buddhists, converted to Buddhism under the auspices of the Ambedkar movement, are referred to as Neo-Buddhists or *Navayana* Buddhists.

Navayana Buddhism, with its rejection of the caste system at its core, represented a revolutionary alternative to Brahminical Hinduism. A look at the twenty two oaths of the conversion, reveals that seven of the first eight oaths [1 to 6 and 8] laid down the rejection of Brahminical deities and traditions. These are followed by two more oaths [9 and 10] embracing social equality, and thus rejecting caste. One more [19] reiterates both these points, typing them up, explicitly as the negation of Hinduism through the adoption of Buddhism.

The oaths were as follows:

1. I shall have no faith in Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, nor shall I worship them.
2. I shall have no faith in Rama and Krishna, who are believed to be incarnation of God, nor shall I worship them.
3. I shall have no faith in Gauri, Ganapati and other gods and goddesses of Hindus, nor shall I worship them.
4. I do not believe in the incarnation of God.
5. I do not and shall not believe that Lord Buddha was the incarnation of Vishnu. I believe this to be sheer madness and false propaganda.
6. I shall not perform Shraddha nor shall I give pind.
7. I shall not act in a manner violating the principles and teachings of the Buddha.
8. I shall not allow any ceremonies to be performed by Brahmins.
9. I shall believe in the equality of man.

10. I shall endeavour to establish equality.
11. I shall follow the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha.
12. I shall follow the ten paramitas prescribed by the Buddha.
13. I shall have compassion and loving-kindness for all living beings and protect them.
14. I shall not steal.
15. I shall not tell lies.
16. I shall not commit carnal sins.
17. I shall not take intoxicants like liquor, drugs, etc.
18. I shall endeavour to follow the Noble Eightfold Path and practice compassion and loving-kindness in everyday life.
19. I renounce Hinduism, which disfavors humanity and impedes the advancement and development of humanity because it is based on inequality, and adopt Buddhism as my religion.
20. I firmly believe the Dhamma of the Buddha is the only true religion.
21. I consider that I have taken a new birth.
22. I solemnly declare and affirm that I shall hereafter lead my life according to the teachings of Buddha's Dhamma.

The effects of the conversion movement initiated by Ambedkar have been variedly evident. Its greatest impact was on Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. Whilst certain scholars tend to suggest that conversion has not made any major difference in the social and occupational life of the converts to Buddhism, according to others, certain advantages have accrued to the Dalits who converted to Buddhism. It is argued that they appear to have improved significantly over the Hindu Dalits in terms of several parameters such as the sex ratio, literacy and work participation.

Economic and educational considerations apart, most importantly conversion or *Dharmantakaran* has emerged as a rallying call for identity formation of the Dalits particularly in western and northern India and continues to be so long after the death of Ambedkar. Special occasions for celebration of events have been identified in terms of the Buddhist conversion tradition. The *Diksha bhoomi* has virtually emerged as a place of regular pilgrimage of Dalits and the *Viharas* have come up as gathering grounds for the community.

It is not that all, or even a majority of Dalits chose to accept the Buddhist option. In fact, a sizeable portion of the Ambedkarites stayed outside the Buddhist fold. Nonetheless, the impact made on the Dalit political movement by those who chose to become Buddhists is noteworthy. It undoubtedly contributed to the rise of a new awareness and a new elite. In

the rise of the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra in the 1970s, for example, the impact of Buddhism was clearly evident. Leaders like Namdeo Dhasal and Raja Dhale, belonging to different factions of the movement, recognized the liberating significance of Buddhism. In mainstream Dalit politics of the Bahujan Samaj Party, Kanshiram spoke of Buddhism and his proposed conversion. It is reported that his last rites were done along lines of Buddhist rituals. In 1996, in the meetings aimed at reviving the Republican Party of India in U.P. many spoke about Buddhism as the philosophy that should guide the party and quoted Ambedkar's *Buddha and his Dhamma*.

Even today, Ambedkarite Buddhism continues to be a popular option for the dissatisfied Dalits. Time and again Dalits, in face of mounting atrocities, have converted, or threatened to convert to Buddhism en masse. BSP supremo Mayawati was seen to threaten to convert to Buddhism with her many followers if BJP members did not change what she considered, their disrespectful, casteist, and communal behavior towards the Dalits. In 2001, Ram Raj, president of the All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations and joint-commissioner in the Income-Tax Department, drove his "Chariot of Buddhism" across the country for six months, urging Dalits to leave Hinduism at a conversion rally planned for Delhi's Ram Lila grounds. In the wake of police withdrawal of permission for the meeting venue, Raj got tonsured at a new venue, changed his faith along with a few thousand of his followers, and adopted a new name, Udit Raj.

6.7 The Politics of Conversion and Re-Conversion

It was since the late nineteenth century that efforts were made to draw back or retain in the Hindu fold the low caste Hindus who were seeking to cross the borders of their religion in search of equality. In this respect, the development of the *Suddhi* ritual by the Arya Samaj was important and came as a response to the Christian and Muslim conversion activities. By the 1890s the Arya leaders started turning their attention to groups such as the Bhangis [sweepers] and chamars [leather workers], many of whom practiced a syncretic mix of local and Islamic beliefs and practices and sought to induct them firmly into the Hindu fold by converting them to Hinduism through *Suddhi*.

The first actual attempts at mass *Suddhi* among the 'Neo-Muslims' is said to have taken place in 1908 in Bharatpur in eastern Rajputana. In this endeavour, the Arya missionaries were reportedly supported by influential local Hindus. Despite the limited success of *Suddhi* campaigns undertaken then, and thereafter in different parts of the country, it stirred up sharp reactions from the Muslim leadership. Muslim leaders pledged to counter the *Suddhi* campaign unitedly, though there were significant differences of opinion amongst different groups regarding the methods to be adopted. In response to the *suddhi* movement,

in the early twentieth century, the *tabligh* made concerted efforts to spread Islam as well as reform neo-Muslims and bring their beliefs and practices in line with normative, spiritual understandings.

Even as conversion or the threat of conversion has clearly been a political tool used by Dalits in their struggles for social justice since long, the mass conversion of Dalits to other religions continue to stir anxiety and anger among India's right-wing , political forces. The *Suddhi* programme initiated by the Arya Samaj in yester years has today virtually merged with the *Ghar Wapsi* programme spearheaded by right wing organizations like the Viswa Hindu Parishad and the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is a right-wing party with close ideological and organisational links to Hindu nationalist organisations like the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), is actively working to halt Dalit conversions. For India's right-wing, it is morally and politically unacceptable for anyone to leave the Hindu religion. While the non-Hindu religious organisations organize mass conversions of Dalits to move them away from Hinduism and caste society in protest against their oppression, Hindu organizations turn to conversions or rather re-conversions of the converted Dalits, terming them as *Ghar Wapsi* [meaning return to the home] movements to bring the Dalits back into the Hindu fold.

Today, in several states including *Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand*, there are controversial laws placing restrictions on mass conversions from Hinduism; yet, significantly, mass conversions to Hinduism are often seen as being promoted rather than restricted. In the 1980s, the target of anti-conversion legislation was largely Muslims seeking to convert non-Muslims, while Christianity has received more attention since the 1990s . Human rights organizations and institutions have expressed concerns over the years about the rights implications of, and lack of equitable treatment under, these state anti-conversion laws. Further, Dalit converts to non-Hindu religions and those involved in converting them have in different parts of the country , not infrequently become prey of orchestrated mob violence. The excuses for perpetrating the violence have ranged from allegations of forced conversion to the consumption of beef and other prohibited food by the non-Hindu.

It is interesting to note that in March 2019, in the context of the forthcoming national elections, Dalit Christians and Muslims organized a joint protest in Delhi and urged the government not to ignore their interests. Four Catholic Bishops were present at the rally as were members of the National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC), an umbrella organisation for various Dalit Christian group; the National Council of Churches in India (Protestants and Orthodox); and the Muslim All India Jamiat Ul- Hawareen (AIJH).

6.8 Conclusion

Dalit struggles against caste oppression have a long and complex history that can be traced back to thousands of years. The struggles of the low castes waged at the religious, social, economic and political levels have time and again created intricate networks for assertions. Ambedkar's conversion movement was a landmark as thousands of his Dalit followers followed his footsteps in rejecting Hinduism and converted to Buddhism. Thus was born *Navayana* Buddhism. It was a movement that was simultaneously religious, social and political.

Dalit struggles for social justice are not confined to the Hindu Dalit population. It spreads beyond, to embrace the non-Hindu Dalit populace who are no less the victims of caste exploitation. In that struggle, 'conversion' occupies an important place as it emerges as a contentious issue in Dalit politics. The resistance to conversion, pressures for re-conversion and the struggle for dignity upon conversion are the different dimensions of the struggle.

6.9 Summary

Conversion of Dalit Hindus to non-Hindu religions has been one of the important tools of struggle of the low caste Hindus since centuries back, in their efforts to escape caste oppression and gain social justice.

Prominent options of the religions to convert to have been Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. While conversion itself has often resulted from political assertion, the political struggle very often has to be carried ahead by the converted individual at a different plane after conversion. This becomes necessary as, feeling let down by the state and sections of their own communities, Dalits converted to the minority communities have to come forth and mobilize to demand their rights and dignity.

In the overall prevailing context of marginalization, Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam are seen to be struggling for recognition as Scheduled Castes with the hope of gaining the state extended support that Scheduled Caste categories are entitled to.

6.10 Questions

Broad Questions [18 marks each]

1. Discuss the problems faced by dalits of minority communities in India.
2. Write a note on the attempts of dalit Muslims to articulate their demands.

3. Examine the nature of discrimination faced by dalit Christians.

Questions where medium length answers are required [12 marks each]

1. How has conversion to Buddhism evolved as a political tool ?
2. Write briefly about the Dalit Panther Movement.
3. Write a brief note on Dalit theology.

Short questions [6 marks each]

1. Who are the *Navayana* Buddhists ?
2. To what extent do you think has conversion helped the dalit communities in overcoming their hurdles?
3. What is the *Ghar Wapsi* movement ?

6.11 Suggested Readings

1. Ambedkar B. R., *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Samyak Prakashan, Delhi, 2nd Edition, 2019
2. George Sobin, *Dalit Christians in India: Discrimination, Development Deficit and the Question for Group- Specific Policies*, Working Paper Series, Vol. VI, No. 02, 2012, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi, <http://www.dalitstudies.org.in/uploads/publication/1473146694.pdf>.
3. John C. B. Webster, *A History of the Dalit Christians in India*, Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 1992.
4. Khanam Azra, *Muslim Backward Classes: A Sociological Perspective*, SAGE Publications India, 2013.
5. Omvedt Gail, *Buddhism in India : Challenging Brahmanism and Caste. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.2003.*
6. Omvedt Gail, *Dalit Visions: The Anti-Caste Movement and the Construction of an Indian Identity*, Orient Blackswan, 2006.
7. Zelliott Eleanor, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, New Delhi: Manohar, 3rd Edition, 2001.

Unit 7 □ Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes & Minorities

Structure

7.1 Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 The Scheduled Castes

7.4 Problems Faced by the Scheduled Castes

7.5 The Other Backward Classes or the OBCs: Socially and Educationally Backward Sections of the Population

7.6 The First Backward Classes Commission or the Kaka Kalelkar Commission

7.7 Second Backward Classes Commission: The Mandal Commission

7.8 Religious Minority Communities in India

7.9 The Constitutional Status of the Minorities

7.10 The Problems Faced by the Minorities

7.11 The Largest Religious Minority Community : The Muslims

7.12 The Sachar Committee Report

7.13 Conclusion

7.14 Summary

7.15 Questions

7.16 Suggested Readings

7.1 Objectives

On going through this Unit we shall be able to understand—

- Who are the Scheduled Castes?
- What are the roots of the problems of the Scheduled Castes?
- Present status of the Scheduled Castes.
- Who are the Other Backward Castes?
- What are the safeguards for the OBCs?
- Present conditions of the OBCs.

- The nature of the minority situation in India.
- Problems faced by the minorities.
- Existing safeguards for the minorities.

7.2 Introduction

India has a large and variegated population. There are differences of language, caste, religion and culture, to mention but a few. Drawing on religious traditions, complex societal norms govern the activities of the people, their interactive styles, their occupations, and in fact the entire spectrum of their day to day activities. A glance at this large, variegated population group reveals that sizeable segments of it are socially marginalized and remain excluded from the goods and services available to others. They also comprise a disproportionately large section of those who regularly suffer from a variety of atrocities and denial of rights. It becomes evident on careful scrutiny that the exclusion from goods and services and rights negations of these people is anything but accidental. There is, in fact, a distinct pattern about such marginality, exclusion and violations lending a unique character to the India social scenario. Their societal marginality is both a cause and effect of human rights violations. Moreover, it is, in itself a violation of human rights.

7.3 The Scheduled Castes

Rigid , caste-based stratification marks Indian society. A birth- ascribed status in terms of the caste hierarchy imposes permanent disabilities on people at the lower ends of the schema. Inequalities and discrimination built into the system remain violative of the spirit of the Indian Constitution and universal principles of justice and equality.

A sizeable section of the population located at the bottom of the social hierarchy are treated as untouchables and suffer worst forms of discrimination. It is this section of the population that has been designated as the Scheduled Castes.

The expression Scheduled Caste was coined by the Simon Commission and subsequently embodied in the Government of India Act 1935. Till then, these castes were variedly referred to as ‘untouchables’, ‘ Depressed Classes’, and ‘Exterior Castes’. Gandhi had attempted to get them recognized as ‘Harijans’, a term that was not universally accepted.

The term Scheduled Castes came from the attempt to list the untouchable castes in a ‘Schedule’ or list for purposes of granting certain safeguards and facilities to the

members of those castes for their uplift. The groups whose members were considered as 'untouchables' were listed in a Schedule' in 1936 in order to give effect to the provisions of special electoral representation as per Government of India Act 1935. This was the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order 1936.

During the process of Constitution-making, Dr B.R.Ambedkar, as member of the Constituent Assembly and Chairman of the Drafting Committee, had repeatedly brought up the question of safeguards for the depressed sections of society. His efforts were fruitful to the extent that compensatory discriminatory measures were embodied in the Constitution to uplift amongst others, the untouchable castes. It was these castes, members of which were identified for the benefits, that continued to be referred to as the 'Scheduled Castes'. The complete list of castes for India was made available in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950.

Reservation for these sections of the population in educational institutions has been permitted under Article 15(4) of the Constitution, while reservation in posts and services has been provided for in Article 16(4), 16(4A) and 16(4B) of the Constitution. Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, which, along with the above mentioned articles, is a Fundamental Right, has abolished the practice of untouchability. Article 46, a Directive Principle of State Policy, speaks of the promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections.

Article 330 and 332 provides for reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies. Article 338 has made provision for the special officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards for the Scheduled Castes.

Over the years, based on the framework of constitutional law, an elaborate legal network for providing assistance to members of the Scheduled Castes , also referred to as the SCs , have come into existence. These include reservation of seats in legislatures, employment and educational institutions, scholarship programmes and hostel and maintenance facilities. In addition, there is a whole package of provisions, providing financial assistance under various heads for their benefit. To effectively implement the safeguards built into the Constitution and other statutory laws, the Constitution provides for a statutory commission, namely, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

7.4 Problems Faced by the Scheduled Castes

The Scheduled Castes comprising of the social category of untouchable castes also called Dalits, suffer various socially imposed disabilities. Traditionally, resting on the concept of purity and pollution, the untouchables were given a very low position in

the society. Socially stigmatized, they were denied access to temples, the right to use public utilities like wells, public transport as well as educational institutions. Marginalization affected all spheres of their life; there was gross violation of basic human rights such as civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. They suffered extreme poverty, poor housing conditions as well as low access to resources and entitlements as a whole. Structural discrimination against these groups was entrenched in the form of physical, psychological, emotional and cultural abuse which received legitimacy from the social structure and the social system.

Physical segregation of their settlements is common in the villages forcing them to live in the most unhygienic and inhabitable conditions. All these factors affect their health status, access to healthcare and quality of life. There are high rates of malnutrition reported among the marginalized groups resulting in mortality, morbidity and anemia. Access to and utilization of healthcare is adversely affected by their socio-economic status within the society.

Constitutional and legal safeguards along with government interventions have brought forth a measure of improvement in the conditions of the Scheduled Caste population on the whole. As a consequence of government's reservation policy, a section of the Scheduled Castes has acquired higher education and thereafter achieved employment in government and non-government sectors. However, notwithstanding these advancements, their problems tend to persist as the pressures from the caste structure of society continue to weigh down on them. It is seen that the large section of child labourers, agricultural labourers, manual scavengers still come from these categories of the population. Members of these castes continue to be under-represented in the higher levels of employment, have marginal or no land holdings and still face discrimination and social stigma in violation of their human rights. They are frequently victims of various forms of atrocities perpetrated against them. In fact, such incidents are alarmingly on the rise.

7.5 The Other Backward Classes or the OBCs : Socially and Educationally Backward Sections of the Population

The Objectives Resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in the Constituent Assembly in December 1946 had stated that adequate safeguards would be provided for 'minorities, backward and tribal areas and depressed and backward classes'. In keeping with the spirit of this Resolution, the Constitution makers were not satisfied with simply providing safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They had realized that there would be other sections of the population requiring support

for their uplift in view of their social and educational backwardness. As such, provisions were incorporated in the Constitution that recognized the possible existence of 'socially and educationally backward classes'.

Article 15(4) of the Indian Constitution speaks of the socially and educationally backward class. Article 16 (4) uses the term 'backward class' and speaks of inadequate representation in services. Article 340 empowers the state to investigate the conditions of the backward classes for taking suitable measures for their uplift.

Article 340 of the Indian Constitution provides for the appointment of a Backward Classes Commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes.

The provisions are as follows:

- (1) The President may by order appoint a Commission consisting of such persons as he thinks fit to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India and the difficulties under which they labour and to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the Union or any state to remove such difficulties and to improve their condition and as to the grants that should be made for the purpose by the Union.
- (2) A Commission so appointed shall investigate the matters referred to them and present to the President a report setting out the facts as found by them and making such recommendations as they think proper
- (3) The President shall cause a copy of the report so presented together with a memorandum explaining the action taken thereon to be laid before each House of Parliament."

7.6 The First Backward Classes Commission or the Kaka Kalelkar Commission

In pursuance of the Constitutional provisions, the First Backward Classes Commission was established by a presidential order in 1953. Kaka Kalelkar was its Chairman ; as such, the Commission is often referred to as the Kaka Kalelkar Commission. The Commission submitted its Report in 1955.

As per its terms of reference, the Commission was 'to determine the criterion to be adopted in considering whether any section of the people of territory of India (in addition to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes specified by notifications issued under Art 341 and 342 of the Constitution) should be treated as socially and educationally backward classes; and in accordance with such criteria, prepare a list

of such classes' and also 'investigate the condition of all such socially and educationally backward classes and the difficulties under which they labour.' On the basis of its findings, the Commission was to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the Union or any state to remove such difficulties and the grants that should be made for the purpose by the Union or any state.

In conducting its survey, the Commission adopted certain criteria for determining backwardness which included [i] low position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society [ii] lack of educational advancement among the major section of a caste or community [iii] inadequate or no representation in government service and [iv] inadequate representation in the field of trade, commerce and industry. Based on such criteria, the Commission identified 2399 castes or communities as backward. Of these, 837 were classified as 'most backward'.

The Commission, inter alia, recommended the relating of social backwardness of a class to its low position in the traditional caste hierarchy of the Hindu society. A vast array of measures was suggested which included re-distribution of land, protection of tenants, help to small agriculturists in the form of credit, price support, irrigation facilities and reservations for backward classes in government services.

The recommendations of the Commission however were not found acceptable by the Government of India. Years later, the Second Backward Classes Commission was set up at the national level.

7.7 Second Backward Classes Commission: The Mandal Commission

The second Backward Classes Commission was set up in 1978; it submitted its Report in 1980.

This Commission is known as the Mandal Commission following the name of its Chairman B.P.Mandal who was a former Member of Parliament and headed the five-member Commission.

The Commission evolved eleven indicators or criteria for determining backwardness. These were applied to each of the castes and, following extensive investigations, the Commission decided to consider caste as the basic unit for determining backwardness.

Based on its investigations, the Commission identified fifty two percent of the population of India as backward. For the uplift of the conditions of the backward population, the Mandal Commission recommended a whole package of programmes including educational concessions, reservation facilities and financial assistance. The

recommended quantum of reservations for the other backward classes or the OBCs was 27%. This was done in view of the legal compulsions of the Balaji Vs state of Mysore [1963] ruling to keep the total quantum of reservations below 50 %.

For ten years the Mandal Commission Report was not acted upon by the Government of India. This was the period when the Indian National Congress was in power at the centre. Ten years later, with a change in government at the centre and the National Front led by V.P.Singh coming to power, the Mandal Commission Report was resurrected. In August 1990 the government made an announcement to partially implement the Mandal Report. On the one hand, this evoked sharp reactions across the country and a wave of anti-reservation movements spread rapidly. On the other hand, it also led to a consolidation of forces in support of the Mandal Report. Needless to say, through the process, politicization of castes reached a very high level.

7.8 Religious Minority Communities in India

India has a sizeable religious minority population. Of them, the Muslims are the largest minority. The basic criterion for a community to be designated as a religious minority is the numerical strength of the said community. Apart from the Muslims, are the Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and others. While the Hindus are an overwhelming majority comprising nearly eighty percent of the population, Muslims who are the largest minority community as per the 2011 Census comprise 14.23% of the total population. The minority communities in India tend to suffer from various problems in view of their minority status. While there is a measure of commonality about some of their problems, they are not identical.

7.9 The Constitutional Status of the Minorities

The Indian Constitution uses the word “minority” and its plural forms in several of its articles, but does not proceed to define it. One can nevertheless infer from Articles 29 and 30 read together that the term primarily refers to religious and linguistic minorities.

Article 29 of the Constitution provides for —

Protection of interests of minorities

- (1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
- (2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained

by the state or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Article 30 of the Constitution speaks of – Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.

- (1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- (2) The state shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

On the whole, it can be asserted that India's Constitution encompasses provisions that emphasize complete legal equality of its citizens regardless of their religion or creed, and prohibits any kind of religion-based discrimination. It also provides safeguards—albeit limited ones—to religious minority communities.

The Constitution has several in-built legal safeguards for the minorities. Articles 15(1) and 15(2) prohibit discrimination on grounds of religion. Article 25 promises the right to profess, propagate and practise religion. It is clear that there is no legal bar on any religious community in India to make use of the opportunities [educational, economic, etc.] extended to the people.

In 1992 the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was established by the government to facilitate the safeguarding of the rights of the minorities. It was instituted under the National Commission for Minorities Act of the same year. Six religious communities have been designated as minorities by the union government. These six communities are – Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and Jains.

In August 2018 Parliament passed the Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status.

7.10 The Problems Faced by the Minorities

A number of problems afflict the religious minorities. These problems range from discrimination faced by them to their forced conversions; other constraints faced by these communities include problems of poverty and the feeling of alienation that has developed among them.

Some of the main problems faced by minorities in India can be categorized under the following heads: 1. Problem of identity 2. Problem of security 3. Problem Relating to equity. They increasingly feel alienated from the society at large, due to the deprivation faced by them as a direct result of discrimination. This has produced an acute impact on the social and economic life of the members of the minority communities.

Deprivation of job opportunities, lack of representation in the civil service and politics, and limited access to quality education have led to the members of some of these communities to struggle for maintaining minimum standards of living.

The issue of identity is important. The minority communities have felt disoriented and displaced due to their fear of being engulfed by the overwhelming majority. They feel threatened by the proposition of losing their own identity to the majority religious community.

Moreover, in the recent times, we have witnessed an alarming rise in communal tensions, riots and hate crimes against the minority communities in India, including the desecration of places of worship. Further, programs like the Ghar Wapsi Movement, have led to the rise of forced conversions in different parts of the country.

7.11 The Largest Religious Minority Community : The Muslims

Turning to the largest minority, the Muslims, who have been in focus for social, economic and numerical reasons, to mention a few, have suffered from a persistent sense of marginality. The community has widely suffered economic and educational backwardness and faced segregation of multiple sorts.

At least 82 different social groups among Muslims were declared OBCs by the Mandal Commission. According to NSSO survey, 40.7% of Muslims are Muslim OBCs, which comprises 15.7% of the total OBC population of the country. The conditions of the general Muslim category are lower than the Hindu-OBCs who have the benefit of reservation. However, the conditions of Muslim-OBCs were considered to be worse than that of the general Muslim category.

While discrimination in jobs and other spheres faced by the Muslim population is rampant, it does not indicate institutionalization of such discrimination. In fact, Indian constitutional law holds out the promise of equality, secularism and justice. It has been more at the level of policy making and implementation that the lacunae becomes apparent. Time and again the government has apparently acknowledged the gravity of the situation but has done little to redeem it. In fact, its actions may be characterized as 'too little', 'too late.'

7.12 The Sachar Committee Report

In March 2005 the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh appointed a high level committee to prepare a report on the Social, Economic and Educational Status of Indian Muslims. The 7-member committee, headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar (retired) submitted its report to the Prime Minister in November 2006.

The findings of the Sachar Committee revealed that the country's Muslim population are far behind other Socio-Religious Communities (SRCs) in the areas of education, employment, access to credit, access to social and physical infrastructure and political representation. The Report made numerous recommendations for urgent governmental action to redress the problem of Muslim backwardness.

The Sachar Committee recommendations were at two levels: One, General Policy Initiatives that cut across different aspects of socio-economic and educational development; Two, Specific Policy Measures that deal with particular issues and/or dimensions (e.g. education, credit, etc).

The main recommendations of the Sachar Committee to address the status of the Muslim community in India, included the following :

1. Need for Transparency, Monitoring and Data Availability - Create a National Data Bank (NDB) where all relevant data for various socio-religious categories are maintained.
2. Enhancing the Legal Basis for Providing Equal Opportunities Set up an Equal Opportunity Commission to look into grievances of deprived groups like minorities.
3. Shared Spaces: Need to Enhance Diversity: The idea of providing certain incentives to a 'diversity index' should be explored.
4. Education: a process of evaluating the content of the school text books needs to be initiated to purge them of explicit and implicit content that may impart inappropriate social values, especially religious intolerance. Need to ensure that all children in the age group 0-14 have access to free and high quality education.
5. High quality Government schools should be set up in all areas of Muslim concentration. Exclusive schools for girls should be set up, particularly for the 9-12 standards. This would facilitate higher participation of Muslim girls in school education. In co-education schools more women teachers need to be appointed.
6. Provide primary education in Urdu in areas where Urdu speaking population is concentrated.
7. Mechanisms to link madarsas with higher secondary school board.
8. Recognise degrees from madarsas for eligibility in Defence Services, Civil Services and Banking examinations.
9. Increase employment share of Muslims, particularly where there is great deal of public dealing.

10. Enhancing Participation in Governance: appropriate state level laws can be enacted to ensure minority representation in local bodies
11. Create a nomination procedure to increase participation of minorities in public bodies.
12. Establish a delimitation procedure that does not reserve constituencies with high minority population for SCs.
13. Enhancing Access to Credit and Government Programmes: Provide financial and other support to initiatives built around occupations where Muslims are concentrated and that have growth potential.
14. Improve participation and share of minorities, particularly Muslims, in business of regular commercial banks.
15. Improving Employment Opportunities and Conditions

The Committee suggested that policies should “sharply focus on inclusive development and ‘mainstreaming’ of the Community while respecting diversity.”

7.13 Conclusion

Marginal sections of the population in India continue to suffer gross human rights violations, notwithstanding legal and administrative safeguards. The dominant, hierarchical social structure legitimizing disparity stands in the way of leveling down of the inequalities between different strata of the society. While legal –administrative measures are important and have contributed significantly towards the uplift of the marginal sections, the deep-rooted social malaise needs to be understood and addressed.

7.14 Summary

In this unit we focus on the Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes and the Minorities in India. They are amongst the most marginal sections of India’s population. As such, they face diverse problems at multiple levels leading to gross violation of their human rights.

There are constitutional safeguards for them both exclusive and in common with others.

Commissions and committees have been appointed to investigate the conditions of the OBCs and the minorities. Important amongst them are the Kaka Kalelkar Commission, the Mandal Commission for the OBCs and the Sachar Committee for the Muslim minority. Elaborate recommendations have been made by these bodies for the betterment of these marginal population groups.

Government action on the recommendations have however remained half-hearted, as only some recommendations have been implemented and others have not been accepted.

7.15 Questions

Broad Questions [18 marks each]

1. What are the problems faced by the Scheduled Castes ?
2. Discuss the findings of the Second Backward Classes Commission and the recommendations made by it.
3. What were the main recommendations of the Sachar Committee ?

Medium length answers required [12 marks each]

1. Discuss the constitutional provisions relating to the Scheduled Castes.
2. Give an overview of the minority situation in India.
3. Discuss the in-built legal safeguards for the minorities provided for in the Constitution of India.

Short questions [6 marks each]

1. What was the mandate of the First Backward Classes Commission?
2. Who are the Scheduled Castes?
3. Who are the Other Backward Classes?

7.16 Suggested Readings

1. Chandhoke Neera, *Beyond Secularism: The Rights of Religious Minorities*, Oxford University Press, 1999
2. Deshpande Satish, *Sectarian Violence in India: Hindu-Muslim Conflict, 1966-2015*, Orient BlackSwan, 2019.
3. Ghurye G.S., *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan, 1969.
4. Hasan Zoya, *Politics of Inclusion: Castes, Minorities and Affirmative Action*, OUP, 2011.
5. Jaffrelot Christophe, *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India*, C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2003
6. Karade Jagan, *Development of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in India*, Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009.

Unit 8 □ Mobility and Change Rural and Urban in India

Structure

8.1 Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.2.1 Definition by Different Scholars

8.2.2 Factors of Social Mobility

8.3 Social Mobility and Change in India: During British Era

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8.4 Conclusion

8.5 Summary

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8.7 Suggested Readings

8.8 Glossary

8.1 Objectives

- Describing the types of mobility.
- Depicting open and closed models- factors and constraints to social mobility.
- Understanding social change in modern India especially through the processes of industrialization, urbanization and modernization,

8.2 Introduction

One of the most prominent features of the advanced societies of the present age is the high rate of mobility. Change is inevitable and no human society is immobile. But the rate of change varies from society to society and from time to time. Social

mobility is a process which involves socio-cultural change due to structural change in the established social, political, economic and cultural institutions of a system or a society. As a result, the attitudes, opinions, customs, ways of acting are changing and people are becoming rational, secular, modern in thought and external behavior and gradually they become individualistic. In this process individuals move from one social position to another within a social space often leading to progressive development of society with respect of time.

8.2.1 Definition by Different Scholars

In the Encyclopedia of sociology “social mobility has been defined as movement through “social space” from one status category (the origin) to another status category (the destination)”. According to Sorokin (1927), social mobility in its broadest sense is the shifting of people in social space. In other words social mobility is the transition of people from one social position to another. Lipset and Zetterberg (1966) points that social mobility of an individual or group is determined by the shift and ranking of occupation, consumption, social power and social class. People’s beliefs, values, norms customs and some of their emotional expressions are different according to their occupational class.

The rate of mobility may differ in different dimensions. There is a possibility of having a higher rate of mobility in one dimension and lower in another. Therefore to get a more qualified and accurate conclusions about social mobility they have suggested a conventional operational method of ascertaining mobility by comparing father’s and offspring’s occupational position.

As defined by Barber (1965), social mobility refers to movement either upward or downward between higher or lower social classes; or more precisely, movement between one relatively full time, functionally significant social role and another that is evaluated as either higher or lower.

Sethi (1976) states that social mobility brings structural changes in the attitudes and beliefs of the people. This leads to rationality, universality and secular ideology which means equality, freedom and independence for everyone. Kumar (1994) stated social mobilization implies the process in which major clusters of old, social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded and broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior.

Sharma (1997) referred social mobility as the change in the status of individuals(s) or group(s) in relation to a given system of social stratification. This change manifests itself in two forms, either as a threat to the contiguous system and ultimately its displacement by the emergence of a new criterion of status evaluation (vertical mobility

or structural change) or through changes within the parameters of the system (horizontal mobility or positional change). The importance of social mobility as a concept in sociology is quite obvious. Any change of position in society experienced by an individual or a group has its impact not only on the individual or the group, but also on the society at large.

Implicit in invoking the concept of social mobility is the recognition of gradation in a society. The gradation is normally done in terms of power, prestige and privileges. That is to say, a hierarchical structure then operates in such societies. This opens up the possibility of sociological investigation of whether or how an individual or a group gains or loses power, prestige and privileges in a society. In other words, along the line of hierarchy whether one moves up or falls down signifies change of social position that is social mobility.

8.2.2 Factors of Social Mobility

There are multiple factors contributing to social mobility such as:

- (1) Status – Every society provides a different status or position to each individual or a group. Ralph Linton (1958) the eminent anthropologist says that status is the position occupied by an individual in the total social network with respect to every other individual with whom he shares a relationship in the network. Therefore, a person's total status is the sum of his total collection of rights and duties in that society. Factors such as family, the social groups, the norms and values existing in the society determine the status of an individual. These factors are objective and they are already there before the individual is born. The Anthropologists and Socio- Psychologists believe that in a modern society the objective factors are becoming less important and they believe that in achievement-oriented society, the process of socialization and the formation of attitudes in the individual determine the status.
- (2) Education - Education is very important for all round development of an individual. Dubey (1976), Goel (2004) state that education enables the members of a society to perform gainful social roles, develop basic skills, abilities, and performance. It also promotes mobility on the thought level in the society conducive to and in support of national development goals, both long-term and immediate; it determines the aspirations, and vertical and horizontal mobility. In this context, Cohn (1961), Oommen (1964) and Kurane (1999) have stated that education is one of the factors for initiating social change leading to social mobility. Patwardhan (1968) has mentioned that mobility in present day India is determined not only by ascription but also by the level of education one acquires and higher education is an effective means to upward mobility.

- (3) Occupation – Occupation is an important indicator to study social mobility. Occupational mobility acts not only as an indicator of social change but also as a transmitting agent of new attitudes and behavior. Lipset and Zetterberg (1956) have mentioned that factors such as the growth of service industries, white collar occupation, rise in the proportion of urban occupations with decline of agricultural work, and bureaucracy- all provide impetus for greater social mobility. Further they say that social mobility of an individual or group is determined by the shift and ranking of occupation.
- (4) Change in attitudes and beliefs – To bring a change in larger society, a change has to occur in the attitudinal level of the individuals of the society leading to behavioral changes and progressive action. This in turn may lead to further structural change and social mobility. Sharma (2007) opines that urbanization leads to breakdown of traditional beliefs and this in turn, influences people in changing their attitudes, beliefs and world view and leads to individualism and formalism.
- (5) Extent of social distance – Caste system which is deeply rooted in traditional Indian society is characterized by non-recognition of personal qualities, rigid caste hierarchy, caste endogamy and restrictions regarding eating, drinking and social interaction. Marriot (1959) mentioned that the relative ranking of different castes in a locality depends on the kinds of interactions they have with other castes, particularly in taking and giving of food and water and in their participation in ritual services. But in the present age due to the changing attitudes and liberal outlook the traditional caste hierarchy has weakened. Lipset and Bendix (1967) reported that in the process of social mobility people tend to change his/her friends and move to a new neighborhood. Malik (1979) points out that social mobility brings a change in interpersonal relations.
- (6) Utilization of mass media – Exposure to and utilization of media of mass communication is directly related to mobility process. Since the level of literacy is low in India, the various prevalent social problems are closely associated with traditional attitudes, beliefs and ignorance among people. Agrawal (2004) writes that media utilization in several ways reflects the end use. People who utilize more mass media are expected to be more mobile because these media of mass communications convey new ideas and beliefs and thus help in achieving mobility. In a study conducted by Agarwal in the year 1977 showed that the women who were viewed T.V. gained more knowledge than the men in areas like family planning, health and nutrition. Jha (1985) opines that a higher degree of exposure to channels of communication such as newspapers, T.V. programs, frequency of seeing films are the facts that serve as the indices of modernization. Sanjay (1994) states that people who are exposed to mass media develop a mobile personality that encourages rationality.

According to M.N. Srinivas (1977) the factors responsible for social mobility are:

- (1) Sanskritization – Srinivas defines Sanskritization as the process by which a low caste or tribe or other group follow the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a ‘twice-born caste’. Thus, the lower caste people imitate the life ways of the upper castes with a view to improve their status within the framework of caste. However, it does not lead to a structural change. Although the change is only positional yet it has significant structural consequences, especially in relation to the orientation of the lower castes towards the traditional upper castes.
- (2) Westernization – Westernization refers to changes brought due to contact with western culture, particularly with the British. According to Srinivas various caste groups have adopted cultural styles of the British. Besides cultural imitation, many people have absorbed western science, technology, education, ideology and values.

8.3 Social Mobility and Change in India: During British Era

In India, social mobility was almost less within a caste system before the British came to India. With the establishment of British rule several new avenues of mobility opened encompassing almost all aspects of Indian society. British rules had opened the new avenues by which land could be sold to anyone, even to low castes who had money. During that period role of missionaries were immense. Land ceiling resulting in new economic opportunities, building of railways, road, canals, and introduction of plantation crops like cotton, tea etc., providing employment to thousands were mentionable. The new opportunities – educational, economical and political were open to all irrespective of caste. Thus, the low castes tried to acquire symbols of high status through possession of political power, education and new economic opportunities.

With the gradual transfer of power from British to Indians, the 20th century witnessed a great increase in quantum of mobility in caste system and Sanskritization also played an important role by enabling low castes to move for high castes.

In their research works both Latheef and Ahmad (1964) indicated that cause and effect relationships between industrial, agricultural, occupational and communicational changes were now taking place in India owing to increased social mobility. Silverberg (1969) Srinivas (1987) observed that studies on social mobility in India had highlighted positional changes in the form of Sanskritization and Westernization.

Omvedt (1981) stated that class rather than caste was basis of social mobility implying change from agriculture to entrepreneurship and the form of migration from rural to urban areas. The emergence of new business class was not only because of economic forces, but social, political and cultural processes, particularly the social and political history of the region and of the dominant land-owning castes also played an important role. Thus, the state in India brought about economic and political changes having consequences for social mobility eliminating some old persisting tensions and of the emergence of a new system of social stratification.

8.3.1 The Indian Debate on Mobility Studies : Caste-Class Framework

It is only with the undertaking of planned development in the country, the creation of the National Planning Commission in 1950, establishment of University Grants Commission in 1956 and various public and private Industries, corporations, factories and other small and medium enterprises brought in sweeping changes in country's socio-economic and political structure. Following the footsteps of west in industrial development, the Indian society began to experience slow but seismic changes in its social structure profile. Traditional markers of identity such as caste, community, clan, language etc., slowly began to co-exist with class, urban, education and occupational identities. Further with world's economic order completely restructured, in post 1990 (popularly known as post-reform period) where the transformation and growth of Indian economy had been attributed to emergence and influence of entrepreneurial private and collective firms leading to the rise of powerful socio-economic and political category called middle class (Manimala, 2011).

While the concept is typically ambiguous in popular opinion and common language use, three structural changes in India namely service-sector led economic growth, rapid expansion of urbanization and higher education are undoubtedly resulting in a massive expansion of the middle class. Hence class is a socio-economic category gained attention in sociological and social science literature. Most of the literature available on social mobility in India has predominantly focused on caste mobility in terms of diversification of occupations, Sanskritization and education. The trends it has shown is the similar to the process that Lipset and Bendix in 1959 have analyzed in the inter-generational occupational mobility rankings in post-industrial societies:

- (1) Most non-manual occupations have more prestige than the manual occupations including the skilled ones.
- (2) White collar occupations generally lead to have higher incomes than manual employment.
- (3) Non-manual occupations require more education than the manual occupations.

- (4) Holders of non-manual positions, even paid lower than that of some of the manual workers tend to think themselves as members of middle-class and act out middle class roles in their conception pattern.
- (5) Low-level non-manual workers are more likely to have political attitudes which resemble those of the upper middle class than those of the manual working class (Dubey, 1975).

The economic forces released under British rule resulted in greater mobility within the caste system, and in post – independence period, universalization of education and wide range of technical employment slowly infused the element of class in the social structure. The post reform period introduced a cosmopolitan way of life that brought into existence of international economic organizations having wide range of specialized occupations with different ranking of status attached to it. Therefore, it is necessary for students of mobility studies to understand class element while analyzing social mobility in India but at the same time also recognize the fact that caste as the traditional stratification is not defunct. Over the years caste system has become more subtle in its manifestations in terms of opportunities in education, employment and accessibility of resources but still remains the de facto hierarchical division in terms of rituals, purity and social status rankings. Studies of social mobility in India have not only ignored the relationship between social mobility and politics but have also not come up with a class and caste schema to capture the mobility trends (Bhatt, 1971).

8.3.2 Change and Development in Rural India

Indian society is primarily a rural society though urbanization is growing. The majority of India's people live in rural areas (67 per cent, according to the 2001 Census). They make their living from agriculture or related occupations. This means that agricultural land is the most important productive resource for a great many Indians. Land is also the most important form of property. But land is not just a 'means of production' nor just a form of property or agriculture just a form of livelihood. It is also a way of life. Many of our cultural practices and patterns can be traced to our agrarian backgrounds. There is a close connection between agriculture and culture. The nature and practice of agriculture varies greatly across the different regions of the country. These variations are reflected in different regional cultures. One can say that both the culture and social structure in rural India are closely bound up with agricultural and the agrarian way of life. Agriculture is the single most important source of livelihood for the majority of the rural population. But the rural is not just agriculture. Many activities that support agriculture and village life are also sources of livelihood for people in rural India. For example, a large number of artisans such as potters, carpenters, weavers, ironsmiths, and goldsmiths are found in rural areas. They were

once part and parcel of the village economy. Their numbers have been steadily lessening since the colonial period.

Rural life is also supported by many other specialists and crafts persons as storytellers, astrologers, priests, water-distributors, and oil-pressers. The diversity of occupations in rural India has been reflected in the caste system, which in most regions included specialist and 'service' castes such as washer men, potters, and goldsmiths. Some of these traditional occupations have declined. But increasing interconnection of the rural and urban economies have led to many diverse occupations. Many people living in rural areas are employed in, or have livelihood based in, rural non-farm activities. For instance, there are rural residents employed in government services such as the postal and education departments, factory workers, or in the army, who earn their living through non-agricultural activities. Several profound transformations in the nature of social relations in rural areas took place in the post-independence period, especially in those regions that underwent the green revolution. These included an increase in the use of agricultural labor as cultivation became more intensive; shift from payment in kind (grain) to payment in cash; loosening of traditional bonds or hereditary relationships between farmers or landowners and agricultural workers (known as bonded labor) and the rise of a class of 'free' wage laborers'. The change in the nature of the relationship between landlords (who usually belonged to the dominant castes) and agricultural workers (usually low caste), was described by sociologist Jan Breman (1974) as a shift from 'patronage to exploitation'. Such changes took place in many areas where agriculture was becoming more commercialized, that meant, where crops were being grown primarily for sale in the market.

The transformation in labor relations is regarded by some scholars as indicative of a transition to capitalist agriculture. Because the capitalist mode of production is based on the separation of the workers from the means of production (in this case, land), and the use of 'free' wage labor. In general, it is true that farmers in the more developed regions are becoming more oriented to the market. As cultivation becomes more commercialized these rural areas are also becoming integrated into the wider economy. This process has increased the flow of money into villages and expanding opportunities for business and employment.

But we should remember that this process of transformation in the rural economy in fact began during the colonial period. In many regions in the 19th century large tracts of land in Maharashtra were given over to cotton cultivation, and cotton farmers became directly linked to the world market. However, the pace and spread of change rapidly increased after independence, as the government promoted modern methods

of cultivation and attempted to modernize the rural economy through other strategies. The state invested in the development of rural infrastructure, such as irrigation facilities, roads, and electricity, and on the provision of agricultural inputs, including credit through banks and cooperatives. The overall outcome of these efforts at 'rural development' was not only to transform the rural economy and agriculture, but also the agrarian structure and rural society itself.

Another significant change in rural society that is linked to the commercialization of agriculture has been the growth of migrant agricultural labor. The large-scale circulation of labor has had several significant effects on rural society, in both the receiving and the supplying regions. For instance, in poor areas where male family members spend much of the year working outside of their villages, cultivation has become primarily a female task. Women are also emerging as the main source of agricultural labor, leading to the 'feminization of agricultural labor force.' The insecurity of women is greater because they earn lower wages than men for similar work. Until recently, women are hardly visible in official statistics as earners and workers. While women toil on the land as landless laborers and as cultivators, the prevailing patrilineal kinship system, and other cultural practices that privilege male rights, largely exclude women from land ownership.

The policy of liberalization that India has been following since the late 1980s have had a very significant impact on agriculture and rural society. The policy entails participation in the World Trade Organization (WTO), which aims to bring about a freer international trading system and requires the opening up of Indian markets to imports. After decades of state support and protected markets, Indian farmers have been exposed to competition from the global market. Contract farming is very common now in the production of specialized items such as cut flowers, fruits such as grapes, figs and pomegranates, cotton, and oilseeds. While contract farming appears to provide financial security to farmers, it can also lead to greater insecurity as farmers become dependent on these companies for their livelihood. Contract farming of export-oriented products such as flowers and gherkins also means that agricultural land is diverted away from food grain production. Contract farming has sociological significance in that it disengages many people from the production process and makes their own indigenous knowledge of agriculture irrelevant. In addition, contract farming caters primarily to the production of elite items, and because it usually requires high doses of fertilizers and pesticides, it is often not ecologically sustainable.

Another, and more widespread aspect of the globalization of agriculture is the entry of multinational into this sector as sellers of agricultural inputs such as seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers. Over the last decade or so, the government has scaled down its

agricultural development programs, and ‘agricultural extension’ agents have been replaced in the villages by agents of seed, fertilizer, and pesticide companies. These agents are often the sole source of information for farmers about new seeds or cultivation practices, and of course they have an interest in selling their products. This has led to the increased dependence of farmers on expensive fertilizers and pesticides, which has reduced their profits, put many farmers into debt, and also created an ecological crisis in rural areas.

8.3.3 Change and Development in Urban India

The nature of urban society as represented in thoughts of urban theorists of modern city greatly have shown contrasting differences in their views. Every place has its distinctive urban characteristic determined by variables as mix of power, space, market and cultural practices. As a result of development in science and technology, there has been industrial development. Due to industrial development, there is urbanization as a result of which urban societies created. Every country has its own urban society. Every village possesses some elements of the city while every city carries some feature of the villages. Different criteria are used to decide a community as urban. Some of them are, for example, population, legal limits, types of occupations, social organizations. The city in the words of Louis Wirth refers to “a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals.”

8.3.4 Meaning of Urban Society

An urban area is characterized by higher population density and vast human feature in comparison to area surrounding it. Urban areas are created and further developed by the process of urbanization. Urban areas are places which have the following criteria:

1. A minimum population of 5,000.
2. At least 75% of the male main working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits
3. A density of population of a least 400 persons per sq. km.

The growth of large cities that contain the bulk of a society’s population is very recent development. Urbanization is a part of development process. The major features of urban society are given below:

Social heterogeneity, secondary relations, anonymity, secondary control, large- scale division of labor and specialization, large-scale social mobility, individuation, voluntary association, social reference, unstable family, special segregation, lack of community feeling, lack of unity in family, moral laxity, unbalanced personality, high incidence of crime, social disorganization, peculiarities of marital life, dynamic life, voluntary

associations are formed quickly and an overall artificial life. Urban life differs with the rural. It refers to a process which envisages land settlement, agglomeration of diversities, complete transformation of economy from agricultural to industrial, commercial sectors and a wider politico-civic life dependent on institutions of modern living. The urban society is heterogeneous. It is known for its diversity and complexity. It is dominated by secondary relations. Urban society is far away from the nature and natural environment. Mass education is widespread in city. It is a “Complex Multi-Group Society”.

8.3.5 City and Village : Continuity and Change in Social Mobility

More striking than new opportunities for group mobility within the traditional status hierarchy has been the appearance in recent decades of new status hierarchies with new arenas for status competition. They have emerged from the impact of urbanization and westernization but are not independent of the traditional social organization in which they are based. Urbanism is nothing new in India but rapid urbanization is new. The emergency of industrial employment, of easy communication over long distances, of increasingly efficient distribution of goods and services and of more effective centralized administration has made urban living a more accessible alternative to more people in India than ever before. Urban life affords a measure of independence from the ties and constraints of membership in rural based social groups by granting a degree of individual anonymity and mobility quite unattainable in rural communities. Caste, religion, ritual, tradition and the social controls implicit therein are not as rigid or pervasive in the city. People are increasingly able to seek status and other rewards on an individual or small family basis largely independent of caste or the other larger social entities of which they are also a part. They do this primarily by going to the city although the values of the city also extend into the country-side and have loosened the hold of tradition even there.

To a great extent urban Indians can achieve status as a result of behaviors and attributes rather than simply as a result of birth.

According to Harold Gould industrialization brought about the transfer of specialized occupations of all kinds from the context of the kin groups to factories organized on bureaucratic principles. This meant that occupational role and role occupant would be in principle separated and that the preponderant criteria for determining occupations would be performance qualities and that economic rewards and social mobility would constitute the principal standards for evaluating the worth or the status of any given role. Traditional status -caste status did not disappear in the city. It remained important in the most private contexts; the family and neighborhood. Some neighborhoods essentially reproduced the village setting in personnel as well as social structure; others do not.

A very large proportion of city dwellers are in close touch with their native villages. Tradition and ascription are important in the city in those relationships upon which the day-to-day functioning and future composition of the family depends of which the epitome is marriage. In the city primary relationships occupy a diminishing proportion of most people's time, attention and energies. Much of the individual's interaction takes place on the basis of particular or even fragmented roles. He can often behave in a way consistent with the requirements of the situation without reference to his group membership. He is even able to pass if that is his desire by learning the superficial symbols of the status such as that of white-collar worker, student, middle class householder or professional. In these statuses skill in handling the language, in pursuing the occupation or success in acquiring money or an appropriate life style may be socially recognized and rewarded irrespective of caste and family.

8.4 Conclusion

Contemporary urban life has available more means to mobility and suggests to those who seek it a greater likelihood of success than the highly structured closely controlled traditional village setting. Mobility occurs in all settings. Some low status groups have been victims of technological displacement with the result that their economic, political and social statuses have declined. They drift either into the status of rural landless laborers or into unskilled urban employment, both of which are overpopulated and underpaid. The result is underemployment, unemployment, poverty and lack of opportunity for improvement. For examples: water carriers comprise a caste whose members have been displaced in many parts of Northern India with the advent of hand pumps. In some instances, new occupations have been created and with them opportunities for enhancement of economic and social status thus allowing certain mobility.

8.5 Summary

The importance of social mobility as a concept in sociology is quite obvious. Any change of position in society experienced by an individual or a group has its impact not only on the individual or the group, but also on the society at large. Studies of social mobility should also take note of the problems associated with such studies. Particular social position as determined by job-status is not immutable, because the social value attached to any occupation may change overtime. Also, while studying

inter-generational mobility it is to be carefully decided at what point of their careers should parents and children be compared.

8.6 Questions

- Discuss in detail the factors responsible for social mobility.
- Differentiate between the various types of social mobility in India.
- Assess the present day implications of mobility in India with suitable illustrations.
- What are the changes associated with mobility in rural as well as in urban areas?

8.7 Suggested Readings

1. Blau, P.M. and O.D. Duncan (1967) *The American Occupational Structure*, New York: Wiley
2. Breen, R. (2004). *Social Mobility in Europe*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
3. Erikson, R. and J.H. Goldthorpe (1987). *The Constant Flux: A study Of Class Mobility In Industrial Societies*. Oxford : Clarendon Press.
4. Kerbo, H. 2008. *Social stratification and inequality: Class conflict in historical, comparative, and global perspective*. 7th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
5. Scott, J. 1996. *Stratification and power: Structures of class, status and command*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
6. Turner, J. 1984. *Societal stratification*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

8.8 Glossary

- Contest Mobility : Refers to mobility which occurs through open competition.
- Horizontal Mobility : Refers to shifts in Position in a society which does not involve movement between strata.
- Intra-generational Mobility : This is mobility which occurs within different generations of people.
- Inter-generational Mobility : Refers to mobility within the time span of two or more generations.

Unit 9 □ Middle Class Phenomenon : Role and Significance

Structure

9.1. Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.2.1 Coining of the Term Middle Class

9.2.2 The Concepts of Class and Middle class

9.2.3 Rise of Middle Classes in India During the British Rule

9.2.4 Middle classes in India After Independence

9.2.5 Why is the Middle Class Important?

9.2.6 Economic Roles of the Middle Income Groups

9.2.7 Social and Political Implications: Middle Class Beyond Income and Consumption

9.3 Conclusion

9.4 Summary

9.5 Questions

9.6 Suggested Readings

9.7 Glossary

9.1 Objectives

- To understand the concept of middle class.
- To understand the role of middle classes in contemporary society.
- To evaluate the importance of middle classes in India.

9.2 Introduction

Almost everybody seems to know, what is called “the middle class”, and even to belong to it. So, actually, our initial question turns to grow out into the following, more accurate, question: What do we know about the middle class? The idea and

category of middle class is not new to India. It was in the early decades of the 19th century, during the British colonial period, that the term began to be used for a newly emergent group of people in urban centres, mostly in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, three cities founded by the colonial masters. Over time, this middle class spread its presence to other urban centres of the subcontinent as well. After independence, with development and expansion of Indian economy, the size of the Indian middle class grew manifold. Beginning with the 1990s, the story of the Indian middle class witnessed a major shift. The pace and patterns of its growth changed with the introduction of economic reforms. By incentivizing private capital and encouraging foreign investments in India, the 'neo-liberal' turn helped India accelerate the pace of its growth substantially.

The process of development or modernization being experienced in our country is not confined to the economy alone. It is leading to some fundamental changes in the social structure of the Indian society. As the process of change unfolds itself, new social groups and categories of people emerge on the scene. The institutionalization of the democratic system of governance based on adult franchise and the introduction of a secular Constitution has transformed the traditional structures of power relations at different levels of social organization.

The last five decades of economic development and democratic governance have also transformed the structures of social stratification in India. The earlier system of domination and subordination based largely on the principles of caste hierarchy and ownership of agricultural land has given way to a different kind of power structure. Though the caste and the ownership of agricultural land continue to be significant, particularly in the rural areas, they are no more the exclusive determinants of social stratification, in India today. A new set of power elite has emerged in India during the last fifty years or so. Similarly, we can observe the emergence of new social categories and occupational groupings of people.

Middle class has been an important historical and sociological category in modern India. The idea of India as a modern and democratic nation state was imagined and articulated by the emergent middle classes during the later phase of the British colonial rule over the subcontinent. The middle class leadership of the Indian nationalist movement also provided foundational values to the newly independent country after the colonial rule had ended. Over the last two decades, the Indian middle class has been celebrated for its economic achievements in the new global economy. It has also been expanding in size, providing critical market base to the process of economic growth and stability to democratic politics.

9.2.1 Coining of the Term Middle Class

The term “middle class” has had several, sometimes contradictory, meanings. Friedrich Engels saw the category as an intermediate social class between the nobility and the peasantry of Europe in late-feudalist society. While the nobility owned much of the countryside, and the peasantry worked it, a new bourgeoisie (literally “town-dwellers”) arose around mercantile functions in the city. In France, the middle classes helped drive the French Revolution. This “middle class” eventually overthrew the ruling monarchists of feudal society, thus becoming the new ruling class or bourgeoisie in the new capitalist-dominated societies. The modern usage of the term “middle class”, however, dates to the 1913 UK Registrar-General’s report, in which the statistician T.H.C. Stevenson identified the middle class as those falling between the upper-class and the working-class.

The middle class includes: professionals, managers, and senior civil servants. The chief defining characteristic of membership in the middle class is controlled of significant human capital while still being under the dominion of the elite upper classes, who control much of the financial and legal capital in the world.

Within capitalism, “middle class” initially referred to the bourgeoisie; later, with the further differentiation of classes as capitalist societies developed, the term came to be synonymous with the term petite bourgeoisie. The boom-and-bust cycles of capitalist economies resulted in the periodic (and more or less temporary) impoverisation and proletarianisation of much of the petite bourgeois world, resulting in their moving back and forth between working-class and petite-bourgeois status. The typical modern definitions of “middle class” often tried to ignore the fact that the classical petite-bourgeoisie was and had always been the owner of a small-to medium-sized business whose income was derived almost exclusively from the employment of workers; “middle class” came to refer to the combination of the labor aristocracy, professionals, and salaried, white-collar workers.

The size of the middle class depends on how it is defined, whether by education, wealth, environment of upbringing, social network, manners or values, etc. These are all related, but are far from deterministically dependent. The following factors are considered important in connection with the concept “middle class”.

- (a) Achievement of tertiary education.
- (b) Holding professional qualifications, including academics, lawyers, chartered engineers, politicians, and doctors, regardless of leisure or wealth.
- (c) Belief in bourgeois values, such as high rates of house ownership, delayed gratification, and jobs that are perceived to be secure.
- (d) Lifestyle.

9.2.2 The Concepts of Class and Middle class

The concept of class has been one of the most important categories in the western sociology. There has been a long tradition of looking at the western society through the conceptual framework of class. The classical sociological thinkers, Karl Marx and Max Weber, have written a great deal on the concept of class. Class is the most important category for Marx in his analysis of the western society and in his theory of social change.

Marx's model of class is a dichotomous one. It is through the concept of class that he explains the exploitation of subordinate categories by the dominants. According to Marx, in every class society, there are two fundamental classes. Property relations constitute the axis of this dichotomous system - a minority of 'non-producers', who control the means of production, are able to use this position of control to extract from the majority of 'producers' the surplus product which is the source of their livelihood. 'Classes', in the Marxian framework, are thus defined in terms of the relationships of groupings of individuals to the 'means of production'. Further, in Marx's model, economic domination is tied to political domination. Control of means of production yields political control.

The other theorists of class have assigned much more significance to the 'middle classes'. Foremost of these have been sociologists like Max Weber, Dahrendorf and Lockwood. Max Weber, though agrees with Marx that classes are essentially defined in economic terms, his overall treatment of the concept is quite different from that of Marx. Unlike Marx, he argues that classes develop only in the market economies in which individuals compete for economic gains. He defines classes as groups of people who share similar position in a market economy and by virtue of this fact receive similar economic rewards. Thus, class status of a person, in Weber's terminology, is his "market situation" or, in other words, his purchasing power. The class status of a person also determines his "life chances". Their economic position or "class situation" determines many such things considered desirable in their society which they can buy.

Middle Classes in India

The middle classes emerged for the first time in western Europe with the development of industrial and urban economy. We have also seen that the term middle class was initially used to describe the newly emerging class of bourgeoisie, industrial class. And later on, the term was used for social groups placed in-between the industrialist bourgeoisie on the one side and the working class on the other i.e., the skilled professional. The historical context of the development of middle classes in India was quite different from that of the west. It was in the nineteenth century, under the

patronage of the British colonial rule that the middle classes began to emerge in India. Though they emerged under the patronage of the British rulers, the middle classes played an important role in India's struggle for independence from the colonial rule. During the post-independence period also, the middle classes had been instrumental in shaping the policies of economic development and social change being pursued by the Indian state.

Hence there is the need to understand the middle classes, their history, their social composition and their politics. Even though being middle class in contemporary India has, in many ways, a matter of privilege, those located in the middle class tend to be also viewed themselves as among those with a fragile sense of security. Along with the poor, they often complain about the manipulative and "corrupt" economic and political system controlled by the rich and the powerful, the wily elite. Middle classes' engagements with politics have been of crucial and critical significance in modern India; from the colonial period to present times. It is the middle class that generally produces leaders who challenge the existing power structures and provide creative directions to social movements of all kinds.

The McKinsey Global Institute (2007) refers to India's expanding consumer market as the country's "bird of gold", a phrase merchants used thousands of years ago to describe its vast economic potential. The growth of a middle class is expected to play a transformative role in modernizing the Indian economy, creates new pressure points on the government to tackle the vestiges of the License Raj, and enable a more propitious environment for private entrepreneurship and job creation (Fernandes 2006). And those who are frustrated with the corruption and cronyism that has characterized Indian politics for decades view the rise of the middle class as a force for positive change, a palliative to the twin vices of identity and patronage politics (Das 2012). Despite these tall claims, the research on the middle class globally is quite divided into its social and political impact. On the one hand, one strand of the literature argues that middle class can be a dynamic force for change (Lash and Urry 1987) while on the other hand, some scholars have argued that they can often a powerful votary of the status quo and traditional social and economic structures (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992). For instance, while the middle class might desire a reduced role of the state in the economy and a corresponding greater role for the private sector, it also wants better safety and environmental standards across a diverse array of sectors which, ironically, bring the state back in—this time in its regulatory capacity.

9.2.3 Rise of Middle classes in India during the British Rule

The British colonial rule in India was fundamentally different from all the earlier political systems and empires that existed in the sub-continent. The British not only

established their rule over most parts of the sub-continent they also transformed the economy and polity of the region. Apart from changing the land revenue systems, they introduced modern industrial economy in the region. They reorganized the political and administrative structures and introduced western ideas and cultural values to the Indian people. As middle class in Indian society pointed out by the well-known historian, B.B. Mishra, the peculiar feature that distinguished the Indian middle classes from their counter-part in the west is the context of their origin. 'In the west', the middle classes emerged basically as a result of economic and technological change; they were for the most part engaged in trade and industry. In India, on the contrary, they emerged more in consequence of changes in the system of law and public administration than in economic development, and they mainly belonged to the learned profession"(Mishra, 1961 :v).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the colonial rulers had been able to bring a large proportion of Indian territory under their rule. It was around this time that, after the success of the Industrial revolution, industrial products from Britain began to flow into India and the volume of trade between Britain and India expanded. They also introduced railways and other modern servicing sectors such as the press and postal departments. A large number of educated individuals were required to staff these administrative institutions. It was not possible to get all of them from Britain. So, in order to fulfill this need, the British opened schools and colleges in different parts of India, particularly in big cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Those educated in these new institutions of secular education were also required a medium through whom the British planned to spread western ideas and cultural values in the Indian society. They were to not only work for the British but they were to also think like them. This intention of creating a native middle class that would become the carrier of western culture in India was expressed quite openly by Lord Macaulay in 1835. In his Minute on Indian education, Macaulay said: 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect' (as in Varma, 1998:2).

Apart from the English educated segment, there were also other sections of the Indian society who could be called the middle classes. The most prominent among them were the petty traders, 'shopkeepers and independent artisans; the social groups that were called the "old middle classes" in the western context. Merchants and artisans had always been separate social strata in the traditional structure of social stratification in India. We could easily identify separate castes of merchants and artisans who were an organic part of the village communities. As the economy began to change in

response to the new administrative policies of the colonial rulers, many of the merchants moved to newly emerging towns and cities and became independent traders. This process was further accelerated during the post-independence period.

Though limited in its significance, the modern machine-based industry also began to develop during the colonial period. The establishment of railways, during the middle of the nineteenth century, created conditions for the growth of modern industry in India. The colonial rulers constructed railways primarily for the transportation of raw materials required for the British industry overseas. However, once the railways were established, the British also invested in the local industry such as plantations. The growing economic activity gave boost to trade and mercantile activity and some of the local traders accumulated enough savings and began to invest into the modern industry. The Swadeshi movement started by the nationalist leadership gave a boost to the native industry. Apart from giving employment to the labor force, this industry also employed white-collared skilled workers. Thus, along with those employed in administrative positions by the colonial rulers, the white-collared employees of the industrial sector were also a part of the newly emerging middle classes in India.

9.2.4 Middle Classes in India after Independence

Though different sections of the Indian society had participated in the struggle for freedom from colonial rule, it was the middle classes that took over the institutions of governance from the colonial rulers. It had been argued that the end of the colonial rule did not mean a total break from the past. Much of the institutional structure that had developed during the colonial rule continued to work the Independence within the ideology of the new regime. Thus, members of the middle class who were working for the colonial rulers did not lose much in terms of their position in the institutions of governance. India's independence from the colonial rule marked the beginning of a new phase in its history. The independent Indian state was committed, in principle, to democratic institutions of secularism, freedom, justice and equality for all the citizens, irrespective of caste, creed or religion and at all levels - social, economic and political. To achieve these ends, India embarked upon the path of planned development. Plans were chalked out for the development of agricultural, industrial and the tertiary sectors of the economy. There was an overall attempt to expand the economy in all directions. The government of India introduced various programmes and schemes for different sectors of the economy. The execution of these programmes required the services of a large number of trained personnel.

Apart from the increase in a number of those employed in the government sectors, urban industrial and tertiary sectors also experienced an expansion. Though compared to many other countries of the Third World, the growth rate of the Indian economy

was slower, in absolute terms the industrial sector grew many folds. Growth in the tertiary sector was more rapid. Increase in population, particularly the urban population, led to a growth in the servicing industry. Banks, insurance companies, hospitals, hotels, press, advertisement agencies all grew at an unprecedented rate, giving employment to a large number of trained professionals.

The next stage of expansion was in the rural areas. Various development programmes introduced by the Indian state after independence led to significant agricultural growth in the regions that experienced Green Revolution. Success of the Green Revolution technology increased productivity of land and made the landowning sections of the Indian countryside substantially richer. Economic development also led to a change in the aspirations of the rural people. Those who could afford it started sending their children not only to English medium schools but also to colleges and universities for higher studies.

Consumption patterns also began to change. ‘Material goods hitherto considered unnecessary for the simple lifestyle of a farmer, began to be sought. And lifestyles as yet remote and shunned were emulated’ (Varma, 1998:95). A new class has emerged in rural India that partly had its interests in urban occupations. The process of agrarian transformation added another segment to the already existing middle classes. In ideological terms, this “new” segment of the middle classes, was quite different from the traditional middle classes. Unlike the old urban middle classes, this new, “rural middle class” was local and regional in character. The members of the rural middle class tended to perceive their interests in regional rather than in the nationalist framework. Politically, this class was on forefront of the movements for regional autonomy.

Another new segment of the middle class that emerged during the post-independence period came from the Dalit caste groups. Government policies of positive discrimination and reservations for members of the ex-untouchable Schedule Castes enabled some of them to get educated and employed in the urban occupations, mostly in the servicing and government sectors. Over the years, a new Dalit middle class had thus also emerged on the scene.

9.2.5 Why is the Middle Class Important?

The middle class is important because it drives transformation and innovation. This role was first noted by Thomas Malthus, who suggested that intellectual improvement was most likely to occur from the “middle regions of society”. Similarly, Karl Marx rooted ‘civilization’ to the process of creative destruction that resulted from the entrepreneurial action of the bourgeoisie (that is the middle class). In more recent times, Dierdre McCloskey convincingly argued how the rise of the middle class since

1600 (first in Holland, then in Britain) gave a reason for ordinary people to innovate. The upper class consists of those who are currently benefiting from the rents and profits of the “old” industries. They have little or no incentive to innovate because it would result in a disruption of their own rents. As for the lower class, while they may be willing to innovate, the opportunity to do so is limited. Think about the financial and human capital necessary to transform a scientific discovery into an economic innovation.

Clearly, the middle class is our most likely innovator. They aspire to improve their socio-economic status and while they are willing to take risks by undertaking an entrepreneurial activity that disrupts existing ones, they are in a stronger position to do so. They have already acquired some assets and are in a position to make initial investments and obtain further credit if required.

9.2.6 Economic Roles of the Middle Income Groups

The middle-income groups are located in all sectors of the economy – primary, secondary, tertiary, quaternary (intellectual activities) and the quinary (highest levels of decision making in a society or economy). Within these segments, they are overwhelmingly located in the private, unorganized sector, albeit significant proportions are also located in the formal public and private sector. The latest Economic Survey of the Union Government emphatically notes that the predominant source of economic growth in the last two decades has been primarily spearheaded by the service sector, followed by industry and agriculture. In terms of sectors of employment, middle-income groups are largely located in the service sector. Within the service sector, the middle-income groups are likely to find employment in the following :

- trade,
- tourism, including hotels and restaurants,
- shipping and port services,
- storage,
- telecommunications-related services,
- real estate,
- information technology (IT) and IT enabled services,
- accounting and auditing services,
- research and development,
- infrastructural services (roads, railways, civil aviation),
- financial services and
- social services (health and education).

These sectors are relatively well paying, have flexible employment contracts and work through the market logic of efficiency and productivity. The secondary sector draws its middle-income household largely from manufacturing, mining, electricity, basic goods, intermediate goods and consumer goods. The middle income households in the rural areas are thus constituted by large farmers and small entrepreneurs and salaried government employees.

Influence of traditional social structure continues to be present in today's economy. Even the official documents of the Indian government accept this fact. The socio economically deprived groups such as Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are generally employed in land based industries like agriculture, mining and construction. Muslims have been associated with trade apart from manufacturing and transport, storage and communication services. OBC's on the other hand are employed in all the industries with the least variation in their shares across different industry groups from the overall average. Those belonging to upper castes have a higher participation in lucrative service industries like banking, finance, real estate and business services.

9.2.7 Social and Political Implications: Middle Class Beyond Income and Consumption

The present-day India is shaped by the contradictions emanating from an ideological commitment to market-led development on the one hand, which is inevitably biased against the asset-less and capability-less, and to the institutions of democracy, with the promise of equitable inclusion, on the other. In other words, the tension is between the economics of markets and the politics of democracy. The former indicates economic policies directed towards a market-friendly regime, supported by international and national capital, urban-based middle and upper middle classes and neo-liberal mandarins. The politics of democracy is represented by the ever-increasing assertion of the historically deprived social categories in the electoral and social domain due to their perceived as well as real marginalization from the development processes. The Indian middle class is placed quite centrally in this emerging contradictory scenario and it carries the burden of balancing them in the 'New India'. Putting it differently, the socio-economic articulation of the middle class has acquired vast legitimacy. Their attestation of the state policies as well as any protest against the same is taken quite seriously by both the state as well as the larger society.

How do we then understand the middle class as a social group, beyond income and consumption? While an understanding of income groups is indeed crucial for making sense of patterns of economic growth in any country, the middle class is also a conceptual and historical category. It represents certain values and produces hegemonic discourses. As a sociological category, it is bound to reflect the vertical and horizontal

diversities of a given society. As India develops, the diversity of its middle classes also emerges, with sections from historically marginalized groups joining the ranks. However, their value frames and attitudes towards the state, political processes, and desirable modes of organizing the economy and social institutions vary significantly. The upper caste middle class talks about efficiency through market competition and privatization of public agencies, transparency and accountability of the governance apparatus. Interestingly enough, sections of the middle class from the historically deprived social group also invoke the frame of universality. However, instead of efficiency, merit, competition and the universal values they try to ensure justice, equality, representation and rights through affirmative action. The state is a critical agency for them that ought to protect and promote these universal values and confirm their presence in the political and economic processes of the country. Of course, these values are invoked to protect the interests of their communities, and hence they are often viewed with contempt by dominant sections of the Indian middle classes. To them, these appear particularistic, and hence, “un-modern” and “anti-progress”.

9.3 Conclusion

Though the middle classes have always been among the most influential segments of the modern Indian society, they were never as prominent and visible as they became during the decade of 1990s, after the liberalization process of the Indian economy began. Of the new economic policy and increasing globalization of the Indian economy have brought the Indian middle class into new prominence. The process of globalization has also generated a lot of debate about the actual size of middle classes in India, their consumption patterns, and the pace of their growth in the years to come. It has been claimed that the size of middle classes has grown to 20 percent of the total Indian population. Some others have put this figure at 30 percent. Though a large number of Indian people still live a life of poverty, it is the middle classes that have come to dominate the cultural and political life in India today. An important feature of the Indian middle class is its internal diversities of income, occupation, caste, community and region. Given that it emerges historically within a given social context it does not necessarily transform everything in the pre-existing social structures of social inequality. Even when the rise of middle class transforms the way people think, behave and relate to each other, the process does not do away with inequalities of caste and community. Those trying to move up in the new social and economic order use their available resources and networks, including those of caste and kinship to stabilize and improve their positions in the emerging social order, with a new framework of inequality.

9.4 Summary

This is also the reason why the middle class is not as homogenous as it may appear at the first instance. Diversities within the middle class are many, of income and wealth as also of status and privilege. Middle classes are often sub-classified into the “upper”, the “lower” and “those in-between” segments, depending upon income, education, occupation, residence and life-style. As mentioned above, those who call themselves ‘middle-class’ or are classified as such, also do not abandon their other identities; particularly those that have been sources of privilege; of caste, community/ religion and region/ethnicity. Thus, we have notions such as the “Bengali middle-class” or the “Muslim middle-class” or the “Dalit middle-class”. The rise and consolidation of a middle class within an “ethnic” or cultural group could work to sharpen those identities, rather than weakening or ending them.

However, notwithstanding the diversity, Indian middle class also has a “dominant section”, which represents dominant communities of India, i.e., the upper-caste, urban and invariably Hindu. While Indian middle classes are globally mobile, inhabit modern spaces and use the language of modernity, they also actively participate in articulations of identity politics of both the dominant “majorities” and of the “minorities”. Unlike the western context, the Indian middle class lacks autonomy. It remains dependent on patronage and perpetuates the patronage culture.

9.5 Questions

1. Discuss in details the rise of middle class in India.
2. Critically analyze the role of middle class in Indian Economy.
3. What impact does the existence of middle class have in present day Indian scenario?
4. Discuss the sociological significance of Indian middle class.
5. Briefly point out the changes brought by the agency of middle class in Indian context.

9.6 Suggested Readings

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9.7 Glossary

- *Urbanization*- The term urbanization denotes an increase in the urban population at a rate higher than that of the increase in the rural population.
- *Neo-liberalization*- Neoliberalism is a policy model that encompasses both politics and economics and seeks to transfer the control of economic factors from the public sector to the private sector.

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- *New Middle class*- The new concept of this class is characterized not by its participation in the production process but by its capacity to consume.
 - *Urban family*- The terms city and town are sometimes used inconsistently. Families that are found in urban areas are termed as Urban Families.
 - *Professionals*- A professional is a member of a profession or any person who earns a living from a specified professional activity.
 - *Middle class*-The middle class is a description given to individuals and households who typically fall between the working class and the upper class within a socio-economic hierarchy.

Unit 10 □ Women's Movements Chipko and Gulab Gang

Structure

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.2.1 Women's Movements and Feminism

10.2.2 Feminism in India

10.2.2.1 First Phase

10.2.2.2 Second Phase

10.2.2.3 Third Phase

10.3 Chipko Andolan (1973) : An Ecological Movement in Rural India

10.3.1 Chipko and Its Effect on the Public: Its Symbolic Value

10.3.2 The Aftermath of the Chipko Movement

10.4 Self Assessment

10.5 Gulabi Gang : 'Female Vigilantism in Rural India'

10.5.1 Female Vigilantism at The time of State Impunity

10.5.2 Theorizing the Approach of Gulabi Gang

10.6 Conclusion

10.7 Summary

10.8 Questions

10.9 Suggested Readings

10.1 Objectives

- To understand the birth of women's movements in India and its association with 'feminism.'
- To understand the main reasons behind the Chipko movement.
- To understand why Chipko movement came to be known as a women's movement.
- To understand the reasons behind female vigilantism in India such as the Gulabi Gang.
- To compare two vastly different women's movements in India: Chipko and Gulabi Gang.

10.2 Introduction

10.2.1 Women's Movements and Feminism

Probably the best way to start a discussion around women's movements or women's participation in social movements is to find the thread that binds the two with the term feminism. It is correct to say that in India the term women's movement came prior to that of feminism - making it a modern concept (this is similar to the way feminism and feminist movements developed in the world). Feminism at its core strives to establish equal rights of women and aims to uplift the subordinate position of women and to end any discrimination that they face due to their sex. This ideology was mobilized through various movements that occurred around the world.

The source of the term feminism lies in a 'French medical text' which was used to describe either the underdevelopment of female sexual organs or certain traits in men who were suffering from 'feminization' of their bodies. A modification of the term was given by French author and anti-feminist Alexander Duma who used the term to describe women who portrayed masculine behaviour. The term gained popularity in the middle of the 19th century when various movements spearheaded by women were gathering prominence in the United States of America. Historically Feminism as a term became popular long after women started to resist patriarchy and demand for justice. The writings of Mary Wollstonecraft ("Vindication of the Rights of Women"), a speech orated by Sojourner Truth ("Ain't I a Woman?"), the contributions of Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Organized the "Women's Rights Convention" in 1848) and Lucy Stone (The first woman to retain her surname post marriage) were notable contributions that followed. Though at the time the term 'feminist' was not popular and many expressed their discomfort in using the term, today most of the female authors, suffragists or activists have come to be known as feminists (Pande 2018).

10.2.2 Feminism in India

Women's movements were associated with the first wave of feminism which began spreading in Europe in the 19th century. However, the idea of feminism was in its rudimentary stages when the first instances of female resistance were recorded in the subcontinent. In India, these movements were an immediate reaction to the deprivations and obstacles caused in the day to day lives of women. In a way, it can be said that the women who were involved in the movements had very little to do with the feminist wave that was taking over Europe and other parts of the world. Many were far from the education that modern society had to offer. What then was the impetus to these movements?

India has come a long way since the first instances of women's struggle to emancipate themselves. History of women's movements in India can be traced back to the colonial period when questions were raised against the age-old practice of Sati and widow remarriage. Yet female advocates for these demands were few, many of the movements during the colonial era were orchestrated and advocated by male reformers of the time, who were educated and exposed to the demands of a new society. These demands, articulated during the colonial period, were initiated and propagated by established male academics and stalwarts of the time, women, remained primarily recipients of the changes that were brought about. However, the most well known participation of women was in the Quit India movement. One may find the names of female activists such as Sarala Devi , Aruna Asaf Ali , Sarojini Naidu etc., who were intricately linked to India's struggle for freedom but a women's movement comprised and orchestrated by women was yet to take fruition.

According to Pande (2018) women's participation in social reforms and women's movements in India can be broadly divided into three phases:

10.2.2.1 First Phase (1850-1915)

Before independence, women's movements can be attributed to social reform movements of the 19th century. Western ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity had already cast an influence on the educated elite as an outcome of English education and cultural contact with the west. Western liberal thought had also addressed the critical question about the subordinate position of women in Indian society which became an impetus for social reform movements. These reform movements differed in their aims as well as in their nature. These movements were at times driven by very different ideas, but their common goal was to bring about social change by eradicating the evils. The problem however was the paradox that India posed. On one hand was the need to reform and establish a modern system and on the other was India's strict traditional base. These reform movements tried to combine the two – 'modern yet rooted in Indian tradition' and in the process faced the issues of casteism, practice of sati, child marriage and illiteracy which hindered the growth and development of women in Indian society. The aim of these reform movements was to be critical of the practices prevalent in Indian culture and to alleviate Indian society of these social evils.

10.2.2.2 Second Phase (1915-1947)

In the second phase the following organizations were formed: 1. Women's India Association (WIA), 2. National Council of Women in India (NCWI) and 3. All India Women's Conference (AIWC). These organizations were formed in the post World War I era (between 1917 and 1927) by female founders. As the fight against imperial

rule increased within the country the foremost cause behind such agitations was nationalism. In this regard, Gandhiji played a crucial role in introducing women in the Civil Disobedience movement which was a non violent retaliation against the British Raj. This propelled women's participation in various agitations and movements in the following decades. The birth of many women's organisations in this phase continued to strive for women's equal rights and dignity. One such organization was established by Saraladevi called the Mahila Mahamandal which addressed concerns such as Purdah and to promote education among women. In 1910 the organisation held its first meeting in Allahabad.

10.2.2.3 Third Phase (1947-Present)

The third phase witnessed, especially since 1975, a steady increase in the number of women's welfare organizations in India. Some issues that they addressed during this period are i) the consumption of liquor, ii) the problem of missing girl children India and iii) violence against women. In addition to this, other problems that were addressed during this period were – i) marginalized women's rights, ii) growing fundamentalism and iii) women's representation in the media had also been taken up by the Women's movement. From mid to late 1980s, women's groups concentrated on providing services to individual women to enable them to gain advantages already given in law.

Flavia Agnes (1992) pointed out that this was significantly different from the welfare dispensed by earlier women's groups. The earlier groups sought amelioration; the new groups sought recognition and realization of rights. Organisations such as SEWA, National Commission of Women (New Delhi), National Council of Women (Pune), Joint Women's Program (Delhi) and Kali for Women (Delhi) were noteworthy organisations of this period.

Today, however, the nature of women's movements is strikingly different from that of its earlier form. In this regard, one of most important women's movements in post colonial India was the Chipko Movement of 1973.

Did you know?

We know that the father of the Indian Constitution was Dr. B.R.Ambedkar and that there were many male members of the Constituent Assembly who helped draft the Indian Constitution. However, little is said of the fifteen women who also helped draft the Indian Constitution. All these women were considered as pioneers in their own right. The list is as follows: Ammu Swaminathan, founder of Women's India Association. Dakshayani Velayudhan, who was elected to the Cochin Legislative council in 1945. Begum Aizaz Razul, a member of the Muslim League as well as elected to the Uttar Pradesh legislative Assembly

in 1937. Durgabai Deshmukh, an active participant in the Non-Cooperation movement, founder of the Andhra Mahila Sabha, member of the Planning Commission, Chairperson of the National Council for Women's Education and received the Padma Vibhushan in 1975. Hansa Jivraj Mehta who served as the president of the All India Women's Council from 1945 to 1946, Vice-Chancellor of SNDT Women's University as well as the Vice-Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations in 1950. Kamala Chaudhary was an active participant in the Civil Disobedience Movement and Vice President of All India Congress Committee. Leela Ray, an activist in the Salt Satyagraha and was the editor of The Forward Bloc Weekly. Malati Choudhury was a member of the Indian National Congress and also a fierce critic of the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. Purnima Banerjee served as the secretary of Indian National Congress. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was India's first Health Minister and the founder of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Renuka Ray was an Indian freedom fighter and a member of All India Women's Conference (AIWC). Sarojini Naidu (The Nightingale of India) was an Indian Poetess and the first woman president of the Indian National Congress and the first woman Governor of state. Sucheta Kriplani was the first woman Chief Minister of India (Uttar Pradesh) and an active participant in the Quit India Movement in 1942. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who became the first woman as well as the first Asian president of the United Nations General Assembly and Annie Mascarene, the first woman member of Parliament from the state of Kerala (Srivastava 2018).

Things to do:

Why are these movements known as women's movements? Think of few reasons as to why women thought it was necessary for them to begin movements of their own?

10.3 Chipko Andolan (1973) : An Ecological Movement in Rural India

Chipko, which means 'to stick to' or 'embrace', was a movement that is often said to have drawn its significance from an incident that occurred in 18th century in Kejri village in Rajasthan. A member of the Bishnoi community, Amrita Devi had objected to the Maharaja's decision to fell trees and protested by embracing trees. However,

the cutters, on being compelled to carry out the Maharaja of Jodhpur's orders, cut down the trees, killing Amrita Devi and others in the process.

A century later in 1973 similar events related to the Chipko movement took place in the Garhwal Himalayas. It was a non-violent movement to stop the indiscriminate felling of trees in the region. During this time wood felling had become the target of many a company such that the locals were being deprived of the most important produce of the forest, its wood which was a source of livelihood for the villagers. In a rather one-sided policy of the government, the locals were banned from felling trees but a certain sports company was permitted to fell trees. This created an uproar and for the first time under the leadership of Chandi Prasad Bhatt, a Gandhian and the founder of Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh began the Chipko movement of 1973. The act of hugging trees came about when the government refused the appeals of Bahuguna and the women on many occasions. It was only when they displayed their protest by hugging trees that the government was compelled to withdraw the permit of the sports company to cut trees. In another instance in the village of Reni, where trees were being auctioned, Gaura Devi, the head of the Mahila Mangal Dal along with 27 other women embraced trees to protect them, even keeping a night vigil. In the face of abuse and threats by the loggers, these women carried out their non-violent protest till the loggers left.

The most loyal followers of the movement were the women of the region as they were directly affected by the impact of logging which caused shortage of firewood and drinking water. Their contribution and due to their centrality to the movement, many social scientists termed Chipko as an 'eco-feminist movement'. Thus, sensitizing the rural folk, especially women, on the effects of cutting trees was an important requirement and the key to mobilising those who were most affected by the actions/decisions of the government. In this regard it was important to note the role of educating the masses on the effects of deforestation which was exemplified by another Gandhian environmental activist, Sunderlal Bahuguna, popularly acknowledged as the leader of Chipko. His contribution in educating the masses was so effective that the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi took the initiative to ban logging and felling of trees.

Things to do:

- Identify popular slogans of the Chipko movement.
- Find out the prominent female figures of the Chipko Movement.

10.3.1 Chipko and Its Effect on the Public: Its Symbolic Value

Chipko was one of the first successful ecological movements recorded in the history of India. The movement itself became the precursor to many later movements concerning deforestation, global warming and other ecological issues both in India and the world. It also heralded and became symbolic of the success of non-violent methods of protest (Satyagraha), persistence and mobilising people in the grass roots. Vandana Shiva and D. Bandhyopadhyay had noted that Chipko could provide us with answers on the strategies of survival at the time of ecological disaster. Chipko became a tale of trust and shared suffering and was an example of how people from the most backward regions could be sensitized and mobilized to fight for causes that affected common people as well as became a source to change forest policies in the country.

One example of how Chipko movement inspired later movements was that of the Appiko movement that took place in North Karnataka in 1983, headed by Panduranga Hegde. Northern Karnataka had experienced drops in its forest cover from 80% in 1950 to 25% in 1980. The alarming drop in forest cover started the Appiko movement in the Kalse forest of Karnataka which like Chipko adopted the non-violent method of hugging trees ('appiko' means 'to embrace' in Kannada). Their protests like Chipko were comprised of many women who were central to the movement as they physically averted felling of trees in the forests. Chipko and Appiko movements were therefore a witness to the increasing participation of women in social movements which later became a part of the 'development' discourse in India.

Vandana Shiva, noted sociologist, has presented Chipko as the beginning of eco-feminism which tries to establish the 'intimate relationship' between women and nature. This is because, according to Shiva, women like nature have the capacity to nurture but have had to endure the oppression of patriarchy and commercial interests such that both situations lead to the lack of control over the self as well as natural resources- this makes both, ecological movements and women's movements, similar in nature.

Did you know?

Eco-feminism or Ecological feminism was a concept which sought to explain a certain link between ecological disasters and the oppression of women. Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies(2014) have explained eco-feminism as the process in which patriarchy has systematically devalued the contributions of women by making them unproductive and consciously excludes female work despite speaking of 'inclusiveness and 'development.' It seeks to understand ways in which patriarchal models of development driven by 'corporate globalization' has not only caused environmental disasters

but have deprived women's access to natural resources and hence limited their access to livelihoods. Ariel Salleh says, "its (eco feminism's) first premise is that the 'material resourcing' of women and of nature are structurally interconnected in the capitalist patriarchal system" (Mies and Shiva 2014). According to Salleh, eco-feminism accomplishes what previous feminist strains failed to do, That is, it was able to integrate issues concerning nature, humans, animals as well as that affect across cultures etc.

Things to do:

- Identify the limitations of eco-feminism.

10.3.2 The Aftermath of the Chipko Movement

Chipko had sought to not only alert rural folk on the effects of deforestation but it also became a way of holding the government accountable for years of neglect and dismissal of local demands and needs. Chipko (as well as appiko), though being spontaneous and immediate in nature, raised fundamental questions on:

- Agricultural practices that were gaining popularity in the country, but would cause long term damage to the land and its people. One such issue was the increased practice of mono-culture in the region which scientists viewed as detrimental to the region. For example the government continued to place importance on Chir Pine as opposed to more productive trees necessary for agro-forestry.
- Why trees were being auctioned to rich companies?
- Why employment in companies in the region favoured migrants than the locals?
- Why were small local production units charged higher for raw materials than big companies?
- The effects of deforestation had already been visible through the many floods that ravaged the region in 1970s (Mawdsley 1998).

The results of the Chipko movement are as follows:

- The use of non-violent techniques such as hugging trees, Hindu techniques of tying raksha bandhan on trees by women, bandaging Chir Pine trees that were over tapped for resin.
- Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took decision to stop commercial felling for 15 years.
- Chipko gave an impetus to new movements such as 'Save Himalaya', Anti-Tehri Dam Movement of 1980, The Appiko Movement of 1983 etc (Ibid).

- Haripriya Rangan(2000) observed that the Chipko movement became 'the conscience of the nation' such that the efforts were quickly recognized and lead to immediate action on behalf of the government to curtail ecological degradation and deforestation in the Himalayas. The movement fostered the ability to see various problems such as floods, poverty, out-migration, and women's sufferings-their daily struggle to collect fuel and fodder for their households-as being an outcome of indiscriminate timber extraction by forest contractors.

When we move from one type of movement such as Chipko which was spearheaded by male advocates such as Chandi Prasad Bhatt or Sunderlal Bahuguna to one that is solely mobilized by women, one would have to speak of uprisings such as the Gulabi Gang of Uttar Pradesh.

10.4 Self Assessment

- I. Answer in detail
 - a. What were the main objectives of the Chipko movement?
 - b. Why was it important to mobilize women in the grassroots in the Chipko movement?
 - c. Why do we say that Chipko movement has a symbolic value in the history of movements in India?
- II. Answer briefly.
 - a. Write a short note on 'Feminism.'
 - b. What were the strategies of protest in the Chipko movement?
 - c. Explain what ecological feminism stands for.
 - d. How did Chipko transform into a movement?
 - e. Why do we categorize Chipko as a women's' movement?
- III. Answer very briefly
 - a. Name 4 women who helped draft the Indian Constitution.
 - b. Who is known as the leader of Chipko Movement?
 - c. What is the full form of DGSS?
 - d. Where did the Appiko Movement take place?
 - e. How had deforestation affected the Garhwal region in 1970s?

10.5 Gulabi Gang: 'Female Vigilantism in Rural India'

Bhanwari Devi, a 52 year old from Banda in Uttar Pradesh narrated the day she was raped by an upper caste man when she was in the field to relieve herself. The crops had been cut and had made the soil coarse, so she could not run as that would tear her feet. After the ordeal, the rapist spat on her and left her in the fields. When she tried to report the matter to the police, they said she had "asked for it." Slowly her husband left her and she, finding no other way for justice, joined the 'Gulabi Gang' or the 'Pink Sari Gang'(from Atrayee Sen's interview of Bhanwari Devi, member of Gulabi Gang).

The Gang operated from its headquarters in Badausa in Uttar Pradesh and its 'commander-in-chief' was Sampat Pal. Pal also had a story of her own. She was married early in life and had faced stiff resistance from her family to get an education, which came to a halt when she was married. She started working as a government health worker in order to support her family which now consisted of five children. It was during her work as a health worker that she became more aware of the inequalities and problems of women in rural areas. On one occasion when she was unable to help a friend from her abusive husband, she took matters in her own hands by forming a gang of women and thrashing the husband in full public view. Thus was born Sampat Pal's Gulabi Gang.

Atrayee Sen(2012) notes that the activities of the Gulabi Gang was an 'effective short term response strategy for localized forms of gender violence'(Ibid.).

Did you know?



Source: <https://www.dcuuniverse.com/>

Female vigilantism is not a new concept and has been a source of violent justice for many in oppressive situations and state impunity. The concept has been a theme for works of fiction, popular culture such as cinema, television series as well as graphic novels.

Things to do:

Watch the documentary *Gulabi Gang* (2012); Director: Nishtha Jain and share your thoughts on the same. Comment on the ideas of 'morality', 'violence', notions of 'justice' etc., as portrayed in the documentary.

Sen continues to provide data on how the group operates, such as the way they have trained themselves in the art of lathi or stick fighting. The lathi has become symbol of justice for the group such that Suman Singh, the deputy commander of the group in an interview to television channel, Al Jazeera says, "All our women can stand up to the men and if need will seek retribution through lathis" (Desai 2014).

The office of the Gulabi Gang is a busy one where women travel for miles to find solutions to their problems. She notes the cases which are handled by the gang as:

Even though a majority of the gang's cases concern marital violence, dowry demands, and (or) abusive in-laws, they also address land disputes, resolve neighborhood skirmishes, and help poor women procure socio-economic benefits, ranging from school admissions to acquiring food cards (Ibid.).

Though the Gulabi Gang had operated away from politics for many years, in recent years the Gang, especially Sampat Pal ventured into politics. The membership in the gang currently stands at around 40,000 women from 11 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

10.5.1 Female Vigilantism at the Time of State Impunity

Gulabi Gang is the answer to prolong state impunity and the state's inability to provide protection to victims. In many cases the victims themselves are counter charged and arrested by the police. Sometimes the activities of the gang are also against state officials such as the one narrated by Amana Fontanella Khan (2013) where Sampat Pal tries to understand a case involving a village girl charged with theft from the house of a Member of the Legislative Assembly (Fontanella-Khan 2013).

Another example is of a 17 year old girl who was gang raped where one of the perpetrators was a member of the local legislature. Female Vigilantism and Gulabi Gang was thus an outcome of anger and mistrust in the 'government machinery.'

10.5.2 Theorizing the Approach of Gulabi Gang

Social scientists believe that the activities of Gulabi Gang and its members are under 'Soft Feminism.' Though trained in the art of violence such as stick fighting, which the members state they use only as a last resort and have had to employ the means to solve cases; the Gang's activities do not necessarily have a 'liberatory' view of

emancipation. In an example, Sampat Pal and other members seek to reinstate a woman back to her husband's house despite the woman complaining that her husband had married her for money. Activities of the Gulab Gang fail to completely sever themselves from the patriarchal ideology and despite being spontaneous in their approach, their activities have remained localized.

It has been earlier stated that the Gulabi Gang can be termed as a vigilante group. However, there is a lack of consensus over what exactly 'vigilantism' is and whether it can qualify as a social movement. Though 'vigilantism' can be undertaken by the government or practiced privately such as the Gulabi Gang, the term is used to denote a wide number of activities which are either 'genuine social movements or a mere social reaction.' But, whatever may be the case, Gulabi Gang is a female vigilante group that does exhibit the six characteristics of vigilante groups like: i) the group's activities are an outcome of a certain amount of planning, premeditation and organization; ii) it involves private voluntary agency which means the voluntary involvement of private persons in vigilante acts; iii) membership is autonomous or rather vigilante groups rely on autonomous citizenship such that any state involvement is not considered as vigilante activity; iv) it uses or threatens the use of force ;v) it is seen as a reaction to crime or social deviance and lastly; vi) it is usually undertaken for personal and collective security (Ibid.).

Things to do:

- Assess the characteristics of Gulabi Gang and outline how it qualifies as a social movement.

10.6 Conclusion

While different in their cause and approach, Chipko Movement and the Gulabi Gang allow us to assess the nature of women's movements in India. Chipko follows to the Gandhian means of non-violence such as Satyagraha but the Gulabi Gang resorts to violence as a means of instilling fear in the minds of its perpetrators. As Sen observes, Gulabi Gang's means of justice can be termed as 'brutal justice among fringe communities.' The role of women in both instances cannot be ignored, while Chipko observes the mobilization of women of the Garhwal Himalayas, they also receive support from empathetic men and the student community. In the case of Gulabi Gang however, it is mostly women who take membership when the state system fails to support them repeatedly. In both cases however, the women have taken the leading role for changing the earlier social system.

It is important to note that both the movements have taken place in extremely backward regions of India with its people having little access to the cultural capital required to mobilise the masses. Yet their effects have been long lasting such that almost decades later (especially in the case of Chipko Movement) it resonates with newer social problems concerning 'global warming, desertification and floods' and for Gulabi Gang, rights of women, equality and feminism.

10.7 Summary

Both Chipko and Gulabi Gang did not become a movement overnight. Their protest strategies whether hugging trees or vigilantism were successful in bringing about policy changes and were mirrored by others in similar situations. Haripriya Rangan(2000), while discussing the Chipko Movement observed, 'it is in a sense the verb chipko came to be associated with social protests that emerged in Garhwal during the mid-1970s'(Ibid. 21). The main reason why Chipko became a movement rather than just a means of correcting an immediate problem of distribution of resources and access to raw materials at lowered rates was because it 'changed its objective'. It did not remain a localized protest but one that aimed to answer the fundamental truth concerning preservation of forests and those whose livelihoods depended on it. The process of it to become a movement obviously required , as Rangan observed that the contributions of the advocates of Chipko such as Sunderlal Bahuguna and Chandi Prasad Bhatt and also that of social activists and academics, Vandana Shiva and Ramachandra Guha who could be credited for starting a global discussion around Chipko.

10.8 Questions

- I. Answer in detail
 - a. What is vigilantism? What were the reasons for the growth of Gulab gang?
 - b. Identify the principles on which Gulab Gang operates. How is it different from other women's movements such as Chipko?
 - c. Is Gulab Gang anti-establishment? Give reasons for your answer.
 - d. Discuss the protest strategies of the Gulab Gang. How is it different from the Chipko Movement?
- II. Answer in brief
 - a. Explain female vigilantism.
 - b. Outline possible reasons for the rise of vigilantism in one of the most backward districts of India.

- c. Does Gulab Gang qualify as a movement? Justify.
 - d. Identify another vigilante group that operates in the world and compare the same with Gulab Gang.
- II. Answer very briefly
- a. Identify two characteristics of Gulab gang.
 - b. Why is Gulab Gang a localized uprising?
 - c. Where is the headquarters of Gulab Gang located?
 - d. In how many districts does Gulab Gang operate?

10.9 Suggested Readings

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Unit 11 □ Peasant Movements: Tebhaga and Naxalbari/Farmer's Movement

Structure

11.1 Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.2.1 Who Are the Peasants?

11.2.2 Peasant Uprisings in India: A Brief History

11.2.2.1 Indigo Rebellion or the Nil Bidraha

11.2.2.2 The Champaran Satyagraha

11.2.2.3 Moplah or the Malabar Rebellion

11.3 What Caused Peasant Uprisings in India?

11.4 The Tebhaga Movement: 1946

11.4.1 Stage-I-Mobilization of Peasants at the Grassroots.

11.4.2 Women's participation in Tebhaga Movement

11.4.3 Stage II-The West Bengal Land Reforms Act or Bargadar's Act of 1955

11.4.4 The Aftermath of the Movement: Operation Barga of 1978

11.5 Naxalbari Movement: Armed Revolution in Rural Bengal

11.5.1 What Caused Naxalbari Movement?

11.5.2 Growth of Naxalbari Movement

11.6 Conclusion

11.7 Summary

11.8 Questions

11.9 Suggested Readings

11.1 Objectives

- To identify peasant movements in India.
- To understand the main causes behind peasant uprisings in India.
- To analyse the circumstances that lead to the Tebhaga Movement in India.
- To analyse the growth of Naxalbari movement in India.

11.2 Introduction

The peasants are small producers who cultivate for subsistence. In the Indian economy they belong to the categories of sharecroppers, tenants, marginal farmers or agricultural labourers. In the Varna system they were known as the 'kisans' or cultivators. The other names are 'krishak', 'roytu', 'chashi'. They are also divided into 'adhiar', 'bhagchashi' and 'bargadars' and are also known as sharecroppers or tenants, 'majdoor', 'majur' or 'krishi shramik' or agricultural labourers. Social scientists believe that these terms connote the socially and economically deprived status of peasants in the country (Sinha Roy 2005).

11.2.1 Who Are the Peasants?

There cannot be one universal definition of peasants and as such these perspectives can be roughly divided into three categories. The first are the historical definitions which involve 'estate like, caste like, corporate or subordinated social group' (Edelman in Rao 2016). Here, a peasant group is usually engaged in providing service to 'super-ordinate groups.' The second are the sociological or anthropological definitions that mostly identify economic groups in agrarian society found mostly in agrarian or peasant studies. The third, are the definitions put forward by activists or Human Rights Council such as the United Nations that are more interested in the marginal farmers than the rural landless ones and the term peasants is used to denote agricultural labour, those engaged in fishing, craft making, shifting cultivation, also nomads and hunters gatherers etc. (Ibid. 98-99).

In India most of the peasants form the lowest socio-economic rung such that they have had to endure centuries of domination from the upper caste 'zamindars', 'jotedars' and 'jagirdars.' Sinha Roy has described peasants or 'kisans' in India as: 'peasants are socially and economically marginalised, culturally subjugated and politically dis-empowered social groups who are attached to land to eke out subsistence living'(Sinha Roy 2005).

11.2.2 Peasant Uprisings in India: A Brief History

A number of identifiable peasant movements took place in India during the colonial period, many of which can further be traced in the eastern regions of India. In this regard it would be noteworthy to discuss the following peasant uprisings in India.

11.2.2.1 *Indigo Rebellion or Nil Bidraha*

The Indigo Rebellion involved widespread peasant agitations in the Bengal region during the period from 1839 to 1860. The agitation was directed against the planters of the indigo crop and the instance was often referred to as an important period that eventually gave rise to the early nationalist movement in India. Textile industries grew at a rapid rate following

the Industrial revolution and equally important was the process of dyeing clothes which required the manufacture of dyes. This became an important branch in the apparel manufacturing industry. As an increasing number of British planters settled in India they took keen interest in the cultivation of indigo, a dye whose manufacture and supply weakened from other sources, but from India, manufacture of and export increased exponentially making India one of the key exporters of the dye. In order to carry out cultivation, large kuthis were established in different parts of Bengal, the largest being a kuthi in Nadia-Jessore-Khulna, established by the East India Company. The European planters made provisions for an advance or *dadon* which the peasants or ryots could borrow in order to reserve a part of their land for cultivation of indigo. The money could be repaid in small amounts which would be adjusted against the final payment at the time of delivery. The receipt of the advance by the ryot however caused them to become financially indebted to the planters. This happened in a number of districts such as Jessore, Nadia, and Pabna. The ryots were further faced with cheating and tampering of scales by the intermediaries or dealers responsible for carrying the produce to the planter's factory. The net profit earned by these ryots were almost negligible or none whatsoever. As the 'value of the produce was calculated at rates far below market price', after deductions in revenue stamps for agreement papers, transport charges and cost of seeds, there was little or no profit earned by the farmers. The tax burden further entrenched the farmer in a 'debt bondage' with the planters which was often passed on to sons. Refusal to pay or cultivate would only invite the wrath of the planters who would send armed guards or 'lathiyals' to beat up the farmers and their family members. With no legal system in place to protect the rights of the farmers or ryots, escape from the system seemed bleak. The retaliation by the peasants took the form of repeated attacks on indigo factories and their British planters. The district of Pabna witnessed some of the worst forms of violence. In this region, peasants also refused to sow indigo seeds (Chattopadhyay and Mamun 2009).

11.2.2.2 The Champaran Satyagraha

Champaran Satyagraha or farmers' agitation is also known as India's first instance of civil disobedience. Indigo plantations during the British raj had extended into the region of Bihar and a system of loans was available to the peasants. The growing textile industry had also generated the need to manufacture indigo in these regions. Most British planters who had acquired lease on land controlled large tracts of area that often encompassed entire villages. Not only were the peasants forced to grow indigo on the most fertile part of their land but there also existed the system 'tinkathia.' However, around the late 1880s with the discovery of the synthetic dye in Germany, a crisis grew in the export of indigo. Irfan Habib (2017) outlined the issues that rose with this new crisis, Decrease in indigo prices led to a sharp fall in the planters' profits from indigo manufacture, the planters in turn increased the 'rent-burden' on the peasants. The impositions took two major forms: Zamindars or thekaders

simply increased the rents paid by peasants and this increase in rent was called *sharahbeshi*, which was 50-60% of the previous rent. The second issue that arose was— since indigo prices fell, the peasants did not wish to produce indigo any longer under the *tinkathia* system. When planters refused to buy the produce, they allowed the peasant to shift to other crops only if he agreed to pay them a large amount as compensation also known as *tawan*. The amounts imposed were so large that the most peasants underwent tremendous difficulty not only to pay interest which was at the rate of 12% per annum but it became even harder to repay the principal amount.

Forceful cultivation of land, illegal imposition of penalties and constant threat of withdrawal of tenancy, the entire 'burden of the crisis' had been shifted to the peasants which led to the Champaran Satyagraha. On 10th April, 1917, Gandhi visited Champaran with a team of lawyers to lend his support. The team included eminent lawyers and statesmen such as Brajkishore Prasad, Rajendra Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Ramnavami Prasad and J.B. Kripalani. Local agitators such as Sheikh Gulab, Harbans Sahay, Pir Mohammed Munsif, Sant Rawat and Lomrah Singh also played a major role in resisting the *panchkatiya* system.

Did you know?

Following are some of the terms used extensively in the indigo plantation system in the Champaran region:

Thekadars: Individuals leasing out land whose powers were equal to that of Zamindars.

Thekas: Leased land often as large as an entire village.

Tinkathia: This included the forceful cultivation of indigo on teen (three) katas of land out of every twenty katas of land in the region of Champaran in Bihar.

Sarahbeshi: The increase in rent imposed on the peasants after the crisis in indigo production and export following the development of synthetic dye in Germany. However, despite the export of the dye being restored after World War I, the practice or rather the burden of Sarahbeshi did not cease for the peasants who continued to be exploited by the planters.

Tawan: A compensation paid by peasants who were willing to cultivate crops other than indigo.

Zira'at: Land on which indigo was cultivated by the factories themselves. Peasants were often transferred to cultivating these factory held lands once they agreed to pay a huge sum towards rent.

Awab: Illegal dues

11.2.2.3 The Moplah/Malabar Rebellion

In 1792 Malabar was under the British. This had caused drastic changes in the economy and especially for one particular community, the Moplahs. The Moplahs or Mappila Muslims, once a prosperous trading community, had been reduced to poverty as the control of maritime commerce had been brought under the English and the Portuguese. Further, Malabar's landlords under the British being mostly Hindu would often face revolt from the Moplahs in the 19th century. It was recorded that between 1836 and 1919, 29 such outrages or offensives had occurred. There was a considerable disagreement in the way the causes behind these 'outrages' were understood. While some believed it to be an uprising against the oppressive land tenure system, others believed it to be characterised by religious fanaticism. Some scholars such as Stephen Dale believed instead of one exclusive reason, there was a possibility of overlapping 'elements' which lead to these revolts.

The Congress played a crucial role in mobilizing the Moplahs. Congress had launched its first mass civil disobedience movement under M.K.Gandhi in 1920. A transformation within the Congress party was brought about by MK Gandhi who had altered the very nature of the party from being an English speaking, elite group to one that could mobilize a huge number of people in British India. Before the Non-Cooperation movement began, Gandhi sought the alliance of the Khilafat Movement which had already mobilized a large number of Muslims. Gandhi and the Khilafat Leader, Shaukat Ali visited Malabar on 18th August, 1920 where a gathering of twenty thousand were urged to jointly resist the British who had deliberately '...flouted religious sentiments dearly cherished by the 70 million Mussalmans'. In the 19th century, the uprisings did not sustain for long as they were 'low in intensity' and were therefore put down by the British easily. It was only in 1921, that their movement was able to take character and became a means for asserting both their cultural identity as well as take on the nature of a nationalist movement (Daniyal 2018).

Things to do:

Discuss the book 'Nil Darpan' by Dinabandhu Mitra and give an account of its historical and social context, the implications of indigo farming on the peasants as well as the economy of Bengal.

Or

Visit Mangalgunj, Sonamukhi etc., and examine the backgrounds of Nil Kuthis.

11.3 What Caused Peasant Uprisings in India?

The agrarian structure during the colonial period was highly fragmented. The British had

also introduced intermediaries to collect tax on behalf of the government. This land tenure system based on strict division of agrarian classes led to widespread economic insecurity among the peasants, the primary producers of food grain in the country. At the time of independence however, rising demands of the peasant community to abolish the intermediary system of land tenure system and providing tenurial security to tenants was gaining momentum. Initiatives were also taken to bring about changes in the agrarian structure, but the process of implementation was not adequate. The result of this was an unequal outcome of the implementation of new reform laws.

In this context it is important to discuss two famous peasant uprisings which are often termed as radical in nature to have occurred in Bengal- The Tebhaga Movement of 1946 and The Naxalbari Movement of 1967.

11.4 The Tebhaga Movement: 1946

The Tebhaga movement was a result of the oppressive share cropping system prevalent in Bengal at the time. Large intermediary landlords known as 'jotedars' would rent out land to sharecroppers in return of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the produce. In addition to this the Bengal Famine of 1943 had caused widespread shortage of food rendering the sharecroppers unable to give half of their produce to the landlords. The sharecroppers demanded that they would be allowed to keep $\frac{2}{3}$ of the produce, the literal meaning of 'tebhaga,' to themselves instead of $\frac{1}{2}$.

11.4.1 Stage-I-Mobilization of Peasants at the Grassroots.

The Kisan Sabha, the peasant wing of the Communist Party of India (henceforth CPI), mobilised the peasants in order to introduce the provision of keeping $\frac{2}{3}$ of the produce and at the same time discontinue the payment of illegal cesses. The CPI had for sometime wanted to introduce the new tenurial method of keeping $\frac{2}{3}$ of the produce and the time seemed ideal for this demand to be placed. It also received an impetus from the submission of the report of the Flood Commission which expressed the need for agricultural reforms in Bengal.

The demands were faced with stiff resistance from the state such that the movement felt the need to mobilize the rural masses in order to free themselves from years of exploitation. As a result, the movement witnessed the participation of about 6,00,000 peasant shailing from mainly the northern regions of Bengal. The protests included demonstration with sticks and flags and stacking of paddy in farmer's houses during the harvest of the 'aman' crop in the month of November (Custers 1986).

Did you know:

The Floud Commission under the chairmanship of Sir F.C. Floud was set up in 1938 to probe into the land tenure practices prevalent in Bengal at the time. The enquiry into the existing system had exposed a number of loopholes and The Commission had successfully raised pertinent questions such as –'Is the barga system economically sound?','What is a fair proportion of produce payable by bargadars?'As well as 'Do you consider that the right of occupancy and other rights should be extended to bargadars ? If not, how would you protect them and to what extent?'

11.4.2 Women's Participation in Tebhaga Movement

Like Chipko movement, women had an important role to play in Tebhaga Movement's success. As Peter Custers observed, women of Bengal had provided the much needed 'spontaneity' that the movement required. Even in remote villages, where women remained confined to the processing phase of the harvested paddy, they rose to the cause as they had already borne the brunt of providing for their families at the time of the Bengal Famine of 1943. Custers further noted that, “For these women, the storing of paddy in their own houses, for the first time in their lives, was a revolutionary event. It evoked a tremendous emotional response”(Ibid: 28). The participation of rural women allowed the formation of the *nari bahini* or ‘women’s wing’ of the movement where women were ready to confront police brutality with brooms, sticks and spics.

While battling family problems, as women were equally oppressed in the family, women such as Bimala Maji, the Chief organiser of the Nandigram area of Midnapore, fought the odds to become a part of the short lived but successful peasant movement. Women of the region set up centres to produce goods such as mat making which would yield some income and also took the initiative to give alms and food to the poor and destitute. A noteworthy initiative by the nari bahini was to set up dheki programmes for the destitute. Women would borrow paddy and process it in order to sell them in the markets. A certain portion was paid back to the land lord or supplier. This made destitute women both employed and capable of feeding their families (Ibid.).

Things to do :

Identify a rural area and enumerate the proportion of share croppers or bargadars in the village. Find out the various problems faced by them.

11.4.3 Stage II-The West Bengal Land Reforms Act or Bargadar's Act of 1955

Following the Tebhaga Movement in West Bengal, The Bargadar Act or Land Reforms Act of 1955 was introduced. The Act sought to give the following things:

- a) *Definition of a 'bargadar':* 'Bargadar' means a person who under the system generally known as *adhi, barga or bhag*, cultivates the land of another person on condition of delivering a share of the produce of such land to that person and includes a person who under the system generally known as *kisan* (or by any other description) cultivates the land of another person on condition of receiving a share of the product of such land from that person' (West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955; Chapter 1: Definitions.).
- b) *Provision for inheritance:* Provisions were made in the Act of 1955 for the inheritance of cultivation of land which the bargadar cultivates. This however, was not applicable to the transfer of land/property. It was stated that the lawful heir of the bargadar would become the rightful cultivator of the land. In case of an absence of an heir or inability to select an heir, it would be a competent authority who would decide the rightful heir.
- c) *Limiting termination rights:* While the renting of land is to be based on a contract (usually one year) between the owner and the bargadar, the rights of termination of the contract would no longer vest on the land lord as long as the bargadar paid his rent regularly except in the cases listed below
- i) If land is left uncultivated;
 - ii) Or unless the landlord wished to take back the land for personal cultivation.'
- d) *The aftermath of the movement: Operation Barga of 1978 :* When the Land Reforms Act of 1955 came into force, it was noticed that the second clause for termination of cultivation rights of tenants/bargadars i.e., 'or unless the landlord wished to take back the land for personal cultivation' had been exploited, leaving the bargadars prone to eviction by the landowners. Further, the procedure of registration of tenants had caused relations between bargadars and land owners to become strained in many occasions which deprived the tenants of any future assistance from the land owners in the form of loan as well as the possibility of pursuing legal cases.

When the Left Front ascended to power in West Bengal in 1977, they focused to give more attention to the problem that plagued the previous land reform legislation. The primary step was to do away with the clause that stated the landlord's claim to the rented land for personal cultivation. The second was to enable tenants to register themselves under the government for legal protection and benefits. The process of registration and enumeration of tenants was termed as Operation Barga and became a defining attempt to bring about agricultural reform in West Bengal by the Left Government (Bose 2013).

The process of registration was elaborate where government officials undertook tasks of publicizing the procedure of Operation Barga in villages and organizing re-orientation

camps of 3-4 days where they explained the rights of bargadars and the benefits of registration under the government. Along with this, Special Revenue Officers or Sub divisional Land Reform Officers carried out Barga recording in special areas.

Did you know?

The idea of Operation Barga was proposed by Benoy Choudhury, who played a major role in Peasant Mobilization. He was also one of the top leaders of the Krishak Sabha.

11.5 Naxalbari Movement: Armed Revolution in Rural Bengal

Following the Tebhaga Movement, many Zamindars started to own land under fictitious names or as was known, benami. It was precisely this struggle to grab land that belonged to the tillers which started the Naxalbari Movement in North Bengal. In 1967, under the leadership of the members of the Communist Party of Bengal, notably, Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal peasants decided to undertake armed struggles against big landowners where the main objective was to reclaim land from big Zamindars and redistribute the same among the tilling farmers and landless labourers. In the incident that took place in 1967, seven women peasants among the 11 were killed. It was these deaths which made the movement prominent (Ray 2014). The first instances of violence took place when the president of the Siliguri Kisan Sabha, Jangal Santhal had begun organising people for the struggle. In May, 1967 the struggle witnessed the killing of a sharecropper, shortly after Jangal Santhal had called for an armed struggle. The attack was carried out by a local Zamindar and his 'armed band.' As retaliation, Jangal Santhal along with few tribals attacked the police team that had come to investigate the death of the farmer. The violence culminated in the death of a sub-inspector in Naxalbari, from which the movement derived its name as it remained the site of the incident.

11.5.1 What Caused Naxalbari Movement?

Speculation had surrounded around why such an armed uprising had taken place. It has been contended that one reason could be incomplete agrarian reforms, followed by extreme poverty and exploitation of landless tillers who hailed from lower castes or tribal communities by Zamindars. As the administration failed to address these problems and to provide social justice, extreme discontent developed among the masses and left-wing leaders. Other reasons include that despite Zamindari system being abolished post-independence in order to promote agrarian reforms, redistribution of land was never a priority of the government. The abolition of Zaminadri further saw the rise of new classes such as the 'neo-rich farmers' who remained profit oriented with little interest in dividing the profit among the tillers and

labourers. This widened the gap between the landowners who made rapid economic gains, and the landless were pushed to abject poverty (Dutta 2017).

11.5.2 Growth of Naxalbari Movement

The Naxalbari movement instead of becoming obsolete metamorphosed into the Naxalite Movement, 2004 saw the merging of two large armed Naxalite groups, the Maoist Communist Centre and the Communist Party of India to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist) which often referred to as the Maoists. Their objective included an escalated offensive against the Indian state. The movement also expanded its operations away from the 'exposed agricultural plains' to the hill and forested regions of Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. This was mostly because the new terrain allowed for guerrilla warfare and these regions were also the home of India's tribal population, which remained neglected and unaffected by any developmental processes of the Indian state. Later the issue which became a social concern was the mineral resource that the region harboured, mainly iron ore, coal, bauxite etc. The region occupied by the Naxalites became a matter of interest to big businesses especially foreign after the trade liberalization of 1990. Consequently, both the Adivasis and the Naxalites who engaged in guerrilla had been increasingly perceived of as an obstruction due to this very reason.

Did you know?

Guerrilla warfare, is a type of warfare fought by rebels in fast-moving, small-scale actions against orthodox military and police forces and, on occasion, against rival insurgent forces, either independently or in conjunction with a larger political-military strategy. The word guerrilla is derived from the Spanish Guerra which means "war." Over the centuries the practitioners of guerrilla warfare have been called rebels, irregulars, insurgents, partisans, and mercenaries. Frustrated military commanders have consistently labelled the them as barbarians, savages, terrorists, brigands, outlaws, and bandits (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Following the formation of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), India's then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, declared the Naxalites to be the single greatest internal security threat in the country and soon launched counter-insurgency measures—dubbed Operation Green Hunt—against the Naxals/Maoists and anyone seen to sympathise with their cause. In 2017, an estimated 10,000 to 25,000 armed cadres with an additional 100,000 militia members were part of the Naxalites and were present in 190 out of India's 626 districts. They had the capacity to attack in 90 districts. To curtail their operations, tens of thousands of members of the armed forces, police officers, and special police officers from across the country were mobilized. It was also during this time that Salwa Judum, a counter insurgency operation became active in Chattisgarh.

Did you know?

Salwa Judum or the purification hunt was a counter insurgency operation active mostly in the Bastar and Dantewada regions of Chattisgarh. Nandini Sundar (2019) elaborates on Salwa Judum as “a people's movement against the Maoists of the Bastar region. Vigilantes accompanied by security forces went through villages burning, looting, killing, forcibly removing villagers to government controlled camps. By 2009, Salwa Judum had converted into a full-fledged police and paramilitary operation known as Operation Green Hunt. In the years since the number of deaths, rapes and arrests of civilians has only grown, quite apart from the deaths of security forces and Maoist Cadres” (Sundar 2019: xii) .

Shah and Jain (2017) talked of counter-insurgency tactic against the Naxalites as “vigilante groups created. The most notorious of these was the Salwa Judum (literally 'Purification Hunt') in Chhattisgarh. There were gross abuses of human rights. Adivasis were pitched against each other. Villages were razed to the ground, many were raped and killed, with an overall result of more than 40,000 people being displaced. With the escalation of the military war against the Naxalites, the guerrillas claimed that their armies had grown. Hundreds of people were killed in the course of the conflict and the prisons of central and eastern India were now full of Adivasis arrested as Naxalites or for allegedly supporting the Naxalite cause” (p. 3)

On 5th July, 2011, Sudershan Reddy and Justice SS Nijjar declared Salwa Judum as illegal and unconstitutional. The court order led to immediate disarmament of tribal youths who were engaged as Special Police Officers (SPOs)- either as 'Koya Commandos' or in any other capacity- in the fight against the Maoist insurgency. The court ruling was a response to a writ petition filed by social anthropologist, Nandini Sundar and others in 2007. The ruling authority observed that Chhattisgarh state had violated Constitutional principles by arming youths who had barely passed middle school and 'conferring on them the powers of police.' The bench also observed that Chattisgarh state had violated the rights of equality and the right to life under Articles 14 and 21 of those employed as SPOs and the citizens of the area and ordered that all firearms provided such as guns, rifles and launchers be withdrawn.

Things to do:

Identify peasant movements in colonial India.

11.6 Conclusion

Peasant struggle in India had been an outcome of prolonged exploitation of peasants at the hands of the colonizers augmented by inadequate laws. It was both, the colonial administrators 'need for security' and the occasional need for 'law and order' which gave the peasant uprisings in the country, across centuries, such a violent character. The importance of and interest in the subject of peasant movements did not gain momentum at the beginning but gradually economists began considering peasant economy as a dynamic field of study.

11.7 Summary

Peasant movements are linked to aspects of revenue, production of goods as well as a growing 'political force' in the country. One has to keep in mind that while other social movements are directed towards civil society, peasant movements have primarily been directed towards the state. It is the very nature of the state, such as the welfare model, which makes it accountable for addressing the needs of its peasantry. As a result, these peasant movements are a testimony to the changing relationship between the state and its people, especially those who inhabit the bottom rung of social strata.

11.8 Questions

Answer in detail

1. Identify the major causes behind the indigo revolts.
2. Discuss the precursors to the Tebhaga Movement.
3. Identify the nature of the Tebhaga Movement.
4. Analyze the objectives and drawbacks of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act of 1955.
5. What is Operation Barga?
6. Discuss why the Naxalbari movement developed in the rural areas of Eastern India?
7. How did the Movement grow in later years?
8. Discuss Guerilla Warfare as a means of protest.
9. What are the similarities and dissimilarities between Tebhaga and Naxalbari movements?

Answer briefly

1. Who is a peasant?
2. Define 'Bargadar'?
3. Discuss the functions of the nari bahini in Tebhaga Movement.
4. Explain the role of Flood Commission.
5. Why did the Naxalites move to the forest regions?
6. Discuss the atrocities committed by Salwa Judum.
7. What is the source of the term 'Guerilla'?
8. In which year was Communist Party of India(Maoist) formed?

Answer very briefly

1. Who is a 'jotedar'?
2. Name the peasant wing of the Communist Party in India.
3. What is the literal meaning of tebhaga?
4. Who was Benoy Choudhury?
5. What is benami?
6. Who were the leaders of the Naxalbari movement of 1967?
7. In which regions was Salwa Judum active?
8. When was Salwa Judum termed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India?

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Unit 12 □ Ethnic Movements : Pre and Post

Structure

12.1 Objectives

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12.2.1 What is An Ethnic Group?

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12.4.2.2 Ethnicity Based on Religion (Communalism)

a) Hindu-Muslim Riots (Communalism)

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12.4.2.3 Assertion of Tribal Rights (Tribal Movements)

a) Birsa Munda Rebellion

12.4.2.4 Regionalism or Nativist Movements

a) Bhumiputra Movement

-The Rise of Shiv Sena

b) Naga Insurgency

12.5 Approaches to the Issues of Ethnicity

12.6 Conclusion

12.7 Summary

12.8 Questions

12.9 Suggested Readings

12.10 Endnotes

12.1 Objectives

- To build an understanding of how ethnicity and nationalism are interlinked.
- To be able to outline key reasons that lead to ethnic movements.
- To be able to understand various ethnic movements that have occurred in India's history.
- To understand the various approaches to understanding ethnic movements and identify.
- How ethnic movements differ from other social movements.

12.2 Introduction

12.2.1 What is an Ethnic Group?

In order to understand an ethnic group, one must first look into how these groups of people are united. A group may be united on the basis of race, language, religion, shared experiences, heritage, physical traits or even region and locality. This is known as an ethnic group. Ethnic groups are often perceived as different from larger society as a result of their distinct characteristics. Those who belong to ethnic groups further organise themselves on activities 'built around their (real or mythical) common origin and culture.'

Ethnic groups are defined by Weber (1997) as being based more on the subjective belief in their common descent established through similarities in either physical types or customs or even both. This subjective belief ensures for the propagation of group formation. Additionally, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relation exists because ethnicity relies more on the existence of the belief of shared characteristics. This belief is further utilized to 'mobilize people along some common point of reference for presenting a united front to articulate their socio-economic or political interests.'¹

Ethnicity is well observed during the process of interaction between two or more groups. In such a situation what is observed is the maintenance of social boundaries and ethnic identities. Social boundaries are intrinsic to the formation of ethnic identities and these boundaries are not only identified by its members but are also strictly maintained such that ethnic groups identify their own members and differentiate themselves from others.

Did you know?

The idea of **ethno-nationalism** conceives of the ‘nation as a community of genealogical descent, vernacular culture and native history and popular mobilisation’ (Gellner 1995). Most known ideas or territorial and administrative definitions of the nation regard it as a “community of shared culture, common laws and territorial citizenship.” The ethnic concepts of the nation places utmost importance on the genealogy of its members. This genealogy is often fictive and relies on the popular mobilization of the folk. The ethnic concepts of the nation are based on, as mentioned earlier, ‘ on native history and customs; and on the vernacular culture.’ Ethno-nationalism involves the transformation of ethnic groups into nationalities and their demand for autonomous governance or even secession as sovereign nation states.

Things to do:

Identify two local groups/communities and trace their ancestry, religion, cultural practices, language etc. Discuss how these two groups identify themselves as being different from one another.

12.3 The Relationship Between Ethnicity and Nationalism

Earlier it was believed that ‘nationalism’ was most closely linked to the idea of the nation. However, as Christophe Jafferlot (2003) states, a theory of nation sees it from the angle of an institution or the nation state, but nationalism falls within the ambit of ‘isms’ and deals with identity , something that shares greater proximity to that of ethnicity. Following Karl Deutsh’s work which for the first time has showed how minority cultures are slowly subsumed into national identities, later research shows how ‘modernization’ and technological development have allowed isolated groups such as tribes to gather information of wider society and become aware of their differences from the rest. This generates a fear of losing one’s ethnic identity making the breakout of ethnic movements become inevitable in the process of nation building.

Did you know?

Cultural homogenization: Sociologist George Ritzer in 1993 has told how McDonalds, a fast food chain has changed the way that the world eats. He termed this new set of business principles that have an enormous global impact as McDonaldization. What is interesting is the way people from different cultures have made this new American culinary habit of their own.

In a similar way the concept of cultural homogenization means the ‘diffusion of a way of being.’ Cultural homogenization may break down cultural barriers but at the same time it may result in smaller cultures to be assimilated into one single culture (Jennings 2011).

Things to do:

Watch the film Kakamuttai ,a Tamil –Hindi (watch preferably with subtitles) movie . Discuss the aspects of Urban Indian culture, the ‘Pizza’ dream and class dimensions as shown in the movie.

12.4 Ethnic Unrest in India

One of the main problems that obstruct the process of nation building in India is the increasing incidence of ethnic unrest in the country. According to Kothari (1998), there are two main reasons behind these “assertions of cultures” in India- firstly, these violent ethnic agitations are an outcome of the excesses of modernization (which has been discussed in this unit) and secondly, due to the homogenizing trend of modern states as well as the nation’s overall educational, technological and cultural goals. Ethnicity should therefore be understood as a response-including reaction – to the excess of the modernising project which undertook to shape entire humanity which also includes its natural resource base. It is often believed that traditional India was free from such dominant or singular identities. However, Gail Omvedt (1990) has criticized such a romanticized perception of traditional India. She instead states that traditional India was far from being a society tolerant of multiculturalism. On the contrary, traditional Indian society was characterised by social hierarchy which pervaded every sphere of an individual’s social life. Keeping these points in mind, some of the main causes of ethnic conflict have been outlined below.

12.4.1 Causes of Ethnic Conflict

India being a plural society is characterized by a large diversity in its population with multitudes of castes and several religious, linguistic, cultural and racial groups living here:

1. As these groups compete for scarce economic resources along with an increased need to preserve their age-old cultures, assertions of ethnic identities have been frequent in India.
2. Skewed economic development of the country has generated among certain groups a feeling of being marginalised or completely left behind in the development process. This has increased the propensity of a politics of ethnicity.

In India, the tribals have been alienated due to faulty development policies, leading to forced displacement from their age-old inhabited land and forests causing homelessness and poverty.

3. In India, where Representative parliamentary democracy enables the formation of different ethnic groups based on castes, religious groups, linguistic groups etc., there exists a competition for political power. In this regard what we see is groups being formed on a basis of 'horizontal solidarity' and a 'consolidation of shared interests.' Issues pertaining to caste and religious identities frequently utilized by political leaders to bolster their vested interests.
4. The fear of 'assimilation' also operates among linguistic and religious minorities. The fear is of being assimilated into the dominant culture which may result in the loss of their distinct cultural heritage. This 'fear' causes a mounting pressure to safeguard their heritage and eventually leads to ethnic groups 'forging horizontal solidarity. Further, the processes of globalization and cultural homogenization have aided this process of horizontal solidarity to extend beyond transnational boundaries.

Did you know?

Ethnic movements (also political movements) can be broadly categorized into two groups based on their demands- **Separatist** movements and **Secessionist** movements. **Separatism** aims only at reducing the central authority's grasp over the specific or targeted territory and its population. Mathew Webb (2017) defines separatism as 'the advocacy of a state of cultural, ethnic, tribal, religious, racial or political separation from the parent state and its majority population.' **Secessionism** is defined by J. R. Wood (1981) as being, a political program based on the demand for a formal withdrawal of a bounded territory from an internationally recognized state with the aim of creating a new state on that territory, which is expected to gain formal recognition by other states (and the UN).'

12.4.2 Check Your Progress

Answer in detail.

1. What do you understand by the term "ethnicity"? Explain with examples.
2. Is ethnic unrest in India a new phenomenon? Justify your answer.
3. Explore the various causes of ethnic unrest in India.
4. Discuss the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism. How is ethnic identity different from national identity?

Answer in brief

1. What is ethno-nationalism?
2. Differentiate between separatist and secessionist movements.
3. What is horizontal solidarity?
4. What is cultural homogenization?

Answer very briefly

1. What is the nature of membership in an ethnic group?
2. How does ethnicity affect nation building?
3. Why are minorities fearful of dominant cultures?

12.4.2 Assertions of Ethnic Identity***12.4.2.1. Ethnicity based on Language or Linguistic Ethnicity***

Language has always formed the basis for asserting ethnic identity in India. The following are post colonial movements based on linguistic ethnicity:

- a) **The Dravida Kazhagam Movement** in the state of Tamil Nadu in South India in 1940s and 1950s when violent protest broke out against the adoption of Hindi as the national language by the government of India. The movement gave the call for the secession of Tamil Nadu from the union of India on the basis of identity centred on Tamil language. However according to T.K. Oommen, language had more legitimacy than religion for administrative restructuring and in 1960s, the Dravida Kazhagam gave rise to two large and powerful regional political parties in Tamil Nadu- the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) and the AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam).
- b) linguistic identity was again on display in the state of Maharashtra in Central India, where in the name of Marathi pride, there were concerted attacks on the helpless and poor Hindi-speaking North Indian immigrants from the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Continued assertions for linguistic ethnicity led to many states being carved out based on languages by the State Reorganization Act of 1956.

Things to do:

Identify various states in India that were formed due to assertions based on linguistic ethnicity.

12.4.2.2 Ethnicity Based on Religion (Communalism)

Religion has been an important socio-political issue that has continued to be an obstacle in the nation building process. The following are key examples:

- a) **Hindu-Muslim Riots (Communalism)**- Communalism, as many social scientists believe, has its roots in British imperialism and further intensified as a result of modern politics based on mass mobilization and imaginary communal interests. The British had effectively applied the policy of “divide and rule” which sowed the seeds of hatred and mistrust between the Hindus and the Muslims. Communalism is basically an ideology that generates hatred based on religious constructions. In recent times, Indians have become highly susceptible to being swayed by communal ideologies and tendencies. As India’s massive population battle for acute resource imbalance, uneven development leading to poverty, inequality and unemployment as they see other communities are responsible for their deprivations and abject conditions. Religious sentiments are whipped up by religious leaders and politicians with vested interests.
- b) **Khalistan Movement**- Khalistan was a ‘religio-political vision’ which sought to establish the “Land of Khalsa” (the literal meaning of Khalistan). This idea encouraged the Sikh imagination to believe that it was their divine right to rule Punjab. In 1710, the movement, under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur, successfully captured Sirhind, which served as one of the most powerful administrative centres between the cities of Delhi and Lahore during the Mughal reign. After the capture of Sirhind, the Khalistan leader established a capital in the nearby area of Mukhlispur. He repaired the Lohgarh fort and named the region the “City of the Purified”. It was believed that Kalistan would be independent and self sufficient, boasting of its ‘own currency, official seal, and issued letters of command invoking the authority of God and of the Gurus.’ The belief that “the Khalsa shall rule” was even made a part of the Sikh liturgical prayer and it has continued to remain an important part of it. The Khalsa Raj under Banda Singh was brief and the idea of the Kingdom of Khalsa was realized only in the early 19th century in the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh . The Khalsa Raj rapidly declined and finally lost to the British in 1849. Despite the bitter experience, the hopes of the Khalsa coming to power once again has continued to thrive among the Sikhs.

Before the partition of Punjab in 1947 and through lengthy periods of negotiations, it became clear that the idea as well as the demand for an independent Sikh state was a reality and had started to gain momentum. The only problem being that the Sikh population lacked numerical strength in relation to other residents of

Punjab, thus making the proposition for a separate state impracticable. Violent secessionist movements followed in Punjab in the 1970s and 1980s in order to create Khalistan Punjab remained very volatile for almost a decade. The secessionist movement was supported by the All India Sikh Students' Federation and was led effectively by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale but, the Khalistan movement eventually failed.

While discussing ethno-nationalism in Punjab, Gupta (1990) contends that ethnic identity or consciousness of some shared characteristics is not a sufficient condition for the rise of ethnic conflict. Political leadership which brings about the mobilization and manipulation of group identity is the reason that leads to ethnicity. He has used the term "conspiracy" to denote the deliberate and calculated manipulation on which such ethnic politics is based. Gupta observes that the agitation in Punjab began with very secular demands like demands for the city of Chandigarh, water distribution and territorial demarcation, but it soon took an ethnic character propagated by the political leaders and developed a communal colour, giving the impression that they were fighting to safeguard the religious and regional identity of Sikhs in Punjab.

c) The Politics of Identity in Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir remain one of the most politically contested regions in India. It is a former Princely state and despite being ruled by the Hindu Maharaja, Hari Singh, the region had a majority Muslim population. Even after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, the Maharaja was not keen on joining both countries and had signed an agreement that would enable Jammu and Kashmir to continue trade and travel relations with Pakistan. Such an agreement, however, was not signed with India. In time as Pakistan began to exert pressure to join, Hari Singh approached India for military assistance which he would receive only if he agreed to become a part of India. In October of 1947, Jammu and Kashmir was formally added to the Indian state. Jammu and Kashmir were also given special status of independence by the Constitution of India which was revoked in 2019. The decision of the Maharaja to join India caused dissatisfaction and conflict among its population and for long this area witnessed militant anti-state activities, communal violence that led to mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits and the cry for 'azadi' (Blakemore 2019).

Things to do:

Watch the movies *Shikara* (2020) and *Widow of Silence* (2019) and reflect on the narratives of victimhood, the outcomes of violence and the role of the state in both films.

12.4.2.3 Assertion of Tribal Rights (Tribal Movements)

Both pre and post-colonial India witnessed the occurrence of tribal movements. The British period was full of incidents when tribes rose in revolt against the officials, the landlords and the money-lenders when they were forcibly evicted from their traditional land.

- a) **Birsa Munda Rebellion-** One of most prominent rebellions of the late 19th century was the Birsa Munda Rebellion waged by the ‘Adivasis’ of Chota Nagpur region in Eastern India. In 19th century colonial India, a number of indigenous rebellions had occurred which were carried out by the ‘Adivasis,’ but the Munda rebellion spearheaded by a young Adivasi freedom fighter, Birsa Munda was the most well-known. The primary reasons that caused such an uprising were ‘a history of exploitation and land alienation’ and it must be noted that these rebellions existed even prior to British rule. With the advent of the British colonizers, these already existing problems were augmented. The British with their “feudal-landlordism which rested on derision and apathy towards for the ‘original settlers’” rendered traditional political, economic and social relations to break down and lose its significance. Most changes introduced by the colonizers in the land governance system not only did little to alleviate problems but rather ‘disrupted the harmony that had been sustained for generations’, as well as traditional patterns of ‘collective ownership’ were affected adversely. The new legal framework based on ‘individual and private ownership’ was opposed to traditional patterns of land use. Birsa Munda’s rebellion was not just directed towards the British but was against the missionaries as well as the Zamindars, who played a key role in propagating systemic violence against the Munda Adivasi community. In the Munda uprising, Birsa Munda took up the role of a prophet who had been entrusted by the gods to bring back ‘Munda Raj’.²

Birsa Munda was a visionary who, guided by his experiences, was able to understand as to what caused the people from his community to suffer. His goal was not merely to start protests or oppose the British, but his greater aim was to create a radical break in the ‘historical continuity of oppression, dominance and exploitation.’ His rebellion was a representation of lived experiences of a Munda as a converted Christian, who grew up under a colonial state that propagated a belief system that taught to undervalue his own. The exploitation was to such degree that tribal people faced a huge crisis that affected their culture and history. Birsa Munda’s rebellion left such an impression on the colonial state that officials were forced to introduce new legislation – the **Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908** – that ensured the protection of land rights of tribals in India.

Did you know?

The Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act which is applicable to the areas of North and South Chota Nagpur and Palamu Districts was enforced in 1908 in order to prohibit the transfer of land belonging to tribals to non tribals. In 1965 Economically Backward Scheduled Castes and OBCs were also brought within the purview of the act. The act, though amended numerous times, is exempted from judicial review.

12.4.2.4. Regionalism or Nativistic Movements

Regionalism manifests itself in the following ways- first, as a group of peoples' fear of being assimilated into the dominant culture and, hence, to preserve one's language and culture by demanding an autonomous state or through nativistic tendencies – such as the 'sons of the soil' concept in which regional identity becomes the source of ethnic struggle. Examples include the Jharkhand movement in the erstwhile state of Bihar and Telangana movement in the state of Andhra Pradesh, the attack on South Indians in Mumbai in 1960s and the movement in Assam in the north-east to expel immigrants especially from the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal which act as a form of a violent collision between the natives and the immigrants. The 'Bhumi Putra Movement' or 'Son of the Soil Movement' in post-independence India is discussed in detail below.

- a) **Bhumiputra movement-** To understand the concept of "Bhumiputra" or "Sons of the Soil," one would have to delve into the deepest recesses of human psyche. The concept ties people to their place of birth and bestows on them certain exclusive benefits, rights, roles and responsibilities. The 'Sons of the Soil' doctrine underlies the view that a state specifically belongs to the main linguistic group inhabiting it or that the state is the exclusive 'homeland' of its main language speakers who are the 'sons of the soil' or the 'local residents'. All others acquire the status of a 'settler' or 'outsider' especially because their mother tongue is not the same as the state's main language. Irrespective of the time that these 'settlers' have spent in the state which may be both- being a resident in the state for a long time or newly migrated, they are not regarded as 'sons of the soil' or 'Bhumiputra.'

The concept of 'son of the soil' is not exclusive to India. In fact, countries around the world have witnessed such nativistic sentiments. The problem with this concept of 'Son of the Soil' is that it occupies a space between two key ideas-that of equality versus the concept of fairness. The main characteristics of the sons of the soil includes conflict between members of a minority ethnic

group which is concentrated in a certain region of a country and migrants from other parts of the country who are ethnically distinct and have begun populating the same area. Second, the members of the minority group think that their group is the original inhabitants of the area. They trace their group's roots to the very region which is sometimes established due to the prolonged inter-generational residence in the region. Thirdly, these tensions are usually heightened when the migrant community has better access to education or are economically affluent than the minority ethnic group. The migrant communities usually have middle or upper middle class status and are involved in lucrative businesses, government services, shop keeping etc.

In India, migration to urban areas, especially to cities had increased in the 1950s, but even in 1960s and 1970s, employment opportunities had hardly increased at the same rate. The only employment that was generated was the ones in the public sector or government services. Consequently, this led to intense competition for available jobs. In addition to this, those who spoke the state language had either been reduced to a numeric minority or a 'bare majority.' For example, in 1961, the percentage of Marathi speakers in Bombay was 42.8% of the population. The trends were similar in Karnataka and Assam where Kannada speakers were less than 25% and the Assamese were barely 33% of the population. All these factors led to the rise of nativistic sentiments among minority groups who utilized the democratic machinery to assert their demands. One such party was *The Shiv Sena*. The Shiv Sena, a Hindu nationalist party was at the forefront of the nativistic movement in Maharashtra. Their main area of contention was the increasing number of people who migrated into Bombay belonged to three distinct ethnic groups- the wealthy Gujarati's, the professional South Indian groups which included the Kannada, Tamil and Malayalis and finally the labourer class of Northern India. The Siva Sena's demand was that preference in the fields of educational opportunities, funding opportunities, job opportunities, etc., be given to the natives of the state rather than outsiders.³

- b) The Naga Insurgency-** The Nagaland secessionist movement had its inception before Indian independence. The British had brought Assam within its control in 1826 and subsequently the Naga Hills also became a part of British India in 1881. The Nagas who were culturally different had come in contact with the Baptist missionaries but by the time India was on the road to attain freedom, they feared that they would soon be assimilated into the dominant Hindu culture. On August 14th of 1947 the Naga National Council (NNC) headed by Angami Zapu Phizo, the Naga nationalist leader declared Nagaland as a separate state. 17 major tribes and 20 sub-tribes united under the banner of Naga National

Council (NNC) and undertook severe resistance against India. The major tribes of Nagaland who were linguistically distinct were the Ao, Angami, Sema, Lotha, Tangkhul, Konyak, Rengma and Mao tribes who came together to demand for an independent Nagaland. In a referendum passed in 1951, almost 99% demanded an independent Nagaland. In the years that followed a number of actions were undertaken by the Government of India to restrain the growing demand for an ‘independent Nagaland.’ These included the deployment of Armed forces in the Nagaland Hill district of Assam and the enactment of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. The division of Assam took place on 1st of December, 1963 and Nagaland became an independent state. In 1964, a political settlement in the form of Agreement for Suspension of Operation (AGSOP) was signed with Naga insurgents to restore peace in the region.⁴



The death of the leaders of two protracted linguistic and nativist movements in India, Karunanidhi (left) and Bal Thackeray (right), being mourned by the masses. The pictures reestablish the role of politics in the assertion for ethnic identity in the country [Source of photographs : (left) Outlook India, (right) Livemint].

12.5 Approaches to the Issues of Ethnicity

As ethnic discord and assertions become more frequent, the approach to understand the idea of ethnicity has also undergone a huge transformation. Social scientists have been divided on how to perceive of the significance of ethnicity to human life and its tendency to cause violence. The **primordialists** “views ethnic identity as innate, fixed and permanent” and that – that the fundamental cultural differences and divergent values between ethnic groups inevitably results in a ‘clash of cultures’ and the emergence of ethnic violence.

The **instrumentalist** approach has challenged the classic primordialists by arguing that ethnic groups are not ‘distinct bounded units with innate cultural characteristics’

(Adalparvar & Tadros 2016). Instead, they have focussed on the cultural ‘content’ of ethnic groups. Frederik Barth’s (1969) approach to understanding ethnicity is known as the ‘subjectivist standpoint’, which suggests that instead of looking at ethnic identity as something innate to its members, it must be seen as selectively emphasized cultural traits whose boundaries are not fixed. Which cultural trait will receive recognition is decided upon and boundary maintenance develops at the time of interaction between ‘us and them.’ In this way, Barth has emphasised the relational, interactional and situational nature of ethnicity.

The primordial approach was further questioned by the ‘**Manchester School**’ where the anthropologists analysed the relationship between black tribes and white colonialists in the African Copperbelt from the 1950s to the late 1970s. A key study from the Manchester School was Abner Cohen’s (1969) thesis on the instrumentality of ethnic affiliation. Cohen’s research on the Hausa and Yoruba tribes in Nigeria suggested that the principal function of ethnicity was informal political organisation. He argued that political elites in some cases created but also used and exploited ‘primordial’ symbols to gain the allegiance of potential followers.

The third school of thought were the materialists who base their arguments on Marxist theories. Michael Hechter in 1978 termed ethnicity as an epiphenomenon i.e., ethnicity is a result of class relations. These crude Marxist theories also suggest that violence between ethnically aligned groups is the result of economic inequalities and elite exploitation. The constructionist approach further developed the idea of ethnicity as being “constructed.” They speak of the agents that aid in the construction of ethnicity—the individual, cultural systems as well as the role of broad social, political and economic forces in the process of construction of ethnicity.

In the 1980s, **post modernist** thought called for the concept of ethnicity to be re-thought and redefined such that there was enough clarity as to what ethnicity stood for. Some of the post modernist scholars however completely abandoned the concept, identifying the “tendency to use ethnicity as a catch-all concept for many varieties of group identity results in a loss of analytical depth. Ethnicity, it is argued, is therefore everything and nothing.” The critique was directed at the over-ethnicized view of social reality.

12.6 Conclusion

The causes and nature of ethnic movements in India have been outlined in this unit. However, the occurrence and persistence of ethnic movements in India can further have two possible explanations. The first being that despite Nehruvian ideas around modernisation, which he believed would ultimately ‘obliterate people’s attachments to religious, ethnic or caste groups,’ in reality caused a shift in demands for ‘honour’

to that of 'dignity.' Vibha Pingle and Ashutosh Varshney (2006) states that 'honour' is reserved for few while that of 'dignity' can be demanded by all. 'Dignity,' they say, is intrinsic to an individual and with modernisation placing greater importance on achievements; traditional 'birth-based' or ascribed hierarchies became weak. Ethnic movements derive its nature from this 'politics of identity' in conjunction with the 'politics of difference' which was enabled with a new found definition of group identities separate from traditional patterns and aware of the 'inherited structure' of group formation and identities.

12.7 Summary

In addition, modernity has also brought in 'claims for recognition,' which to Pingle and Varshney is achieved through dialogue especially when faced with questions such as "where we are coming from" and "who we are". These questions may often lead to misrecognition and cause "injury" while "withholding recognition is seen as a form of oppression" (Pingale and Varshney 2006: 357-358). These reasons became important points for the inception of various ethnic movements in the country.

12.8 Questions

Answer in Detail

1. Discuss the circumstances under which the Khalistan Movement grew.
2. Write a note on the Nagaland Secessionist Movement.
3. Discuss the main features of the 'Son of the Soil' movement.
4. Discuss the incidence of communal riots in India.

Answer briefly

1. Discuss how the Shiv Sena rose in Maharashtra and their main objective.
2. Why did Birsa Munda revolt against the British, the Zamindars and money lenders?
3. Identify the dissimilarities between the 'primordialist' and 'instrumentalist' approach to understanding 'ethnicity'.
4. Discuss the 'Dravida Kazhagam Movement.'

Answer very briefly

1. What is the full form of NNC?
2. What is the meaning of the term Khalistan?

3. What does “Bhumiputra” mean?
4. Which legislature provides protection to the Munda community’s right to land?
5. What strategy did Birsa Munda employ to mobilize the tribal population?

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Unit 13 □ The Tsunami and its Human Impact and The Bhopal Gas Tragedy

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NATURAL DISASTER: THE TSUNAMI

13.1 Objectives

- To understand what causes a Tsunami and its aftermath
 - To analyze disaster risk management after a natural disaster
 - To understand the magnitude of man-made disasters such as the Bhopal Gas leak
 - To identify the legal provisions available
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13.2 Understanding Tsunami

13.2.1. What is a Tsunami?

In Japanese the term ‘tsunami’ means ‘a large harbor wave.’ A Tsunami is a series of large water waves which is caused due to the sudden vertical displacement of water. Tsunamis are different from ocean waves which are caused by wind, tides and by the gravitational pull of the Moon and the Sun. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, meteorites and other underwater explosions above or below water all have the potential to result in a tsunami.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (2021) identifies the following as key characteristics of a tsunami. Tsunami waves are different from normal sea waves as the latter has longer wavelength. In the initial stages, a tsunami resembles a ‘rising tide’ rather than ‘breaking waves.’ Tsunamis are usually caused due to submarine earthquakes and volcanic eruptions though they do not increase in height rapidly in the depths of the ocean. They gain height as they travel inland due to the decrease in ocean depth in increase in coastal friction. The speed of tsunami waves is determined by the depth of the ocean and not by its distance from the ‘source of the wave’. Tsunamis can decrease in velocity and can slow down considerably when the depth of the ocean decreases. The series of waves in a tsunami is called a ‘wave train.’ Tsunamis are different from ocean tides and therefore experts discourage the use of the term ‘tidal waves’ to refer to a tsunami .

The ancient Greek historian, Thucydides had mentioned tsunamis as being ‘submarine earthquakes’ in *History of the Peloponnesian War*, but greater knowledge of the phenomenon was developed only in the 20th century. However, despite the more recent findings and research on the phenomenon, much of it still remains unknown.

Did You Know?

On July 21st of 365 CE, one of the oldest and most destructive tsunamis in history took place in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The island of Crete was affected by an earthquake with an estimated magnitude of 8.0–8.5 on the richter scale due to a fault slip. The magnitude of the earthquake was so powerful that parts of the western third of the island were raised up to 33 feet. The earthquake followed by a tsunami claimed thousands of lives and caused widespread damage spanning from the ‘islands in the Aegean Sea westward to the coast of present-day Spain. Tsunami waves pushed ships over harbour walls and onto the roofs of houses in Alexandria, Egypt, while also ruining nearby croplands by inundating them with salt water.’ (Encyclopedia Britannica).

13.2.2 Why and How Do Tsunamis Happen?

The origin of the tsunami can be linked to aquatic earthquakes, which is the most common cause, along with ‘volcanic activities, landslides and impacts of meteorites.’ When vertical movement of tectonic plates, in the deep sea, continental shelf or coastal, occur, the overlying water is displaced. As waves created by these disturbances are pushed outward, away from the source, they gain height and reduce in speed when the ocean depth decreases. In deep waters these disturbances are not noticeable and resemble a ‘gentle wave’. Towards the coast, along with rise in friction, the wavelength is shortened and ‘the wave amplitude (height) increases’. The following facts hold true for tsunamis:

Coastal waters may rise as high as 30 metres (about 100 feet) above normal sea level in 10 to 15 minutes. The continental shelf waters begin to oscillate after the rise in sea level. Three to five major oscillations generate most of the damage, frequently appearing as powerful “run-ups” of rushing water that uproot trees, pull buildings off their foundations, carry boats far inshore, and wash away entire beaches, peninsulas, and other low-lying coastal formations. Frequently the succeeding outflow of water is just as destructive as the run-up or even more so. In any case, oscillations may continue for several days until the ocean surface reaches equilibrium (The Editors, Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Tsunamis are diverse in their nature and to predict one is difficult. However, the most obvious sign is the receding of water which ‘exposes the shallow seafloor.’ This is usually followed by a wave crest. Additionally, ‘Topography’, ‘configuration of coastline’ also determines the intensity of a tsunami (Ibid.).

Did You Know?

Tsunamis have often gathered curious spectators, but the outcome of this behavior has been dangerous. In the bay of Lisbon in Portugal, a large earthquake had occurred on 1st of November, 1755, causing the coastal waters to recede. In order to watch the phenomenon that exposed the ocean floor, many spectators had gathered. What followed few minutes later was a wave crest which caused many of these spectators to drown. Further, the day the earthquake occurred was also ‘All Saints Day ‘ and many worshippers attending church that day died as buildings collapsed due to the seismic shocks (Ibid.).

13.2.3 What are the effects of a Tsunami?

The aftermath of a tsunami includes flooding and though it affects coastal areas initially, the destruction can spread inland. Damage to ocean basins and eroding the ‘foundations of coastal structures’ are some of the after effects of a tsunami. As mentioned before, the degree of destruction is determined by the topography of the coast. High impact tsunamis such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami affected fourteen nations and resulted in more than 230,000 deaths. Similarly the Japan Tsunami of 2011 lead to 28,000 deaths. The effects of a tsunami, therefore, are human, social and economic. Given these recent tsunami disasters, a broader understanding of the characteristic effects of tsunamis on human populations could inform preparedness and response efforts (Doocy et al. 2013).

The presence of a ‘tectonic interactive plate’ makes the islands of the Indian Ocean more prone to tsunamis. The priority of disaster management in this area is the transnational collective development of an early tsunami warning system in order to effectively and timely communicate with all the people in this tsunami-prone region (Ramalanjaoana 2011).

13.3 The Indian Ocean Tsunami on 26th December 2004

13.3.1 Causes

On December 26th of 2004, an earthquake of magnitude 9.1 on the Richter scale led to one of the most destructive tsunamis. The earthquake displaced the ocean floor off the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. This caused the Indo-Australian Plate to subduct below the Eurasian Plate. The cause for such a movement attributed to convection currents that made the two plates to move towards each other. This was followed by

aftershocks, some of which were of 7.1 magnitude on the Richter scale which led to earthquakes in neighbouring countries in Asia, east coasts of Africa as well as eastern coast of India and Sri Lanka which were hit by massive waves despite being almost 1,200km away. The impact was felt even further away, 3000 km on the Horn of Africa (Srinivas 2015).

13.3.2 Impact, Damage and Loss

More than 230,000 people were killed, most of them on Sumatra but thousands of others in India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and more in Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Maldives, Somalia, and other locations. Millions more have been displaced or rendered homeless. The damage from the tsunami was particularly severe as an increasingly percentage of the population, and many key cities and towns, were within 50 kms of the ocean's edge.

The impact of the tsunami in terms of damage and loss can be very broadly divided into three separate but not mutually exclusive aspects—

- a. Social
- b. Economic and
- c. Environmental.

a. Social Impacts of the Tsunami

- i. Loss of human life: The tsunami had resulted in the death of more than 2,30,000 people.
- ii. The destruction had left 1.7 million people in 14 nations homeless, some were geographically displaced, and many others became refugees, leading to 'loss of nationality and political status.'
- iii. The problem of forced migration: The tsunami pushed people to migrate, especially those who had lost their homes. In some cases, the rise in sea levels due to tectonic shifts had caused islands and low-lying areas to become submerged. This resulted in not only the loss of habitat but also entire 'homelands.' This caused the homeless population to spill over into neighboring countries or areas which lead to a tremendous pressure to 'accommodate' as well as to rehabilitate them.
- iv. Emergency relief including food, water and medical supplies was required for five to six million people.
- v. A disaster of such magnitude had damaged the infrastructure especially waste management resources. This invariably led to the risk of disease and epidemics as fresh water reserves pipelines had become contaminated with sewage water.

- vi. Loss of livelihood: 'Livelihoods depend on human, social, natural, physical and financial assets' and the 2004 Tsunami had affected every single of these adversely. For example, the tsunami had destroyed 1,500 fishing villages in Sumatra, Indonesia. The loss of lives and natural resources had stripped the fishing community of its livelihood. In addition, such destructions also limit people's access to 'credit, capital and insurance' (Wachtendorf, Kendra, Rodriguez and Trainor 2006, Srinivas 2005).¹

b. Economic Impacts of the Tsunami

The tsunami destroyed livelihoods and damaged entire economies, especially in those primarily maritime countries, like Indonesia, Thailand, Maldives, and parts of India, especially the port-towns, like Vishakhapatnam, Paradwip, Port Blair, the entire Andaman and Nicobar Islands being the worst affected in India. Srinivas (2015) has outlined the extent of the immitigable loss can be briefly and objectively stated as hereunder—

- i. The tsunami left major harbours and ports ruined, resulting in massive loss of trade. It further resulted in severe damage to infrastructure, and burgeoning costs of reconstruction of those affected port-areas, in the aftermath of the disaster.
- ii. It left the fishing industry devastated - boats, nets and equipment were massively destroyed. An estimated 60% of Sri Lanka's fishing fleet stood destroyed. Banda Aceh of Indonesia, which was the worst affected, was submerged, losing out on its prime source of income through fishing. In Sri Lanka itself over 7500 fishermen had died and as many as 5600 went missing.
- iii. The process of reconstruction cost was billions of dollars, and most of the affected counties being LEDC's (Less Economically Developed Countries), the expenditure came at far greater cost.
- iv. The tsunami ravaged areas were like Bali, Indonesia, Phuket, Thailand, Maldives, Sri Lankan beach towns, The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and all popular beach destinations across the world. The loss of national income accruing from tourism was irreparable as these areas, depended heavily on tourism as their sole source of income.
- v. Further, salination of the soil left agriculture crippled, and crops were damaged, creating food scarcities, and loss of agricultural income, and higher prices due to shortages of supplies, which created greater economic hardships for the already suffering people.
- vi. Communications including roads, bridges, aerodromes, airports and rail networks, were severely damaged, making even rescue and relief work difficult and delayed.²

c. Environmental Impacts of the Tsunami

The worst impact, in terms of long-term damage, that the tsunami had, was on the environment. It resulted in destruction of coastal ecosystems, loss of marine ecosystems and habitats, including destruction of mangroves and coral reefs. Further the problem of debris and sustainable waste-management had arisen. To objectively outline the major environmental concerns— the biggest environmental problem was with 'solid waste and disaster debris' as areas affected were left with enormous amounts of debris, far beyond the manageable capacity of cities and towns. Waste disposal and recycling became important aspect of handling the matter. Secondly, 'rapid cleanup' had resulted in the mixing up of hazardous waste with ordinary waste. Inappropriate disposal including 'air burning and open dumping' had an impact on the environment. Thirdly, as tsunamis pushed salt water inland, it affected freshwater bodies such as 'rivers, wells, inland lakes and ground water aquifers.' This adversely affected the fertility of soil and 'debris contamination' brought a decline in productivity of soil. Furthermore, waste from damaged toilets and sewage contamination of drinking water supply was also a problem. Fourthly, the damage to infrastructure such as buildings and industrial sites including water and sanitation systems and solid waste disposal sites and waste treatment centres and oil storage facilities caused a wide range of contamination and pollution of the environment was aggravated due to improper handling. Fifthly, the tsunami had destroyed both the mangroves and damaged the coral reefs leading to a long lasting impact on the 'floral and faunal species' of the region and the process of rebuilding mangroves and coral beds was tedious and time taking. It was established after a thorough review of the aftereffects of the tsunami in Sri Lanka, The Stockholm Environment Institute concluded that natural barriers or 'bio shields' such as coral reefs, mangroves, coastal dunes, peat swamps etc., could lessen the damage caused by tsunamis. Areas where environmental degradation had been considerably less experience lesser damage despite being in the 'direct path' of the tsunami such as Maldives , Srilanka's Yala and Bundala National Parks etc. (Ibid.).

13.3.3 Responses to the Tsunami

a. Disaster Management Responses

Post Tsunami rescue and relief to affected communities was tremendous along with United Nations , national institutions , community groups, Non-governmental organizations and others workin in collaboration to provide rehabilitation and any kind of aid to those affected The response to high magnitude disasters such as Tsunamis are broadly divided into four categories **immediate** and **secondary** responses and **short term** and **long term**:

Immediate Responses	Secondary Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Search and rescue operations. ● Emergency food and water. ● Providing medical care to those injured. ● Temporary shelter to rendered homeless. ● Damage to transport and communications require re-establishing of infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restoring infrastructure and improving housing. ● Employment generation and providing support to small businesses. ● Giving advice and technical assistance.
Short term responses	Long term responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborative efforts of the communities to help themselves when external help was difficult to get. ● Burial or burning of the dead to avoid the spread of disease and epidemic. ● Providing food aid to affected people ● Financial aid from foreign governments and transparency in its utilization. Charities from the general public, NGOs and philanthropic organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continued efforts to reconstruct infrastructure. ● Setting up of tsunami warning systems internationally to alert high risk areas. ● Recovery and rebuilding damaged natural ecosystems that can operate as 'bio shields' such as mangroves and the coral reef. The restoration of natural assets. ● Support to small business and 'small scale sustainable development projects at the local level to help people regain their livelihoods.

(Tsunamis; Case study: Tsunamis at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zbfrd2p/revision/2>)

b. Preventive Measures

Hussey (2014) states that despite the difficulty in precise prediction of a tsunami, the UNESCO set up a 'tsunami- forewarning' system for the Indian Ocean after the tsunami of December, 2004. Later, the project was expanded to the entire world. Experts such as geologists, oceanographers and seismologists analyze each earthquake and decide whether or not to send out a warning. The development of automated systems such as 'bottom pressure sensors, attached to buoys are effective in monitoring 'the pressure of the overlying water column' and also in sending warning immediately after an earthquake and thereby curtail damage and loss of life. High risk and subduction prone regions use tsunami warning systems to monitor 'seismic activity in the Pacific Ocean.' One key activity of these systems is to analyze the possible extent of risk that an earthquake poses in the area. From understanding the structure of the ocean floor and coastal topography, heights of tsunami waves are also calculated. Usually, the geological society would send a warning regarding an earthquake after which meteorological agencies report sea level changes. Once the magnitude of the tsunami is estimated, governments are notified about the imminent danger and evacuation of coastal areas can be carried out at the right time. Disaster management is a collaborative effort on the part of the national, regional, and international organizations to develop tsunami programmes, fund tsunami projects, and continue research programmes.

Did You Know?

In 1949, The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre was established near Honolulu, Hawaii after a submarine earthquake that occurred near the Aleutian Islands impacted the island of Hawaii causing the death of 170 people. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) was established in 1965 and is coordinated by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System or the ICG/PTWS. The PTWS has 46 member states which comprises of 27 Pacific Rim member states and 19 Pacific Island member states (Encyclopedia Britannica, International Tsunami Information Centre).

13.4 Post Tsunami : Lessons learnt, and the way forward

Rehabilitation after a tsunami firstly involves rebuilding damaged coastal regions including reforestation of coasts with mangroves and coral reefs and decrease coastal erosion. Ecologists have discovered that despite severe damage, mangroves and coral reefs have the capacity to recover and continue to provide protection from tsunamis.

However, the coasts must be protected and “buffer zones and 'no build areas” with more strict land use policies and urban planning must be undertaken. Such projects are underway in countries such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand. Coastal development can put unnecessary pressure on the coastal ecosystem and therefore this must be curtailed at any cost. Coastal development can greatly hinder the recovery process of the ecosystem.

Secondly, rebuilding the ecosystem must be accompanied by employment generation and other income generation possibilities. This will enable the community to recover faster. As the coastal economy relies greatly on tourism, steps to restore the industry are necessary. This must however continue alongside the enforcement of land use policies and careful coastal planning. Finally, disaster preparedness is yet another aspect to be mentioned. Laws and plans that would take environmental factors into consideration and treat it both as a 'contributing factor' as well as 'affected by disaster' must be put into place. Maldives, for instance, has established 'safe islands' to protect vulnerable communities 'by measures such as specially constructed areas of high ground, taller buildings, and buffer stocks of provisions.' A combination of preparedness, conservation and awareness has been effective in disaster management and as such tsunamis have had considerably reduced impact when ecosystems were adequately protected and communities were aware of the risks. Constructions in high risk areas and close to the coastline can have dangerous outcomes at the time of a disaster. For this, awareness campaigns at multiple levels- families, communities, provinces and at the national level is essential along with a legal framework for disaster management (Srinivas 2015).

Did you know?

The United Nations had declared 1990s as The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) which tried to promote disaster management as being an integral part of the 'socio-economic strategy' of any country. Despite India being a participant in the UN's mission, two massive natural disasters struck India at the start of the Millennium, The Gujarat Earthquake of 2001 and the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004. In 2005, The National Disaster Management Act was enacted by the Parliament. Two apex bodies were also established-the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the National Executive Committee (NEC) for the implementation and execution of disaster management policies and plans (Pandey 2016).

Things to do:

Identify the main provisions of the National Disaster Management Act of 2005.

13.5 Man-Made Disaster: Bhopal Gas Tragedy

13.5.1 Introduction

Bhopal Gas Tragedy or the Bhopal Disaster, considered to be one of world's worst and tragic industrial disasters, took place after a gas leak in the pesticide plant of Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL). The disaster occurred in the intervening night of 2nd and 3rd of December of 1984. The incident was the cause of thousands of deaths in Madhya Pradesh. On the particular day when the chemical reaction started in the Union Carbide (India) Limited factory a leakage of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) gas occurred from one of the tanks of the factory. The poisonous gas contaminated the air, water bodies, turning them into literal gas chambers. The disaster caused the environment to become polluted and adversely affected the ecology of the area. Approximately five lakh people were exposed to the deadly MIC gas and close to 15,000 people had died within few days of the leakage. Close to '20,000 premature deaths' took place in the following two decades. Children were born with grave medical disorders and numerous still births were also recorded. As epidemiology showed an increased mortality as well as morbidity rates, 'Bhopal became synonymous with industrial catastrophe' (Broughton 2005).

Did you know?

Methyl Isocyanate (MIC), a chemical used in the manufacture of polyurethane foam, pesticides, and plastics, is usually handled in its liquid form and is combustible. It is also an explosive. It has a strong odour and being a highly volatile chemical, it mixes with air quickly. However, on exposure, a person can be affected by the chemical even before the chemical is identified by its smell. The molecular formula of the chemical is CH_3NCO or $\text{C}_2\text{H}_3\text{NO}$. In the Bhopal chemical disaster about 40 tonnes of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) gas had leaked in addition to other toxic chemicals from the Union Carbide Factory. The toxicity levels were multiple times higher than the level required to cause death i.e. 21 ppm (parts per million).

(IDPH: http://www.idph.state.il.us/Bioterrorism/factsheets/methyl_isocyanate.htm)

13.5.2 How MIC Leakage Took Place in the Union Carbide Factory and What Followed:

Methyl Isocyanate was used to cool the plant at the Union Carbide factory. MIC was mixed with water in Plant 'C' of the factory. As volumes of gas were generated, it put tremendous pressure on tank number 610. Due to this enormous pressure, gas from

the tank leaked and diffused over a large number of areas. The situation worsened as the alarm system of the Union Carbide factory did not work even after several hours of the leakage. The leakage is captured through an eye witness and worker of the plant:

Suman Dey, a worker at the plant, noticed that the temperature gauge on tank 610 had reached 25°C, the top of its scale, and pressure was rapidly moving towards 40 psi, the point at which the emergency relief valve opens. He rushed to the storage tanks to investigate and was horrified. As he stood on a concrete slab above the storage tanks, the slab suddenly began to shake. "There was a tremendous sound, a messy boiling sound, underneath the slab, like a cauldron." He ran, only to hear a loud noise behind him. The slab, made of 60 feet of concrete at least six inches thick, was cracking. The heat was like a blast furnace. He couldn't get within six feet of it. He then heard a loud hissing sound and saw gas shoot out of a tall stack connected to the tank and form a white cloud drifting over the plant and towards the sleeping neighbourhood. In the plant, he found that the pressure indicator had gone above 55 psi, the top of the scale, and the safety valve had opened releasing MIC from the storage tank (Centre for Science and Environment p. 207).³

The population of Bhopal in 1984 was approximately 8.5 lakhs. The morning after the leakage, more than half of the population started to show symptoms that included 'coughing, complaining about itchiness in eyes, skin and...breathing problems.' In addition to this, people also developed pneumonia, internal hemorrhage, and in many cases even death. The people living in villages and slums in the neighbouring areas were affected the most.⁴

Bhopal at the time also had limited health care facilities especially hospitals were lesser in number which made it difficult to accommodate half of the city's population. The situation was such that initially patients and doctors were confused as to what had happened suddenly and why. The doctors in Bhopal had not faced a situation like this before. Reports had shown that people complained of dizziness, breathlessness, skin irritation, rashes, and even sudden blindness. They were also not experienced in dealing with medical ailments arising from industrial disasters and hence were not aware of the symptoms of MIC exposure. Reports revealed that two government hospitals of Bhopal had treated approximately 50,000 patients in two days after the MIC leakage.

Those who survived were severely affected. Their lungs, brain, eyes, muscles, gastrointestinal, neurological, and reproductive and immune systems were severely

damaged. It also affected fertility in men and women. Long after the disaster, traces of toxins were found in the breast milk of mothers which was transmitted to the babies. The economy had also suffered with people unable to work and thereby unable to meet their basic needs.

13.5.3 The After math of the Incident

The damage caused by the Bhopal disaster extended far beyond one particular day. For instance the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGPMUS) had alleged that toxic waste from the plant which was generated between the periods of 1969-1984 had been disposed without precaution and had contaminated the soil and water in and around the plant. The factory, therefore, despite being closed continues to pose health risks. Also, the groundwater on being tested 16 times by government and non-government agencies since 1990, had shown 'pesticides, heavy metals and poisonous chemicals, including six persistent organic pollutants, at depths greater than 30 metres and distances of several kilometers from the factory.'⁵⁶



Photograph by: *Raghu Rai, who was present in Bhopal after the disaster, took this photograph as someone was burying their loved one (December 4, 1984).⁷*

13.5.4 Litigation and the Principle of Absolute Liability

Since the disaster, many cases were filed against Union Carbide, both in Bhopal, India as well as in the USA. For those who could not sustain the legal battle for long, especially the financially weaker section, the cases were filed on behalf of these victims. In 1985, the Indian Parliament passed The Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster (Processing of Claims) Act. Section 3 of the Act stated that the Government of India could file cases on behalf of any citizen who had claim for compensation. This provision was included in Section 9 of the Act which introduced "The Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster (Registration and Processing of Claims) Scheme, 1985".

The Indian Government had also filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court of New York against Union Carbide Corporation. However, on grounds of inconvenience cited by UCC, as the disaster had taken place in Bhopal and hence all evidence would be there, a new case was filed against UCC in the District Court of Bhopal. Shortly thereafter, the District Court ordered UCC to Rs 350 crores to the victims as compensation. To this, UCC filed an appeal in the Madhya Pradesh High Court against the judgment of Bhopal District Court. This led to the decrease in the “interim compensation” from Rs 350 crores to Rs 250 crores. Further, UCC tried to settle the matter directly with the victims outside of court. To this, M.W. Deo J. of Bhopal District Court ordered UCC not to engage in any settlement with victims until further orders of the Court. It was only after the propagation of the rule of Absolute liability, that Union Carbide Corporation was held liable for the Bhopal tragedy.

a. Principle of Absolute Liability or the “No-Fault Liability”

In the case of ‘absolute liability,’ the accused is held liable without any exception of being excused from the liability. In ‘absolute liability,’ on the other hand, a person can be held liable even if he had no intention of committing the crime. The principle of absolute liability also bars a person who has committed the crime from escaping the liability. In 1989, based on the principle of ‘absolute liability,’ The Supreme Court of India ordered Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) to pay a sum of 470 Dollars or Rs. 750 crores to the victims of the Bhopal Disaster (Union Carbide Corporation (Appellant) vs. Union of India and Others 1989).

Did you know?

The following major Acts were passed in India after the Bhopal disaster to ensure safety and to control disasters:

1. Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Act (1985)
2. The Environment (Protection) Act (1986),
3. Criminal liability provisions of the Environment Protection Act, (1986)
4. Factories Act (1987)
5. The National Environment Appellate Authority Act (1987)
6. Hazardous Wastes rules (1989)
7. Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemicals (MSIHC) rules (1989)
8. The Public Liability Insurance Act (1991)
9. The National Environment Tribunal Act (1995),
10. Chemical Accidents rules (1996),
11. Provision in Chemical Accidents Rules (1996)
12. National Green Tribunal Act (2010).

13.6 Conclusion

The Bhopal Gas Disaster triggered a debate around industrial safety and risk reduction. The following were some of the key lessons learnt from the disaster and what is to be followed strictly to avoid disasters of such magnitude in the future:

1. No hazardous industry can be located close to settlements that are thickly populated. In the case of the Bhopal Gas Disaster, the Union Carbide Plant was located in the heart of a thickly populated settlement. The Central Board for the Prevention and Control of Water and Air Pollution recommends that every hazardous industry be surrounded by a 2km green belt and far away from human settlements.
2. Industries must invest in risk reduction and the cost of accidents should be high.
3. It is important to spread awareness about industrial risks, set up regulatory bodies and risk documentation should be made available to the public.

Things to do:

- Find out industrial disasters that have taken place in other parts of the world. Assess their nature and also the aftermath of these disasters
- Watch the documentary and share your thoughts: Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain (2014); directed by Ravi Kumar

13.7 Summary

Natural Disasters are by itself the most devastating and the debilitating types of crisis that shake the human civilization immensely prevention measures must be taken to avert such crisis as far as possible.

13.8 Questions

Answer in Detail

1. What were the impacts of the Indian Ocean tsunami that occurred on December 26th, 2004?
2. What was the response and reaction to the tsunami of 2004?
3. If a tsunami of similar magnitude were to happen again, what lessons from the 2004 tsunami would you apply, while considering tsunami predictions and disaster management?

4. Discuss what led to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy.
5. Explain how MIC affects a person's health.
6. Was Bhopal ready to handle an industrial disaster? Justify your answer.
7. Discuss the legal battle that followed after the disaster.

Answer in brief

1. What causes a tsunami?
2. What operated as bio-shields in arresting the devastation caused by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami?
3. What were the hardships faced by people socially as a direct result of the 2004 tsunami?
4. What have been the foremost environmental concerns after the tsunami of 2004 happened?
5. Write a short note on The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.
6. What is Methyl Isocyanate?
7. How did Union Carbide Corporation try to evade liability?
8. What is The Principle of Absolute Liability?
9. What precautionary measures must be taken to reduce industrial disasters?

Answer very briefly

1. What does 'tsunami' mean in Japanese?
2. What is meant when the water retreats from the shore? What is it a sign of?
3. What was the magnitude of the earthquake that caused the tsunami? Where did it take place?
4. How did the tsunami impact agriculture in affected areas?
5. What should be the coastal zone management strategies with regard to tsunamis?
6. What caused soil and water contamination after the Bhopal Disaster?
7. What is the meaning of 'mens rea'?
8. What is the other name for 'The Principle of Absolute Liability'?
9. Name four rules that were passed to curb industrial disasters in India after the Bhopal Gas Tragedy.

13.9 Suggested Readings

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13.10 Glossary

1. Mortality rate- Also known as death rate, it is defined as the number of deaths in a population per unit time.
2. Morbidity- The state of being ill or diseased. It is also defined as the rate of sickness in a population.

13.11 Endnotes

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²Tsunamis: Case study, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zbfrd2p/revision/2>

³The Bhopal Disaster, Centre for Science and Environment : <https://cdn.cseindia.org/userfiles/THE%20BHOPAL%20DISASTER.pdf>

⁴Dutta, P.K. (2017) Bhopal Gas Tragedy: What had Happened 33 years ago that killed thousands? India Today available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/bhopal-gas-tragedy-what-had-happened-this-day-33-years-ago-that-killed-thousands-1099247-2017-12-03>

⁵Bhopal Gas tragedy: 35 years of the catastrophe;03 Dec 2019: available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bhopal-gas-tragedy-35-years-of-the-catastrophe/35-years-of-grief-pain/slideshow/72342988.cms>

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⁷Picture source: The Famous Pictures Collections. Available at: <http://www.famouspictures.org/bhopal-gas-disaster-girl/>

Unit 14 □ Communalism : Factors

Structure

- 14.1 Objectives**
- 14.2 Introduction**
- 14.3 Meaning of Communalism**
- 14.4 Meaning of Communal Violence**
- 14.5 Communalism: Perspective from Sociological Studies**
- 14.6 Conclusion**
- 14.7 Summary**
- 14.8 Questions**
- 14.9 Suggested Readings**

14.1 Objectives

To understand :

- The meaning of Communalism.
- The concept of communalism violence.
- The sociological perspective of violence.

14.2 Introduction

Social life is not static but it is always in an incessant process of change. Change is normal and natural condition of society. This is well rendered by the metaphor of “social life”. Like life itself, social life consists of incessant changes, when changes stop, life ends. Change is ubiquitous but the speed, scope, depth and tempo of changes vary from society to society. Not all changes are progress. A plethora of changes has happened in the last few decades. However, what is the direction of change? Who is being benefited by this change? The answers of these questions are very relevant to understand the nature of society.

Communalism is a serious threat to maintain integrity and make economic development of the countries which have diverse religions, communities, and linguistic groups. Communalism is a permanent wound of a society. If a part of a

community is infected by communalism, then it affects and creates its impact on rest of the community. Such type of infections is largely seen in different regions consisting of various groups like religion, caste, class etc., and at the end of the result mistrust is seen among them. One of the major priorities of any developing country is to maintain a unity of its people. In the history of modern India, such a unity is put to a very severe test by the growing communalization of the Indian people, politics and society. In India, communalism and communal violence have created huge problems since decades.

14.3 Meaning of Communalism

The word 'communalism' is derived from the word 'communal', which in itself has been derived from the word 'commune', and 'community', *meaning a feeling of oneness or friendliness*. To be more specific, 'community' has been defined as "a concept used in sectarian, territorial and functional context about the persons who are in social interaction within a geographical area. In the Indian context, Robert Hardgrave defines the term 'community' as "in India, community usually refers to a racial, caste, linguistic or religious group rather than a locality as in the United States." But in Indian context the word "communal" has been used in worst disparaging sense. The word 'commune' also means mistrust, hatred, rivalry etc. among the people of different religions. It is characterized by tension or conflict between culturally distinct but geographically mixed communities (Ahuja, 1992).

Communalism is a negative term, taken as something harmful to the healthy growth of people and the nation. It creates enmity, hatred, violence and revenge, which hamper the growth and development of the society. It affects adversely the property of the community at the cost of human values. It divides India into two parts leaving behind memories and incalculable wounds and loss of property.

There are many definitions of communalism. Every thinker defines the concept from his or her political and ideological perspectives. The scholars have amplified the concept from socio economic, cultural, political and historical outlook. Communalism is a multi-faced phenomenon. Each factor has close relations with each other.

Bipan Chandra (1984) explores several possible meanings of communalism. The main religious community becomes the root cause of it. According to Chandra, (1984) the communalist assumes that most meaningful distinction among the Indian people, on social, cultural, economic and political issues, is to be made, on the basis of such units, of 'religious communities'. The Indian people can exist and act socially and protect their collective or corporate or non-individual interests, only as members of religion-based communities. They never think, want, feel or act in any other

manner or category, except as members of such homogeneous communities, whose interest, outlook, way of life etc., are the same.

Bipan Chandra (1984) has also mentioned three elements of communalism. First, communalism is strong among the people, who follow the same religion, having common secular interests. Second, the secular interests of different religions are dissimilar or divergent from the followers of other religion. Third, these interests of different communities are not only different, but are also hostile to each other.

In the opinion of T.K. Oommen, a famous sociologist, there are many dimensions of communalism and he suggests mainly six dimensions of communalism. These are:

Assimilationist (or) Communist Communalism

Under this type of communalism, small religious groups are assimilated into big religious group. For instance, Scheduled Tribes, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists are Hindus and they should be covered by Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. In addition, all of them should be covered with the same personal law. Hence, a Sikh, or a Buddhist or a Jain does not identify himself/ herself too much different from a Hindu and Hindu religious beliefs and sentiments.

Welfarist Communalism

In this type of communalism, emphasis is placed on the welfare for the particular community. Providing education, scholarship, financial assistance in higher studies, matrimonial assistance, skill development, residential accommodation are examples of different services provided under this type of communalism. These welfarist organizations are involved in different kind of charitable and other social upliftment activities related to their particular community alone.

Retreatist Communalism

Retreatist communalism is one in which a small religious community keeps itself away from politics; for example, Bahai community, which proscribes its members from participating in political activities

Retaliatory Communalism

This type of communalism attempts to harm, hurt, injure the members of other religious communities.

Separatist Communalism

It is one in which one re-ligious or a cultural group wants to maintain its cultural specificity and demands a separate territorial state within the country, for example, the demand of some Mizos and Nagas in Northeast India or Bodos in Assam, or of Jharkhand tribals in Bihar, or of Gorkhas for Gorkhaland in West Bengal, or of hill people for Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh, or of Vidarbha in Maharashtra.

Secessionist Communalism

It is one in which a religious community wants a separate political identity, and demands an independent state. A very small militant section of Sikh population demanding Khalistan or some Muslim militants demanding independent Kashmir have been engaged in practicing this type of communalism. Of these six types of communalism, the last three types create problems engendering agitations, communal riots, terrorism, and insurgency.

The most extreme forms of these are the retaliatory, separatist and secessionist. The practice of each of this type of communalism leads to virulent methods such as terrorism, communal riots and insurgency.

According to Zenab Banu (1989) “Communalism in India is neither the reaction to anti communalism nor an outgrowth of religious and cultural differences but it is a triangular power struggle of the elite.”

Louis Dumont (1964) considers, communalism, as a product of interaction between tradition and modernity.

Pradeep Nayak (1993) believes communalism should be perceived as a state of consciousness and a strategy of mobilization of a community for a political purpose, to form a political community out of religious issues.

K.N. Panikkar (2000) regards communalism both “as a state of consciousness in society and as an instrument of power, not purely for capturing state power, but for operating in political, social and economic domains and at almost all levels of social organization.” Thus, Panikkar highlights the multi-dimensional perspective of communalism and its far reaching impact on the institutional society. Moreover, he illustrates the element of false consciousness for the genesis of communalism. Panikkar was more historical in highlighting the material gains, gathered by different religious groups, behind the inflammable communal pressure strategies.

Sociologically, Sabrewal (1996) argues communalism as a concept with the above said connotations emerges due to the fact that the members of a multi-religious society work with different manuals listing divergent codes for life. Where people live by different manuals, one way to anticipate the other’s behaviour, attitude and intentions is to reckon with the other’s manual and other’s religion. Social unease is also obviated by signaling one’s own manual through various diacritical marks: clothing, life style, facial marks, one’s language and manners. During this process religiously rooted social identities gradually get established and are mutually acknowledged. Awareness of socio-religious identities slowly get established and are mutually acknowledged. This awareness helps one constitute useful social maps in one’s mind demarcating the social territory into sacred, friendly neutral and hostile.

Generally, this may be added that due to the propaganda and other factors such as prejudices, hostilities and negative feelings against one another may be emerged. It is therefore argued that all such type of attitudes depends upon the nature and type of interactive patterns between people of different religion and culture. In case if they do not hurt the religious sentiments and challenge religious identities, then there is no problem. But if they, by chance or choice, develop hostility against other, this leads to outbreak of communal outbursts and communal conflicts.

Communalism is a collective ideological and ideology-centric expression of one's community identity in relation to the other in the process of acquisition of power. Since the expression is in relation to others, it often encourages separatism, hatred, and violence.

The political perspective based communalism is created and nurtured by political elites to attain political power. Also, Marx argued that "ideas of ruling classes are in every age the ruling ideas". The ruling classes in the multi-religious country support either one or the other community and spread their cunning ideas of polarizing the religious communities and derive political benefits. The ruling classes as a whole are responsible for encouraging communal identities for political ends thereby aggravating the communal conflict.

Communalism as Discrimination on Religious Basis

Communalism is also defined as the discrimination or protection of interests on a religious basis and is the outcome of conflicting religious practices. This understanding has the following implications. It implies that religious groups are homogenous in nature and their members have common social, economic and political interests that bind them together. This assumes that there exist separate socio-cultural, economic and political interests of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and these are dissimilar and divergent. To accept this implication is to analyze the question of communalism within the communal framework. In fact, it is this assumption, which is the basis of communal propaganda. The repeated assertion regarding the existence of such interests by communalists has even distorted the perception of some of the analyst and policy makers. It is very difficult to accept such an assumption when members of a religious group pursue different occupations and have dissimilar socio-economic background and cultural heritage. These elements of communal propaganda distort real issues and misrepresent real interests. According to Bipan Chandra, communalism is the result of the ideological conditioning of the last 100 years, when the middle classes and the intelligentsia were perceptually surrounded by a communal outlook in politics, in the press, in literature and particularly often has been viewed in the social sciences, as in real life, through conscious or unconscious communal assumptions. For example,

if one's analysis starts by accepting the communal leaders as leaders and representatives of their 'communities' – and if one refers to the Hindu, Muslim or Sikh communalists as Hindu leaders, Muslim leaders, or Sikh leaders – or if one accepts communal political activity is the political activity of their 'communities', one is already accepting the basic communal framework of thought and analysis. On the other hand, if no communal, economic, political and social interests exist, the communalists cannot be representing such interests and are not, therefore, representative of their 'communities'. The use of communal categories to understand and unfold social reality leads to mistaking the symptoms for causes. Remedies are prescribing to eradicate the symptoms. The result is that the problem persists while the symptoms may disappear. To understand and counter communalism it is no doubt necessary to recognize the religious factor as an important component, but will be hazardous to accept the notion of Hindu interest, Muslim interest or Sikh interest and so on. Once if this notion is rejected, there shall be no question about secular needs, aspirations and expectations of different religious groups being divergent and dissimilar. The second implication is that communalism seeks the protection of the interests of one religious group at the cost of another. To accept this is to again reinforce the communal propaganda. Communalism does not and cannot protect the interests of one religious group at the cost of another. Communalists do not benefit the 'community' in whose name they seek concessions. It is only a few individuals who benefit from this and such examples become a tool in the hands of communalists to mobilize support. It arouses expectations for the fulfillment of the secular needs and reinforces the belief that a particular religious group is being discriminated against. The present system is not geared to benefit one or the other 'community'. Hence, demands raised along communal lines which cannot benefit 'communities' as a whole, but may only benefit individuals within them. The third implication is the historical inevitability of the phenomenon of communalism in a society having plurality of religions and castes. The assumption that the very existence of religions would make communalism inevitable is false. Communalism, unlike class-consciousness and the fight against imperialism, has not been caused by contradictions in society. Rather it is based on the perception of common non-religious interests of a particular religious, caste or other group. Present day communalism, which is a modern ideology, uses religion to fulfill their secular interests and will persist even if religious group identities are abolished. Only its form may change and some other retrogressive category may replace religion.

Duality in Communalism: Integration and Differentiation

The inherent notion of communalism is the inter-group differences and intra-group commonalty of secular interests having their basis in religious, caste or other ascriptive group aggregations. In other words, communalism underplays the homogenous and

common aspects shared by members of different religious, caste, or ascriptive groups and highlights their differences. For instance, communalists use religion as an instrument to cement communal monoliths. It creates an illusion of the universal content of the secular interest of unequal individual members of a religious group. Further it will be hazardous to accept only the notion of Hindu interests or Muslim interests and so on. Once this notion is rejected there can be no question about secular needs, aspirations and expectations of different religious groups being divergent and dissimilar. Therefore, it will be wrong to categorize communalism as Hindu or Sikh or Muslim. The danger is that such a categorization would further sharpen communal polarization. The right approach is to identify the basis of a particular communal mobilization. It should not be forgotten that communalism uses religious or caste group differences, but is not caused by them.

14.4 Communal Violence

In India, communal violence has a long history. In fact, communal violence had started before the arrival of the British rulers in India. The British rulers exploited the feelings of Hindus and Muslims by their policy of 'divide and rule'. The British obviously did not create the Hindu-Muslim communal problem, but they did exploit it for their own purposes from time to time. It will be wrong to believe that the British rulers were responsible for religious or communal feuds. However, the British rulers did play an important role in the promotion, spread and growth of communal problem in India. The medieval rulers did not encourage communal violence but that is what the colonial masters had done. In India, the problem of communal violence did not grow up suddenly. It is rooted in the past. It is not the product of religion but of the politics of elites of a religious community. It is not only confined to Hindus and Muslims but recently violence against the Christian community has also increased. The communal violence has continued even after India became independent. The British sowed such seeds of hatred that today Indians are facing its consequences even after 72 years of independence. The British rulers made religion as a tool of hatred instead of love. It is, therefore, necessary to look into the problem of communalism and communal violence, which can be divided into three periods.

1. Muslim Period.
2. British Period.
3. Post independence Period.

The purpose of periodization is only to see the steady growth of communalism and communal violence in different phases of Indian history.

What is communal violence ?

After having dealt with the concept of communalism, the other concept needing discussion is “Communal Violence”, a collective manifestation of religious feelings and sentiments against the others. A communal violence, in general refers to a collective violent manifestation of one’s identity, ideas and beliefs, etc., in relation to other religious community for the realization of certain interests, openly manifested on sometimes hidden but presented in a mystified way. It is, most often, a consequence of the spread of communal ideology. The problems and characteristics of communal violence are different from student agitation, workers’ strikes and peasants’ movements. At the national level, we have to differentiate between communal violence and agitation and terrorism and insurgency, through mass mobilization and degree of violence, degree of cohesion, target of attack, flare-ups, leadership and victims, and aftermath experiences (Singh V. V., 1994).

14.5 Communalism: Perspective from Sociological Studies

When we look at and review the sociological literature on communalism and social tension, we find three stages of the analysis by sociologists on communal problems. At one stage, which might be called the classical stage of Indian sociology, the debate on communalism, bears the imprint of the national movement, its ideology and values. We find it in the writings of historians, political scientists and other scholars.

At the second stage, sociologists, who constitute the pioneering generation, have dealt with this problem and it would be useful briefly to look at their contributions. One of them is D.P. Mukherjee. He wrote a very interesting book in 1942, which was reprinted in 1946, called *Modern Indian Culture*. In this work he dealt with the problem of Hindu-Muslim relationship and the problems of partition, which in 1942 was looming large on the political horizon of India. He offered some very interesting insights on the problems of communalism in our country.

Between Ghurye and Mukherjee, as a matter of fact, we encounter two opposite ideological perspectives on communalism. Mukherjee represents the mainstream thesis of cohesion on communal issue in India through cultural synthesis and integration in the process of nation building, whereas Ghurye takes more or less what one may call the ‘communal line’, a kind of partisan Hinduistic viewpoint on problems of communalism in India.

Mukherjee first emphasizes the role of tradition; that is, to him the issue of communalism cannot be abstracted from the issue of tradition. One has to understand tradition and the structure of tradition in a society in order to understand what is

called the problem of communalism. Secondly, he points out that even during the Muslim period there was autonomy and religious autonomy between urban areas and rural areas. Even what is known as the Muslim rule in India was largely an urban phenomenon and the rural social structure in India had its own autonomous existence; it had its own internal equilibrium. Thirdly, Mukherjee also mentions that when we look into Hindu-Muslim relationship, there are three levels of interaction at which it should be examined. He calls them the primary level, the secondary level and the tertiary level. He says that one cannot talk of Hindu-Muslim relationship in an undifferentiated fashion, because then the very basic social phenomenon will be lost sight of. I think, here he was a precursor or a forerunner of latter-day sociologists. It is an important insight that he contributed. The primary level is the level of economic interaction. It comprises of the roles of merchants, labourers, farmers and the concomitant economic relationships. It also includes the family structure, the institution of authority and its distribution in the family and kinship relations. It also implies economically related ritual structure, not its ideology but basic rituals.

At the primary level of interaction between Islam and Hinduism, according to him there has always existed a measure of partnership and a measure of harmony, so that the Muslim-Hindu relationships in the structure of their consciousness do not involve much disjuncture. The relationship is functioned in a very harmonious manner. It is a very important structural perspective.

The secondary level is the level of polity – political ideology and leadership. At this level, there exists a differentiation; there is a dual role; one may even come across some degree of contradiction between the outlook of the representatives of the two traditions-the Hindu tradition and the Muslim tradition.

Finally, at the tertiary level, which is the level of ideology, there exists between the two traditions a sharper contradiction in the perception of social reality and in the nature of their interaction. One point he makes is about the extent to which these different levels, as enunciated, could be taken as truly representing the nature of the cultural and social division between the two traditions. Here the insight that we get from his observations is that the relationship should not be dichotomized as a Hindu-Muslim question, because then we would round-off a number of very important similarities in the relationship in the process of the abstract treatment of divide between the two ideologies.

In Dumont's view (1964) the relationship between religion and communalism, or the notion of communalism cannot be explained from a purely economic perspective. Dumont would like to make a distinction between the concepts 'communal' and 'communalism'. He says one cannot understand communalism unless one has understood the notion of the communal and its meaning. It signifies a sacred and hierarchical principle. The communal principle is a basic characteristic of the Indian tradition and its social structure. The Indian social structure is communal in the sense

that it is community conducted; in other words, it is hierarchical. The notion of hierarchy is basic to its understanding. What is hierarchy? As Dumont defines it, hierarchy is the encompassing of the utilitarian and individualistic principles of society by one that is sacred and communitarian. It has the supremacy of the transcendental principles in the value system and role definition in society. In a hierarchical society the transcendental principle defines the utilitarian. In an equalitarian society, it is the other way round. In India, according to Dumont, it is the transcendental principle, such as God, religion or whatever one might call it, which defines the utilitarian principle; that is, economy, polity, etc.

Functional perspective views that communal riots persist because they are functionally useful to the individual, group, parties and the state authorities. The analysis of communal riots reveals that the functional utility of riots is in the form of political benefits they derive from such incidents.

The Marxist approach demands, from everyone endeavoring to understand social reality, a clear understanding of the nature of means of production, the techno-economic division of labour involved in operating the instruments of production and social relations of production, or what are more precisely characterized as property relations. The Marxist approach considers property to be checked carefully about the spelling relations as crucial because they shape the purpose, nature, control, direction and objectives underlying the production. And further property relations determine the norms governing who shall get how much and on what grounds.

Viewed thus, from a Marxist perspective, different parts or problems of Indian society with all their conflicts and contradictions relating to religion or politics, caste, language or region, ethnicity or nationality, ideology or culture, women's oppression or national integration, etc., do not exist totally apart from each other or from society- the social whole. These often do have a historically specific autonomous reality of their own; their dynamics is decisively conditioned by the economically structural logic of the continental social formation that is India today. And this is the logic of a development, which is essentially capitalist in nature, though it has a historically specific character of its own which scholars variously refer to when they speak of a state or government-supported capitalism, weak or retarded or backward capitalism, underdeveloped capitalism or capitalist underdevelopment or even 'peripheral' capitalism, etc. It is in this sense alone that the problems or conflicts mentioned above, including those relating to religion or communalism, are economy or class dependent. A class perspective today has to accommodate the rich diversity of contemporary Indian social reality even as it lays emphasis on the crucial importance of the economic base and its structural logic that conditions the dynamics of this diversity. Needless to add, without such emphasis Marxism would be theoretically indistinguishable from any other 'sociology'. And it is not without reason that today, especially in the absence of class-based people's politics, all the identities, all the divides and fissures of Indian society are simultaneously becoming significant and explosive. This is equally true of the explosive emergence of communalism in recent years.

The structural-functional approach is a perspective in sociology that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. It asserts that our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behavior. Social structures give shape to our lives - for example, in families, the community, and through religious organizations. Structural Functionalism explains why society functions the way it does by emphasizing on the relationships between the various social institutions that make up society (e.g., government, law, education, religion, etc.). R.K. Merton (1949) argues that the units of society not only perform functions but dysfunctions as well. When it performs functions, it organizes and when it performs dysfunctions it disorganizes the structure as well. Looking otherwise, the structure of a multi-religious society is composed of different religious groups. If these groups live with harmony, there is no problem but if at times there is conflict between them, it leads to communal conflict and poses a threat to the social fabric and social structure of the society and a state of anomie occurs in a society.

14.6 Conclusion

The way fundamentalism (Hindu, Sikh and Muslim) has raised its head in India, threatening the unity and integrity of the nation puts a question mark regarding the continuation of our secular polity. Our political leaders, in their own interest, during elections deliver hate communal speeches which have the tremendous impact on the masses, recurring communal violence in various parts of the country taking hundreds of rupees demonstrate the strength of communal forces and relative weakness of secularism.

14.7 Summary

The recent controversy on Ram Jonmobhumi and Babri Masjid dispute has shown clearly how in spite of a secular Constitution the communal elements in majority and minority communities can set the whole country ablaze on smallest excuse. This shows that the something has gone wrong with the secularism that we are supposed to practice in India.

14.8 Questions

1. Write a note on Communalism.
2. What is Communal Violence?
3. According to Oommen, what are the dimensions of communalism?
4. Explain the problem of communalism from the sociological perspective.

14.9 Suggested Readings

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Unit 15 □ Communalism : Control Measures

Structure

15.1 Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Discuss Communalism

15.4 Describe Communal Violence

15.5 Communal Politics

15.6 Measures to Control Communalism

15.6.1 Short Term Remedial Measures

15.6.2 Long Term Remedial Measures

15.7 Summary

15.8 Questions

15.9 Suggested Readings

15.1 Objectives

- To know communalism.
- To understand communal violence.
- To know communal politics.
- To adopt various measures to tackle communalism.

This unit explains the concept of communalism, nature of communal violence and communal politics in brief. Then it tries to discuss elaborately the measures to tackle communalism.

15.2 Introduction

Communalism threatens Constitutional values which actively promotes secularism and religious tolerance. Communalism dividing the society on communal lines is a threat to maintain the unity and integrity of the country. Communal feeling engages the state authorities like the police, the army and the intelligence agencies to view minorities with distrust and unpleasant way. This leads to the harassment of members belonging

to the minority communities. Communal violence makes the country open to the outside world. It becomes a real barrier to the all-round development of the country.

15.3 Discuss Communalism

The trauma of growing communalism haunts India today. The myth of ‘secularism’ is crumbling. In 1947, India accepted democracy and secularism as a value enshrined in the Constitution despite the fact that the communalization of both the Hindus and Muslims in the colonial period resulted into the division of the subcontinent (Chandra, 2007; Sarkar & Butalia, 1995). Three salient features articulated in the Indian Constitution are—religious freedom, celebratory neutrality and reformative justice. As European antecedents influence the Constitution, the conceptualization of secularism focuses on the relationship between state and religion (Panikkar, 1991). Mahatma Gandhi looked at the Indian nation as, ideally, a consistent collection of all religious communities placed on an equal footing. Communalism in a religiously plural society (like India) is a highly complex phenomenon, which is dangerous to try to restrict within a single definition. But it is among other things, a process of involving competitive de-secularization which along with non-religious factors helps to harden divisions and create or increase tensions between different religious communities. Here greater importance is granted to religious forces, religious identity, religious competition and religious ideologies; as the development of a strong collective religious identity among the Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians is a necessary but insufficient condition for the growth of communalism. Non-religious factors are not excluded as important causal factors, but are often misperceived in religious terms. If we are to comprehend communalism properly, we must undertake a comprehensive examination of both the religious and secular practices in Indian society.

The idea of secularism was emerged in early modern Europe as an ethics of behavior and a prescription for political organization. It promised to replace the violence and irrationality that seemed inherent in the collective forms of religious utterance. It prescribed a separation between the institution of church and the state and between religion and politics and signified ‘toleration’ for societies that had been torn by religious conflict. Secularism in India was a complex part of the nationalist self conception at independence and had been persisting for a long time following the debates about citizenship belonging in the post-colonial state. The Indian Constitution enshrined freedom of religion as one of its central principles. The definition of communalism is secularism and is seen as the antithesis of Indian nationhood.

Communalism is not all that appears to be, a 'minor scuffle between two neighbors belonging to different communities.' Historians, sociologists and political leaders are arguing that beneath such event lies a power game. In its widest sense, Zenab Banu (1980) defines, "Communalism in which a minority receives unequal treatment from the majority, on the basis of religion, culture and ethnic characteristics."

15.4 Describe Communal Violence

In India, communal violence has a long history. In fact, communal violence had started before the arrival of the British rulers in India. The British rulers exploited the feelings of the Hindus and Muslims by their policy of 'divide and rule'. The British obviously did not create the Hindu-Muslim communal problem, but they did exploit it for their own purposes from time to time. It will be wrong to believe that the British rulers were responsible for religious or communal feuds. However, the British rulers did play an important role in the promotion, spread and growth of communal problem in India. The medieval rulers did not encourage communal violence what the colonial masters had done. In India, the problem of communal violence did not grow up suddenly. It is rooted in the past. It is not the product of religion but of the politics of elites of a religious community. It is not only confined to the Hindus and Muslims but recently violence against the Christian community has also increased. The communal violence has continued even after India became independent. The British has sowed such seeds of hatred that today Indians are facing its consequences even after 72 years of independence. The British rulers have made religion a tool of hatred instead of love. It is, therefore, necessary to look into the problem of communalism and communal violence, which can be divided into three periods.

1. Muslim Period.
2. British Period.
3. Post-Independence Period.

The purpose of periodization is only to see the steady growth of communalism and communal violence in different phases of Indian history.

What is communal violence?

After having dealt with the concept of communalism, the other concept needing discussion is "Communal Violence", a collective manifestation of religious feelings and sentiments against the others. A communal violence, in general refers to a collective violent manifestation of one's identity, ideas and beliefs,

etc., in relation to other religious community for the realization of certain interests, openly manifested or sometimes hidden but presented in a mystified way. It is, most often, a consequence of the spread of communal ideology.

The problems and characteristics of communal violence are different from student agitation, workers' strikes and peasants' movements. At the notional level, we have to differentiate between communal violence and agitation and terrorism and insurgency, through mass mobilization and degree of violence, degree of cohesion, target of attack, flare-ups, leadership and victims, and aftermath experiences (Singh, 1990)

The history of communal conflicts in India is generally the history of Hindu-Muslim rivalry. A lot of factors constitute the existence of communal conflict. If the problem is to be solved and communal harmony is to be ensured, the causes of communal problems should be dealt in depth. Although it appears that the reason behind a communal trouble is religious in nature, the detailed analyzing of incidents uncovers other reasons and causes. Apart from religious factors, there exist numerous other causes for the occurrence of a communal problem. Historical distortions and false interpretation of history, the majority-minority problem, economic disparities, and imbalanced economic growth, role of political parties to gain political ends, lack of communication and misconceptions, efforts for conversion, social factors widening the gap are all the major causes which trigger a communal conflict.

The term 'communal' was first used by British colonialists simply to describe 'communities of interest', including religious groups. It was in the context of the 1906–09 debates around Constitutional reform in India and the issue of separate electorates for Muslims that the term 'communal' was given a negative connotation of bigotry, divisiveness and parochialism as such separate representation was deemed antinational and anti-modern.

14.5 Communal Politics

Focusing on the specific problem of communal politics, we are immediately confronted with an important question. What lies behind the appeal of communalism? Though the identity crisis of an urban middle class undergoing modernization and partial westernization has made it receptive to such appeals, their origin has usually been elitist, and disseminated for achieving and promoting secular purposes and goals. There is considerable authority in the instrumentalist argument that religion, whether in the form of faith or ideology, has little to do with the formation of such an appeal – beyond the obvious point that some of its symbols, myths and devotional themes are selectively misappropriated.

Here a 'materialist' analysis of the sources of communalism would reveal the role of the colonial state in deliberately exacerbating the communal divide. Competition for jobs created tensions between the Hindu and Muslim urban middle classes and elites. In post-independence India, attention would no doubt be focused on the socio-economic changes that have taken place in many Indian towns possessing a sizeable Muslim population, as a result of Gulf remittances, the growing export demand for handicrafts and artisanal products, and other expressions of uneven development that have clearly disturbed traditional patterns of dependence between Hindu traders and Muslim artisans. Similarly, the effects of the Green Revolution in Punjab are not without communal resonance for the Sikh Land Lords and Hindu trader.

Major Incidents of Communal Violence in India

- Communal violence is a phenomenon where people belonging to two different religious communities attacks each other with feelings of hatred and enmity.
- The partition of India witnessed mass bloodshed and violence that continued up to 1949.
- No major communal disturbances took place until 1961 when the Jabalpur riots shook the country due to economic competition between a Hindu and a Muslim bidi manufacturer than any electoral competition.
- In 1960s – A series of riots broke out particularly in the eastern part of India - Rourkela, Jamshedpur and Ranchi - in 1964, 1965 and 1967, in places where Hindu refugees from the then East Pakistan were being settled.
- In September, 1969, riots in Ahmedabad shook the conscience of the nation. The apparent cause was the Jan Sangh passing a resolution on Indianisation of Muslims to show its intense opposition to Indira Gandhi's leftward thrust.
- In April, 1974, violence occurred in the chawl or tenement, in the Worli neighborhood of Mumbai after the police attempted to disperse a rally of the Dalit Panthers that had turned violent, angered by clashes with the Shiv Sena.
- In February, 1983, the violence took place in Nellie as fallout of the decision to hold the controversial state elections in 1983 in the midst of the Assam Agitation, after Indira Gandhi's decision to give 4 million immigrants from Bangladesh the right to vote. It has been described as one of the worst pogroms since World War II.

- In October, 1984, the anti-Sikh riots broke out after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, where more than 4000 Sikhs were killed in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and other parts of India.
- Meanwhile, the Bombay-Bhiwandi riots were instigated by the Shiv Sena when it jumped on the Hindutva bandwagon to revive the political fortunes of the Shiv Sena which had lost its appeal.
- The Shah Bano controversy in 1985 and the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi controversy became powerful tools for intensifying communalism in the eighties.
- The communal violence touched its apogee in December 1992 when the Babri Masjid was demolished by right wing parties.
- This was followed by the worst riots of post-independence India - in Mumbai, Surat, Ahmadabad, Kanpur, Delhi and other places.
- In 2002, Gujarat witnessed communal riots when violence was triggered by burning of a train in Godhra.
- In May, 2006 riots occurred in Vadodara due to the municipal council's decision to remove the dargah (shrine) of Syed Chishti Rashiduddin, a medieval Sufi saint.
- In September, 2013, Uttar Pradesh witnessed the worst violence in recent history with clashes between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Muzaffarnagar district.
- The 2014 Saharanpur Riots occurred on 25 July of that year in the city of Saharanpur in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. The root of clashes is a land dispute between former MLA Moharram Ali aka Pappu Ali and Gurudwara Singh Sabha in Kutubsher area.
- Since 2015, mob lynching is quite prevalent in India as near 90 people have been killed.
- Nadia riots was a large scale communal riot that occurred in Kaliganj block, Nadia district of West Bengal during 5 May 2015. 4 people were killed and 8 injured. Mainstream media and local politicians didn't condemn the incidents as the victims were from Scheduled Caste Hindus and accused are Muslims. Nadia had seen communal tensions in the past.
- Riots broke out in Kaliachak, Malda district in West Bengal, India on 3 January 2016.

- In Dhulagarh, a town 25 kilometres west of Kolkata, the tension erupted on 12 December, when two groups clashed as a procession was brought out in the area.
- Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, May 5, 2017.
- Baduria, West Bengal, July 4, 2017.
- Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, September 7, 2017.
- Bhima Koregaon, Pune, Maharashtra, January 1, 2018.
- Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh, January 26, 2018.

15.6 Measures to Control Communalism

All the causes of communal tensions provide us with the means of their solution. Hence the following suggestions may be given for the eradication of communalism. For academic purpose, the steps to be taken to tackle communalism can be divided into two categories like short term measure and long-term measure.

Do you know?

Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005:

Till 2002, the successive governments did not take any notable legislative actions but to check the sporadic events of communal violence, the UPA government had in 2005 brought forward the “Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005”. This bill provided measures for prevention and control of communal violence and speedy investigation and trials as well as rehabilitation of victims. This bill could never see the light of the day and the parliamentary standing committee tagged this bill as something, which violates the basic federal principle of the Indian Constitution. After that, the National Advisory committee drafted and brought forward the Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence (Access to Justice and Reparations) Bill. In February 2014, the UPA-II government faced a major embarrassment on the first day of extended winter session of parliament as united opposition forced the government to defer the communal violence bill in the Rajya Sabha.

As the opposition parties, including BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), Samajwadi Party, CPI(M), AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) and DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), stepped up their attack on the

government, accusing it of going against the spirit of federalism and encroaching upon states' rights, Deputy Chairman P.J.Kurien deferred the Prevention of Communal Violence (Access to Justice and Reparations) Bill, 2014 in view of the “mood of the House.”

The Bill was to replace the Communal Violence (control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005, withdrawn by Home Minister.

15.6.1. Short Term Remedial Measures

a. Established Peace Committees and Their Role

Communal violence has been a major peace-breaking aspect in India. India is a country with a lot of diversity in terms of religion, language and culture. Very good co-ordination is needed to maintain the unity in the diversity and to keep the peace in the society. But this has not been the case. Often, we hear the communal violence in the society. Actually, it starts for insignificant reasons, but when it takes the color of communities, the people blindly divide themselves into the parties and they quarrel with each other.

The government should immediately constitute a peace committee in the riot – hit areas comprising of the respected people belonging to different communities. These leaders can help in persuading the leaders of the fighting communities and help in restoring peace.

In communally sensitive towns and areas, Peace Committees comprising of prominent citizens, community leaders and representatives of political parties, respectable organizations, etc., should be set up, and periodic contacts with them should be maintained by the concerned officers at the police station, sub-divisional and district levels. Prominent persons/ members of Peace/National Integration Committees, and voluntary organizations in the area, could make a significant contribution towards the maintenance of communal harmony, and prevention of communal discord, if they are involved in overseeing the situation in areas over which they are influenced. Women, who constitute a very vulnerable group in the context of communal tensions /riots, play an effective role in helping to defuse communal tensions and to prevent riots. Their fair representation in Peace Committees could help in containing riot situation

b. Media's Role

In democratic societies, when there is a wide heterogeneity among the citizens, this often results in conflicts and violence, sometimes leading to largescale communal violence and loss of life and properties. India also had a long history of communal violence among the various communities. In this situation, media

occasionally play harmful roles in fomenting communal violence. We find many biases in media reporting. Since communalism is rapidly increasing, threatening our pluralist society, media is also affected by this virus.

People are influenced by what they read and what they see on screen. In the context of communal violence, media play a strong pull on mass awareness. Instruments of media play very important roles for communal propaganda and persuasion-messages. Newspapers in India are most directly and repeatedly implicated in the entire process of aggravating communal violence

If any communal incident occurs, channels of contact with media persons should be established at a responsible level. The objective is to provide the media with the facts to avoid speculative reporting leading, inter alia, to fueling rumours and community sentiments. Frequently, the electronic media continuously show images of specific incidents, which could lead to exaggerated perceptions about the incidents and lead to provoking sentiments and passions. Regular monitoring and briefing of the media in this context should be ensured. Similarly, the government should also keep a vigil over the social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp etc., which tend to spread rumors and trouble people.

c. Law Enforcement

The role of the police in communal riots has always been a highly controversial issue. Riot victims generally complained that: (1) the police did not come to their rescue; (2) police forces were themselves instrumental in the killing; (3) they led the mob in looting and burning; (4) they arrested innocent persons and tortured them inside the lock-up and put false charges against the arrested persons, and (5) encouraged the culprits to act according to their will, preventing the members of one community to come out during the curfew and allowing members of another community to do so with impunity. These and some other grave charges are made against the police after every communal riot.

The role of law enforcement agencies remains sensitive on the spot in preventing the communal violence. For our purposes, the enforcement agencies include all those who are involved in restoring peace while dealing in communal violence. All organs of law enforcement agencies play different role either at the same time or in different phases while dealing with communal situations.

Peace can be established by the law enforcement agencies through expertise activities. Expertise activities insist on good behavior, kindness and a tendency to help the people. In democracy, people of India are the supreme. In this regard Supreme Court (SC) of India says that “the highest office in our democracy is the office of citizens; this is not only a platitude, it must translate into reality.”

In communally sensitive areas, secular minded law enforcement officers must be appointed. Similarly, Special Courts may be set up, whenever the situation demands, for the expeditious trial and disposal of communal riot cases. When a communal riot takes place and an Enquiry Committee/Commission is set up, it should be given a time specific mandate for completion of its inquiry. The state governments should give priority to providing all manner of logistic support required by the Committee/Commission to enable it to submit its report on time. Its recommendations should be expeditiously implemented, say within 3 months and the central government should be informed. Also, immediate legal action should be taken against those who instigate communal violence.

15.6.2 Long Term Remedial Measures

a. Encouraging Pluralistic Settlements

Pluralism refers to a basic quality of modern societies, where a wide (but not all encompassing) range of religious and political beliefs with diversity is accepted and where the ideal societies envisaged by different political parties may be incompatible with each other. Every generation must understand this complex set of challenges in pluralist societies and how they may be met in a democratic community. Human Rights Education can support students to develop the understanding, attitudes and skills that they need in order to participate as citizens. Through experience of the processes of democratic discussion, students will also learn the open and fair debates demanding certain basic procedures be followed, including:

- all participants with something to contribute should be enabled to do so;
- everyone's contributions should be listened to with respect;
- participants should attack arguments not people;
- participants should enter a debate accepting the possibility that their own views could be modified;
- adversarial debates, where participants argue from closed positions, are often less helpful than exploratory debates, where the aim is not to “win the argument” but to “understand the problem better”.
- Communal riots are only an indicator of a 'boiling point' being reached and a multi-pronged strategy is needed to address the factors that contribute to communalization. Ghettoisation is one of them as religious segregation strengthens communal identities and reinforces negative stereotypes of the 'other'. Ghettos form because of the prejudices inherent in society and therefore governmental action is required to correct this.

- The government should have a policy that encourages pluralistic settlements where members of different communities live together. This can be done in two ways.

First, existing barriers should be removed. There are regular instances of intolerance where Muslims, Christians, Dalits, non-Brahmins, North-Eastern citizens, meat-eaters etc. are denied housing owing to their identities. This should be cracked down upon and landlords should be penalised. The Sachar Committee Report on the status of Indian Muslims recommended the creation of an Equal Opportunities Commission that would deal with such complaints.

Second, pluralistic settlements should be incentivised. The Government can provide rewards to settlements that are diverse whether they are public housing projects, private settlements, colonies, etc. These can take the form of tax breaks, rebates, cheaper loans for future projects, cash prizes, etc.

b. De-communalising History Education

Ultimately communalism is an ideology and can be neutralized through education. Two main areas that need attention in this regard are i) the way history is taught ii) equipping children to deal with diversity.

The current controversy over the nature of history textbooks to be prescribed in schools reflect two completely divergent views of the Indian nation. One of the most important achievements of the Indian national movement, perhaps the greatest mass movement in world history, was the creation of the vision of an open, democratic, secular and civil libertarian state which was to promote a modern scientific outlook in civil society in independent India.

They have, for example, in books published by Saraswati Shishu Mandir Prakashan for classes four and five, portrayed all communities other than the Hindus as foreigners in India, wrongly described the medieval period as the Muslim period and, following the footsteps of the British, portrayed the period as one of great oppression and decline. These books, in the name of instilling patriotism and valour among Indians, spread falsehoods, treat mythological religious figures like actual historical figures and make absurd claims such as that the Qutab Minar was built by Samudragupta. They claim that Ashoka's advocating of Ahimsa (non-violence) spread "cowardice" and that the struggle for India's freedom became a "religious war" against Muslims, and so on.

The present categorisation of Indian history into Ancient, Medieval and Modern has significantly contributed to communal thinking in the country. It has effectively divided history into the Hindu period, Muslim period and Christian period.

Medieval India begins in about 1000 CE/AD with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate which is widely seen as the 'Muslim invasion'. Modern India begins in about 1757 CE with the establishment of the British Raj after their victory in the Battle of Plassey.

This categorisation was tremendously flawed and was a real source of danger. The notion that Hindus in the medieval period were suffering under Muslim tyranny was also a colonial construct, as the British rule could then be projected as having freed the Hindus from this tyranny. Further, depicting the Hindus and Muslims as warring communities created the justification for the British presence in India, and also prevented them from uniting against the British.

Therefore, it is abundantly clear that the way history is taught needs to be drastically changed. A much better framework is one based on class. The great historian Romila Thapar in her masterly work 'The Penguin History of Early India' (p 31) which periodises history based on major changes in society such as changes in the economic structure (e.g., from hunter-gatherer to agrarian), in the political system (e.g., from tribal oligarchies to monarchies), in technology (e.g., from stone to iron tools), and so on, offers a far more realistic view of the development of history. The re-categorisation of history is a highly complex topic and needs to be explored in more detail.

c. Rethinking and Use of New Strategies

It is necessary for the government to rethink its strategies to counter communalism. It is generally perceived that economic development brings down instances of communalism. But this is not true. It is found that economic development alone cannot suppress communalism. In fact, communal riots have registered in more numbers from developed states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, and developed cities like Mumbai, Amhedabad, Jamshedpur and Kanpur. So, there is a need for the use of new strategies and well-planned efforts to suppress communalism.

d. Teaching Our Children to Deal with Diversity

Living with diversity is one of the greatest challenges facing the societies in which our children are growing up. In a world where cultures increasingly touch and intermingle with teaching the values and skills of 'learning to live together' have become a priority issue for education. We all want children to grow up in a world free from bias and discrimination, to reach for their dreams and feel that whatever they want to accomplish in life is possible. We want from them never to experience the pain of rejection or exclusion. But the reality is that we do live in a world in which racism and other forms of bias continue to affect us.

This must be in the form of practical exercises that instill the habits and skills required to do so such that these remain with them throughout their lives. Some examples include role-playing (promotes empathy for different groups), exercising in critical thinking (to guard against prejudice), exposure visits, conflict resolution through dialogue and so on.

A peaceful future depends on our everyday acts and gestures. Let us educate for tolerance in our schools and communities, in our homes and workplaces and, most of all, in our hearts and minds.

These were some steps that can be taken by the government in neutralizing communalism. However, in the long run social reform is essential. Therefore, the main thrust of the effort towards neutralizing communalism is in the sphere of social and political reform and in bringing about a change in the values and mindsets of the people at large.

15.7 Summary

Communalism is a pervasive phenomenon in Indian public life and communal violence is a particularly ugly expression of it. Secularism in the subcontinent is an inextricable part of the nationalist self-conception since independence, and has remained central to subsequent debates about citizenship belonging in the post colonial state. It signifies all that have been enlightened and integrative within a modern society.

The Indian Constitution enshrined freedom of religion as one of its core principles but the practice of religion was to be personal and private. The public presence of religion, 'communalism' it was adamantly stated, would not be entertained any further. This force had its devastating consequences for the nation in the past, and had gravely retarded the process of integration in the post-independence period.

15.8 Questions

- a. Discuss communalism.
- b. What is communal violence?
- c. What lies behind the appeal of communalism?
- d. What can we do to end communalism?

15.9 Suggested Readings

1. Banu, Z. (1980). REALITY OF COMMUNAL RIOT: Class Conflict Between the Haves of Hindus and Muslims. *The Indian Journal of Political Science* , 41 (1), 100-114.
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Unit 16 □ Secularism : Concepts / Definition

Structure

- 16.1 Objectives**
- 16.2 Introduction**
 - 16.2.1 Meaning of Secularism**
- 16.3 Secular, Secularization and Secularism**
- 16.4 Secularism in India**
 - 16.4.1 Jawaharlal Nehru on Secularism**
 - 16.4.2 Mahatma Gandhi on Secularism**
 - 16.4.3 Ambedkar's Views on Secularism**
- 16.5 Growth of Indian Secularism**
- 16.6 Conclusion**
- 16.7 Summary**
- 16.8 Questions**
- 16.9 Suggested Readings**
- 16.10 Endnotes**
- 16.11 Glossary**

16.1 Objectives

- To learn about the concept and meaning of secularism in modern society.
- To understand the meaning of a secular state especially in the context of India.
- To differentiate between the concepts 'secular', 'secularization' and 'secularism' and understand their implications.
- To learn about the meaning and growth of Indian secularism.

16.2 Introduction

Secularism is one of the most contested ideas in today's society. It is a complex term which needs to be perceived under different situations and politics. What is secularism is not easy to answer and neither easily comprehended. This is because there are various nuances to the idea of secularism. Secularism is a modern concept indicating

the separation of religion from politics in modern society. While religion is viewed in terms of the traditional or the supernatural, secularism is the opposite of it. Secularism is more attuned to science, reason and rationality, the eminent features of modern society. Secularism means condemning any kind of religious regression and standing against any kind of religious intolerance.

Secularism is a progressive thought compared to the outmoded ideas of religion. Religion is best kept within the private domain while secularism will be the face of the public world. Scholars across the world have tried to seek answers to the questions on religion and secularism that intrigued them the most. Their quest has been to search for the significance of secularism in modern society and its impact on religion. How religion and secularism are different in their sensibilities and how successful secularism functions to replace religious sentiments by secular practices.

But the idea is not as simple as it sounds. Many countries across the world have used secularism differently. For the western countries like United Kingdom and U.S.A. secularism holds a different meaning compared to the Indian concept of secularism. India had adopted and adapted secularism and made it its own. Indian secularism is contextualized in the larger gamut of diversity and social differences that lie at its core. Similarly, the Indian problems with secularism have not dissipated either even after seventy years of independence. In this unit we will try to decode the meaning of secularism and address the issue of a secular state with special reference to India.

16.2.1 Meaning of Secularism

Secularism is a term which dissociates itself from religion. It means everything that is 'this-worldly' and is opposed to the sacred or 'other-worldly', supernatural beliefs and practices. Secularism is a political term which maintains to keep religion away from state matters. It also questions or rejects anything that is based upon faith and belief. Donald Eugene Smith in his book 'India as a Secular State' defines "Secular State is a state that guarantees individual or corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion"¹.

This famous definition of religion indicates three things-one is the relationship between the religion and the individual, the second is the relationship between the state and the individual and the third is the relationship between the state and religion. Secularism is known as a western concept simply because it was evolved in western society. This happened at a time when societies were undergoing a transformation from traditional societies based upon faith and belief in God or the supernatural to modern societies based upon reason and rationality. This was also a time when societies were changing their authoritarian political structure to a democratic structure.

Modern nation-states were also coming up. Societies were freed from the clutches of

the Church and also freed from religious connections or interventions. While earlier forms of traditional societies were run by religious institutions like the Church and adhered to all kinds of religious doctrines, modern western societies followed and practised secularism where religion had no control over state matters.

Religion becomes a private affair and state and politics become free of religion. This also means that all the different parts of society like economy, politics, culture, education all function independently of religion. This also implies that modern men act on the basis of rationality and not on religious beliefs. In some western society secularism ensures complete separation of the state from the Church. The state is free to function from any kinds of religious impositions or influences. The state will not interfere in the affairs of religion while religion will not interfere in the affairs of the state. Religion is strictly pushed to the private realm and will not be considered as a matter of state policy. Such a state which distances itself from religion is a secular state. A secular state is opposed to a theocratic state ruled by religion. Thus, the distinguishing features of a secular democracy as contemplated by the Constitution of India are:

- 1) That the state will not identify itself with or be controlled by any religion;
- 2) That while the state guarantees to everyone the right to profess whatever religion one chooses to follow (which includes also the right to be an agnostic or an atheist), it will not accord any preferential treatment to any of them;
- 3) That no discrimination will be shown by the state against any person on account of his religion or faith, and
- 4) That the right of every citizen, subject to any general condition, to enter any office under the state will be equal to that of his fellow-citizens². But a secular state is different from a secular society. While secularism is strictly related to politics, it is different from being secular in everyday life or following the practice of secularization.

16.3 Secular, Secularization and Secularism

Understanding the ‘secular’, ‘secularism’ and ‘secularization’ can be very confusing and overlapping. Yet there are different meanings to the word secular, secularism and secularization. Secularism is more of a political doctrine. Secular is more cultural. While secularization is a process of being secular, i.e., being outside the reach of religion and religious institutions. Being secular can also mean being ‘this-worldly’ in one’s orientation. Secularization as a trend emerged in the period of early modernity which also indicated a decline in religious practices and its believers. It also indicated the rise of non-religious or secular institutions worldwide. The word ‘secularization’

was first used in 1648 at the end of the thirty years war in Europe, to refer to the transfer of Church properties to the exclusive control of the princes. George Jacob Holyoake coined the term secularism in 1851 and led a rationalist movement of protest in England. Secularization was built into the ideology of progress. Peter Berger had mentioned that secularization was the process by which religious domination removed from sectors of society and culture.

T.N Madan has noted that there is a confusion caused by the use of words such as 'secular', 'secularization' and 'secularism'. For Srinivas, the term secularization implies what was previously regarded as religious is now ceasing to be such and it also implies a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of society, economic, political, legal and moral becoming increasingly discrete in relation to each other³. Secularism on the other hand requires that all religions should have the privilege of free exercise and be even handily treated except when a religion's practices are inconsistent with the ideals that a polity seeks to achieve. Secularism is a doctrine that may be relevant even in societies where there is no religious plurality.

Secularization leads to changes in-

- a) The beliefs and practices of individuals;
- b) The nature of institutions and their mutual relations.

It doesn't imply elimination of religion but to a state of affairs in which some ideas, practices and institutions cease to be regulated by religion. The range and depth of secularization vary from one country to another within the same country from one segment of the population to another. One can also see that nowhere has secularism led to the disappearance of religious beliefs and practices and institutions. Beteille states that 'it is a sociological truism that no modern society can as a whole afford to dispense with either secular ideas and institutions or religious beliefs and practices'. Srinivas said that 'Hindus were more affected by the secularization process than any other religious groups. Further different sections among the Hindus are affected in different degree by it...'. He suggests that there are certain institutional features of Hinduism that make the progress of secularization easier among the Hindus than among other religious groups. Indians irrespective of their religious faith, practice secularization due to the changes in the external and material conditions of existence. Such changes can also provide a new lease of life to certain religious practices.

The prospects for the co-existence of religious and secular ways of life will depend in part on how we think of religion. Srinivas for instance traced the course of secularization through the changes in the rites and ceremonies of the Hindus. For example, the most significant ritual among the caste Hindus is that of purity and pollution. However, the notion of purity and pollution have undergone changes in recent years. As he said, "the notion of purity and pollution have become less

pervasive...”. Many ceremonies related to birth, death and marriage are acquiring a different focus which indicates the presence of ‘secularization’ but it does not mean that it is at odds with religion. Needless to say, that there are new rituals and ceremonies that are incorporated in the Hindu calendar and other religions. Much of these are ‘secular’ by definition. Religious occasions are redefined as ‘social occasions. There is also elimination of magical elements from traditional religious observances. Both are conventionally regarded as aspects of secularization⁴.

Beteille also brought a relationship between religion, magic and secularization through several examples. Many elements of Hinduism and Catholicism were more magical than religious. Among the various social rituals of the Hindus, Brahmin women were not allowed to enter the kitchen during their menstrual time just as the untouchables were not allowed to enter major Hindu temples. The weakening of these restrictions and reduction of their magical and superstitious beliefs were linked to the process of secularization.

The modern society finds the growth of new institutions and structures. These institutions are universities, laboratories, hospitals, banks etc. The Indian universities of today were designed by and large to be secular institutions from the beginning. The Indian university is a secular institution in the further sense that individuals have equal opportunity to find a place in the faculty irrespective of religion, caste or creed. Institutions like laboratory hospitals and banks are governed by rules of its own specialized practice, scientific practice or financial practice. They are not intrinsic to any particular kind of religion. Although secular ideas and institutions tend to have a bias for modernisation, secularism can be turned into a doctrine as well as an ideology too, it has had its partisans and militants⁵. Therefore, secularization process can be followed in everyday lives of the people even though the state is non-secular. On the other hand, a secular state doesn’t mean all its citizens will be secular.

16.4 Secularism in India

Secularism although appeared in western societies, it was later adapted by many countries around the world. India as an independent nation-state also chose to adopt the model of a secular state. Although the idea of secularism was gathered from the west, Indian secularism has its own distinctive character which differs from its western counterpart. India is religiously diverse. The Indian subcontinent has been home to different religious groups over the years. While the majority of its population are Hindus, other minority religious communities like Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis and others co habit or co-exist. Being a culturally diverse country, India also exhibited fair amount of tolerance across the subcontinent. This also meant that India’s approach to secularism will be idiosyncratic.

In India the word ‘secularism’ is highly ambiguous. The common man finds the term not only difficult to comprehend but also make different meanings out of the same. Due to various historical, political and cultural factors Indian secularism has always been a matter of confusion as far as state policies are concerned and as far as citizens and their rights and obligations are concerned. That is probably the reason why Indian secularism despite being a constitutional term failed to find its place in the heart of Indians at large.

Secularism was the chosen word included in the Indian Constitution in its 42nd Amendment. It was believed that the problems and turmoil that India was going through after the Partition of the country along communal lines in 1947 could be cured by the inclusion of this magical word ‘secularism’.

Some people believe in secularism and are in support of it while others find it a farce. The concept however helps to shape one’s own understanding of religion. As Andre Beteille says, secularism is not only opposed to religious predominance but also indicates freedom to pursue any religion. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India wanted India to be a secular state. This one will be the one that protects all religions but favours none at the expense of others. Neither there will be anything called a state religion. The state will ensure equal protection to all religions that lie at the heart of the Indian sub-continent. Nehru was the philosopher, the harbinger of Indian secularism. Secularism for him meant complete opposition to communalism of all kinds. Secularism was a means to achieve national unity and integrity for India.

16.4.1 Jawaharlal Nehru on Secularism

Jawaharlal Nehru was the pioneer to develop the notion of Indian secularism. It was he who believed that secularism would help develop an attitude of tolerance and peaceful co-existence of all religious groups within the country. Jawaharlal Nehru’s secularism rested on the notion that religion is an erroneous view of the cosmos that will yield to more rational understanding as scientific thinking and economic growth advance⁶. Nehru wanted to develop the ideology of secularism to suppress communal woes in the country. He was a liberal and believed in liberal secularism. He envisioned that by following secularism, India would not only be tolerant towards the religious minority groups but also ensured liberty and equality for all. Nehru’s secularism aimed at social welfare. Nehru always projected a modern and liberal India which would grow along the lines of industry and scientific growth. The secularist ideology fitted well into this philosophy which would help to attain justice for all and avoid any forms of discrimination on the part of the minorities. Nehru wanted to curve out the mottoes of secularism, socialism, liberty and equal justice for Independent India. He was the main architect behind secularism. He was aware of India’s deep religious

diversity and the fissures it created within Indian society. He thought secularism would help unite the country shattered by communal forces. Nehru believed that communal problem which was at the root of the history of Indian independence was not a religious problem. Rather it was more about exploitation of religious differences existing in Indian society by a group of calculating politicians. The quest for achieving secular ends had produced communal divide.

For Nehru secularism was about separation of religion from political, economic, social and cultural lives. Secularism was also about separation of the state from religion. Secularism also would not allow discrimination of any kinds on religious grounds and develop more religious tolerance. Religion was simply a private matter that would bring about inner development of one's personality. Nehru was aware of the enormous impact of religion on the lives of the people especially in an old civilization like India which had been the home to large number of religions. But for Nehru, the new India would be built on the premise of secularism, socialism and democracy. New India was a modern India that was scientific and industrialized. He believed that modern scientific education would help people realize the spirit of secularism. He preached about liberty and equal rights of all the citizens of the country.

16.4.2 Mahatma Gandhi on Secularism

Gandhi was a religious devout man. Even though he supported the policy of secularism for India. He always believed religion to be the spirit of India and it was not possible to separate the religion from the secular. Gandhi's secularism rested on the notion that all religions were true, getting the meaning to the moral life and that Indian society could be built on a community based on religious communities. Religion could not be separated from politics either. Gandhi perceived that one could not keep religion away from the parameters of life but one could practice what he called good religion compared to bad religion. Gandhi was against sectarianism, communalism and religious fanaticism. Gandhi believed in spiritual politics. He had always supported Hindu revivalist cult and was a follower of Vivekananda and Aurobindo. The Mahatma Gandhi always believed that every religion should be revered and respected because the ultimate truth can be perceived through different religions. However, he also said that communalism was not a religious problem but a political one. This view showed the secular side of his. He never supported state religion even if a country possessed one religion. After independence he always envisioned a free India and not a Hindu state to come into being.

Gandhiji claimed that in independent India issues of religious majority and minority should no longer prevail. He never saw Hinduism as an organized religion and neither were the Hindus a homogeneous group. Gandhi was aware of the growing

communal forces in the country among the Hindus and Muslims since the nationalist movement. But he had no intentions of fighting for religious nationalism. Gandhi emphasized on the inseparability of religion and politics and the superiority of the former over the latter. For Gandhi religion was the source of absolute value and hence constitutive of social life, politics were the arena of public interest. The inseparability of religion and politics in the Indian context was for Gandhi fundamentally a different issue from the separation of the state from the Church in Christendom.

16.4.3 Ambedkar's Views on Secularism

B.R Ambedkar was the architect of the Indian Constitution. He was also known as the Father of Indian Constitution. Ambedkar was a vehement protester of the Indian caste system and the Hindu religion which he condemned this altogether due to its divisive nature. His aim in life was to bring about social equality of the Dalits or the untouchables and stop any forms of social discrimination within Hindu society. Ambedkar was against Hinduism due to its exploitative and discriminatory character. Through the various laws within the Constitution, Ambedkar wanted to achieve equal protection of rights of all individuals under law. Ambedkar had full faith in the principles of secularism which was included in the Constitution in its forty second amendment. He trusted secularism to give equal respect and protection to all religion. Hence secularism was conceptualized by Ambedkar to give freedom of religion to every citizen. Along with religious equality Ambedkar also wanted to stop practices of untouchability, economic exploitation and caste type of social differences. This widened the scope of secularism. Ambedkar wanted to change the Hindu Code Bill but he managed to obtain the provision of Article 44 which states that every citizen will be secured a uniform civil code by the Indian state within its territory.

16.5 Growth of Indian Secularism

Indian secularism arose in the context of deep religious diversity that predated the advent of western modern ideas and nationalism. It was a political phenomenon than a philosophical one and was adopted with a purpose of defying communal tensions in the country. The Congress under Nehru was committed to secularism but there were differences in the true nature of a secular state in India even among the Congress. The R.S.S or the Hindu Right wing never supported secularism and denounced it as a western concept. It was thinkers like Gandhi, Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and B.R Ambedkar who supported secularism in India.

India is a secular state because there is no particular religion which is adopted as the state religion. The Constitution doesn't provide any preferential treatment to any

religion and the people of any particular religion has the right to worship or any religion may be of one's choice is a fundamental right. Secularism in India also brings with it equality of all citizens in the eyes of law. According to the Indian Constitution no discrimination will be made on the basis of caste, creed, gender and class. All citizens irrespective of one's religion, caste or gender have the right to vote. According to Article 14 to 21 all enjoy same rights without discrimination. Person professing any religion will be considered equal before the law. Article 15 also prohibits discrimination of any persons on religious grounds. Article 25 states that all who reside in India are free to confess, practice or propagate the religion of one's choice subject to social health, law and order. All these provisions make us believe that India is a secular state.

Indian secularism is unique in its own way. This is because India has always been a multi religious, plural society. In India we find a domination of four major religions Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism. Indian society is built upon communal harmony and integrity. Right after independence the Indian Constitution has adopted the democratic form of government. Directive principles and fundamental rights are also incorporated in the Constitution. Among them Articles 25 to 30 ensure freedom of religion to individuals, as well as religious denominations and institutions. However, there are restrictions over certain public sectors while the state has full right to intervene in religious matters if it thinks fit. It was in 1976 that the word 'secular' was included in the Indian Constitution.

Indian secularism is more an attitude of "good will towards all religions", "*sarvadharmā sadbhava*"; in a narrower formulation it has been a negative or defensive policy of religious neutrality on the part of the state. Secularism has multiple meanings. It is being applicable through the process of modernization. It is also thought as the anti-thesis of religion and consistent with rationality, individuality, materialism, economic development and social change. Secularization also implies a break away from the traditional structures of society. Secularism is the pathway to a new modern society. A secular state is one that has no connection with any matters - religious or spiritual-, and that the state shall not intervene in it nor sponsor it. The Indian state follows a neutral path to secularism. According to Article 15 of the Indian Constitution, the state shall not discriminate on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. According to Article 44, there should be a Uniform Civil Code which means one rule for all.

But secularism in India met with many challenges and was not accepted by all. T. N Madan has argued that where religion persists as a powerful element in personal identity, secular policy cannot build on a rationalist avoidance of religious community but must take it into account. Secularism is simply perceived in the light of the political but it has been insufficient in countering religious fundamentalism and

fanaticism. Madan notes therefore that the search for secular elements in the cultural traditions of this region is a futile exercise for it is not these but an ideology of secularism that is absent and is resisted. Secularism is often viewed as a dream of the minority which wants to shape the image of the majority. For many, secularism is nothing but a social myth. It is a tool in the hands of political parties to cover the failure of the minority to separate politics from religion and secure vote banks. Majority of the Indians are dependent on religion to establish their place in society and bestows meaning on their life, more than any other social and cultural factors. Despite all the forces of secularization it is found that secularism is unable to make its headway in India. The biggest example of this is the rising and persisting communal riots and tensions in the country, secessionist movements, dissent over personal laws and uniform civil code, unresolved Kashmir issue, prevalence of the Hindu Rights, domination of the anti-secular BJP. Many of the arguments against secularism are vociferous. People believe that it is the failure of the society and the state to bring communal forces under control and secularism is not an answer to it. Indians are largely religious and would continue to be so. Even the Congress party couldn't be fairly secular. This became more evident in its inability to positively deal with the ever-contentious uniform civil code and banning of the Muslim personal law in the Shah Bano Case (1985-86). This had further created seething anger among the Hindu majority in particular which saw secularism to be instrumental in shaping minority politics.

16.6 Conclusion

This chapter takes an attempt to comprehend the meaning of secularism in the world politics as well as the political life of India. The principle of secularism is a controversial issue for Indian politics. Under the current social and political situation, the concept is facing redundancy. Indian politics is far from being secular. Secularism only finds its place in the Preamble and the Constitution but fails to shape the lives of Indians. People are still religiously divided.

16.7 Summary

The majority and minority issue still revolves around Hindu and Muslim religious identities. Communal tensions, religious riots, mobs and fanaticism never cease to exist. Political parties seek votes along communal lines and the position of every religious minority are under threat. Under such circumstances one is forced to think why is India a secular nation-state and whether it is time to reinvent or redefine secularism in India.

16.8 Questions

I . Answer in detail:

- a. What is secularism? How is Indian secularism different from its western counterpart?
- b. Differentiate between the concepts secularization and secularism with examples.
- c. Explain the growth of secularism in India.

II Answer briefly:

- a. Why is Indian secularism ambiguous?
- b. What was Nehru's vision of secularism for India?
- c. Explain Ambedkar's views on secularism.

III Answer very briefly:

- a. How does the Uniform Civil Code contribute to secularism in India?
- b. What is the Shah Bano case and its implications on secularism?

16.9 Suggested Readings

1. Beteille, Andre. 2000. *Antinomies of Society: Essays on Ideologies and Institutions*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press
2. Bhargava Rajeev. 2008. Secularism in Rajeev Bhargava and Acharya Ashok (ed). *Political theory: An Introduction*. New Delhi. Pearson Education in South Asia
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4. Pylee. M.V. 1994. *India's Constitution*. Ram Nagar. New Delhi. S. Chand and Company Private Limited
5. Smith, D.E. 1963. *India: India as a Secular State*. New Jersey. Princeton University Press. Bombay. Oxford University Press
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16.10 Endnotes

1. Smith, D.E. 1963. *India: India as a Secular State*. New Jersey. Princeton University Press. Bombay. Oxford University Press. P.4
2. Pylee. M.V. 1994. *India's Constitution*. Ram Nagar. New Delhi. S. Chand and Company Private Limited
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4. Beteille, Andre. 2000. *Antinomies of Society: Essays on Ideologies and Institutions*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press. P. 93
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16.11 Glossary

Theocratic State- It is a state that is ruled by religion.

Secular State- It is a state that keeps religion away from state or policy matters and treats its citizens equal irrespective of their religion.

Hindu Code Bill- The Hindu Code Bill was an attempt to reform the Hindu personal laws by Dr. B.R Ambedkar. It especially sought to bring reforms to the condition of Hindu women. It was Ambedkar's attempt to bring about equality and justice within Hinduism through legislative measures.

Uniform Civil Code- It seeks to replace personal laws based on religion by one uniform civil law for India.

Secularization- It is a process by which people adopts a secular way of life by rejecting religious influences.

Unit 17 □ Secularism and its Challenges in India

Structure

17.1 Objectives

17.2 Introduction

17.2.1 What is Secularism?

17.2.2 Secularism in the West

17.3 The Need for Secularism in India

17.3.1 The Crisis of Secularism

17.4 The Problem of Communalism

17.4.1 Communalism and the Nationalist Movement

17.4.2 Communalism and Vote Bank Politics

17.4.3 Issues of Majority and Minority

17.5 Conclusion

17.6 Summary

17.7 Questions

17.8 Suggested Readings

17.9 End Notes

17.10 Glossary

17.1 Objective

- To understand the concept of secularism.
- To learn the meaning of secularism in the West.
- To analyse the need for secularism in India.
- To learn about the various crisis faced by secularism in India.
- To learn about the problem of communalism and Hindu nationalism vis-a-vis secularism in India.

17.2 Introduction

Secularism was introduced to Indian citizens as a principle policy of the state. It was largely a political practice whereby Indian government wanted to secure the rights and interests of every religious community in the country. This secularism was different from being secular in the social and cultural lives.

However, secularism is met with serious challenges and obstacles. Already there have been started so many debates and discourses that state secularism must be a promotional interest of the government for securing the sympathy and support of the minority groups. Yet few also feel that secularism is a major step towards a healthy democracy with its objectives of securing equality and justice for all its citizens. The debate over secularism in India is an ongoing process where scholars, politicians, academicians and the people share dissenting their voices. Secularism in India is still popularly perceived as a western imposition for the purpose of fulfilling vote bank politics. Communalism and religious fanaticism are seen as major impediments to secularism.

In this unit, the attempt is taken to decipher the meaning of secularism, its importance in Indian democracy and the challenges that secularism face in India.

17.2.1 What is Secularism?

Secularism means that an independent nation-state will not discriminate against any religion or community or any person professing a particular religion. Even though a pluralistic society, no particular religion will be considered as a state religion. The state will refrain itself from bestowing any preferential right on person of any particular religion. In other way the state will maintain its distance from religious favouritism. “The goal of secularism, defined most generally, is to ensure that the social and political order is free from institutionalized religious domination so that there is religious freedom, freedom to exit from religion, inter-religious equality and equality between believers and non-believers. In other words, religion defines the scope of secularism”¹. Indian secularism also aims at bringing about religious equality in the country which takes place in the aftermath of the Partition.

However, unlike its western counterpart, the Indian states have always been anything far from anti-religious. For India secularism doesn't imply a complete separation of the state and religion but it is a matter of state policy. On the contrary, by adopting the principles of secularism the state aims to protect the diverse religious groups and their identities that exist in the subcontinent since the ancient times. So, religion definitely holds an important place in Indian polity.

Secularism was one of the ideals of the new democratic government in India that was to come into being after the British rule. However, it was included formally much later in the Indian Constitution. The Indian state was expected to uphold the principles of secularism. Nevertheless, secularism is one of the most contested and challenged ideals of democracy. Secularism is challenged by the various social, political and economic developments.

Many scholars like Amartya Sen held the doctrine of the *Hindutva* ideology and thought that BJP might be responsible for damaging secularist principles in the country². They were seen as the main critiques of secularism and represented the ideology of Hindu nationalists in the political arena. However, one cannot only blame the *Hindutva* movement for the crisis faced by secularism in India. There are a series of factors that added to its collateral damage. The secular state of India is under constant threat today and with it the ideals of democracy seem to break down. People were and still are divided on the basis of religion. The major question is to trace the challenges and crisis of secularism in Indian society and polity. Before coming to the crisis of Indian secularism, it is important to understand the difference between secularism in the west and in India.

17.2.2 Secularism in the West

In the west secularism emerged as a new modern idea that was to mark the end of the old feudal order and develop the emergence of a new modern nation-state. Secularism was the need of the hour in the west which tried to undermine the powers of the Catholic Church over the lives of the people. Modern western secularism was a search for a way out of religious wars and keep the Church out of all matters of state interest. Another major function of secularism was that it helped people identify themselves as citizens of the state and not in terms of other primordial loyalties like religion, ethnicity, race and class.

The word secularism was coined by George Jacob Holyoake in the middle of the nineteenth century. The word was Latin in origin and also indicated freedom. The origin of the idea of secularism might be traced to the period of Enlightenment in Europe. This was a time when religion or belief in God started giving way to reason and rationality. The word 'secular' started being associated with 'this worldly' while religion was concerned with the 'other worldly'. Although religion is seen to be a feature of backward or traditional society, secularism is a feature of the new age of modernity. It is also associated with the words like 'progress' and 'development'. While religion is seen to divide the society, secularism aims to establish an egalitarian and just society.

17.3 The Need for Secularism in India

In India secularism was viewed to be the harbinger of a just and equal society which could cordon off religion-based inequalities and differences among groups and communities. Secularism was adopted in order to build a united India amidst plurality and multiculturalism with religious differences and discriminations. According to Rajeev Bhargava, the makers of the Indian Constitution adopted secularism as one of the principles of state policy as an aftermath of the Partition and deterioration of Hindu-Muslim unity in the country. “Bhargava (1998) defined what he called political secularism, a minimalist secularism in which the state keeps a principled distance from religious communities in order to ensure minimal standards of living to ordinary citizens and prevent the degradation of life. Ethical secularism is more demanding in that it necessitates not merely living together in a political association, but living together well. Both ideas of secularism insist upon the separation of religion from politics”³

Bhargava believed that secularism is necessary not only to avoid or stop religious fanaticism but also to avoid religious conflicts. While religion was excluded from state institutions it was not excluded from the lives of the people. The declaration of the Indian state to provide special rights to minorities gave secularism a distinctive character in India. It was believed that absolute uniformity was not required for national integration. Secularism was an attempt to promote communal harmony by not disrupting the religious sentiments of the people.

The idea behind secularism was that the state would maintain distance from religion but it possessed every right to intervene in matters of religion that was necessary. Actually, it was thought that India was the home of different religious communities and Indian state had every right to cater to the needs of all. After independence, India wanted to build a democracy that would treat all its citizens equally. As the Partition took place India vowed that it would not discriminate its citizens along religious lines, neither it would have a state religion. Secularism became the gradual call of the hour. Besides secularism being a major state policy, the Congress government had to wait till the Forty Second Amendment of the Constitution to include the term secularism officially.

Secular ideologies are mentioned in Article 25 and Article 28 in the chapter of Fundamental Rights. Article 25 propagates the freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess and practice any religion. Similarly, Article 27 and Article 28 ban taxes for the purpose of supporting a particular religion and by banning religious instruction in the institutions recognized or aided by the state. Article 325 and 326

provide for the principle of non-discrimination among citizens in the area of voting and representation on the basis of religion, race and sex.

The ideology and practice of secularism are under much debate and controversy across Indian society. Popularly there is a belief that secularism is a borrowed concept which has been forcefully imposed upon the country. Its alien construction makes it inept for solving the problem of communalism in the country. The seeds of communal disharmony were sowed since the British rule which outgrew into the most violent form of communal tension in the history of India in the form of the Partition. But in no way could secularism bridge the gap between diverse religious groups, neither had it been able to avoid communal issues. Many believe that the crisis is faced by India today are due to secularism. As T.N Madan says, “In either formulation, Indian secularism achieves the opposite of its stated intention; it trivializes religious differences as well as the notion of unity of religions... He calls secularism as ‘impossible’, ‘impracticable’ and ‘impotent’⁴

The makers of secularism have failed to recognize the supremacy of religion in the social and cultural lives of Indians. People of the dominant Hindu majority groups are even unhappy about the protection of the rights of the social religious groups in society. Besides all Constitutional principles, laws and Acts, Indian democracy has failed to uphold the values of secularism. Numerous communal tensions and violence are indicative of the failure of secularism in India today.

17.3.1 The Crisis of Secularism

T.N Madan, Ashish Nandy, Partha Chatterjee all criticized secularism as a symptom of deep internal crisis⁵. This was because secularism never complied to the normative structure of Indian society. They all linked secularism to a flawed- modernity in India. Secularism could never eliminate religion from the public life of the people because religion formed the foundation of Indian society and culture. Rajeev Bhargava placed his argument against this view. Bhargava believed that those who criticized secularism failed to view India as a modern society and secularism was a new variant feature. He stated that Indian secularism never promoted privatization of religion and never created a wall of separation among different religious groups or communities rather secularism proposed a distanced relationship between the state and religion. While intending to understanding the failure behind secularism in India, Bhargava noted that secularism as a concept faced some internal threat. This threat originated from the failure to understand the distinctive characters of secularism.

Bhargava also believes that secularism is a doctrine that can change over a period of time. Secularism also has multiple interpretations. Secularism is a value that has been inherited from the west but has been made its own by the non-western societies. Even

in western societies the traditional meaning of secularism is again being reexplored and reinterpreted. This is essentially due to the rising multiculturalism in western societies along with large scale migration and development of Diaspora communities. In case of India, Bhargava notes, that the critics of secularism have linked it to other concepts inherent in modern society i.e., the concept of nation-state, instrumental rationality, hegemony of science and probably industrialization. Secularism is also related to individualism and concepts like liberty and equality which is not well accepted by the Indian society. The Indian critics of secularism for instance have failed to understand the substantive value behind secularism of protecting its citizens against all kinds of religious oppression. However, separation of religion and the state does not mean exclusion of religion and state.

The critics of secularism also fail to look into its positive implications like eradication of untouchability, bringing about social and religious reforms and promoting or expanding secular institutions like schools, colleges, hospitals and so on. Hence one major criticism against secularism is that it is highly unsuitable for the Indian context and there should be some alternative to it.

17.4 The Problem of Communalism

Secularism is challenged by the communal forces that operate within the country. The frequency with which communal holocausts have been taking place in this country show that there is something fundamentally wrong with our political system as well as our secular governance⁶. Secularism was a dream of the then Indian National Congress leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. But this dream got backfired under the elite driven communalism in the country.

Communalism means a kind of collective outburst of one community against the other or strong allegiance to one's own ethnic group than to a society. It is associated with a religious community and implies exclusive loyalty to one's own religion. There are several popular notions about communalism. One of them is that it is seen as a product of religion but it is not. Rather it is the product of the politics of elites of religious communities. It is the competitive politics between the elites of two or more communities which give rise to communalism⁷. Communalism can be traced back to the Nationalist movement which started as a Freedom struggle from British rule. But even after independence the country got its first major communal blow through the Partition. The Hindu-Muslim unity was lost forever. Even after independence series of communal revolts and backlashes were found in different regions of Uttar Pradesh, Gujrat and other states of North India. The

Gujrat riots, Godhra riots, Bombay riots, riots in Punjab all proved about the failure of secularism in Indian society.

17.4.1 Communalism and the Nationalist Movement

One major obstacle to the principles of secularism is communal politics which was embedded within the Nationalist movement itself. If one questions the reason behind the defeat of secularism in India, one has to dig deep into the Nationalist movement for an answer. The Nationalist movement was also known as the Swadeshi movement whose primary aim was to free the country from British rule and create an independent nation-state. Drawing inspiration from the western world and other newly emerging nation-states after the setback of World War II, the Nationalists like Nehru, Gandhi, Jinnah and others envisioned a new India with a new identity of nationhood. The Nationalist movement therefore brought with it new modern ideals of nationhood, patriotism, equality, liberal thinking and secularism. As a nation divided along caste and religious lines and victimized by the ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British, secularism was believed to be the prerequisite for an equal society.

After independence, the ideology of secularism became the ideology of the state but couldn’t touch the popular sentiments of the people. Rather people were not just alien to the concept but many vehemently opposed it. This was because the nationalist movement itself was not secular in nature. Rather it brought with its fears of communal disharmony. The Movement itself recognized the dominance of two major religions in the country, the Hindus and the Muslims that further culminated into the Partition of the country along communal lines. Many scholars like Akeel Bilgrami⁸ believed that the way secularism was imposed upon India did not go down well with its popular sentiments. Rather preaching of secularism should have been a gradual and negotiated process between the Congress party and the other religious groups and communities. Communalism emerged as a mere reaction to secularist principles in the state. Even most of the Indian politicians and bourgeoisie failed to accept secularism even though it was formally included in the Constitution.

It was never easy to translate the Constitutional ideals into practise in a complex country like India. The Congress party was not really as secular as it stated to be. Few members of the Congress also allegedly practised communal politics. Nehru believed as education, science and technology spread, Indian society would become more secular and rational. However, the picture of India was very different from what Nehru envisaged. The masses lacked education at the primary level and science and technology was also limited to the elite sections or the upper caste groups in society. There was inequality everywhere. Even the education system was trapped under the influence of communalism. For instance, the text books were a source of communal

divide. The ruling classes wanted to mobilize votes on the basis of their own respective communities and they also started practising the old British policy of ‘divide and rule’. The Indian democracy never could oust communalism, rather it was supported by communal forces.

17.4.2 Communalism and Vote Bank Politics

In India the Hindus constitute the majority while the Muslims are the largest minority groups. Tensions between these two religious communities have grown since the British rule. It was the British who tapped the cultural differences between these two communities as an instrument for the ‘divide and rule’ policy. The age-old dispute between these two religious groups further accelerated to the Partition of the country. Even the nationalist leaders during the freedom struggle couldn’t bridge the gap between the Hindus and Muslims under the one nation theory. One major reason for this has been the fight for power and electoral policies in the country. The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League were for ever divided in their battle for electorate power after independence. Communal disharmony started ever since the partition of the country and India’s independence. Religion was used as an instrument to mobilize the people to fulfil the wish of a selective few, the powerful or the elites. The ruling elites are always in a power battle and the politics of the country is nothing but divisive politics.

The major political parties like the Congress and the Janata Dal had always exploited the communal sentiments of the people for their own political motives. The Congress party from the very beginning tried to maintain a pluralistic nature which gradually reduced to nothing but vote bank politics. Secularism therefore became a medium for encouraging vote bank politics.

Among the Hindu fundamentalists, secularism is seen as a means to appease the Muslim minority groups. Many feel that it is pseudo secularism that operates within the country. Secularism promotes further communal disharmony and anti-nationalist feelings among the people. Many yet feel that after the Partition just as Pakistan adopted Islam as the state religion, India could have been declared a Hindu state.

Jawaharlal Nehru believed that the spread of education, science and technology would eventually help establish secularism and secular ideology in Indian society. But this never happened. Not all members of the Congress were secular in their mind or in practice. Education took a backseat and illiteracy became a major social problem. Education never seeped into the lower rungs of society. Caste, class, religion and linguistic inequalities never withered away, rather heightened. Even the text books taught in schools were sources of communal divide. The ruling classes,

the political and economic elites were always trying to secure votes on the basis of compartmentalization of society.

There was a strong propaganda against Nehruvian secularism which was shown as a sham and meant for creating Muslim vote bank. Protests were flared against the separate Muslim personal law which allowed the Muslims to marry more than once while the Hindus had to strictly adhere to monogamy. All this developed in the light of the famous *Shah Bano* case of 1985 that further went against the preaching of secularism. In the *Shah Bano* case the Supreme Court gave its decision in favour of a divorced Muslim woman *Shah Bano* who moved the court seeking maintenance from her divorced Husband. This was against the Muslim personal law. The decision of the Supreme Court was given in her favour under section 125 of the CrPC. This was seen as an interference in the Shariah Law. In 1986, the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister was forced to change the law for the Muslims. Soon an Act was passed called the Muslim Women (Protection on Divorce) Act which made section 125 of CrPC inapplicable to Muslims. This was met with severe criticism and a blow to the Congress's secularist policies. The BJP as the opposition demanded implementation of the Uniform Civil Code. The Congress made yet another blunder. In order to appease the Right wing Hindu fundamentalists, after the passing of the Muslim Bill, Rajiv Gandhi opened the doors of the Babri Masjid for the Hindus to worship Ram. The location of the Babri Mosque was believed to be Ayodhya, the birth place of Ram. This led to the Ramjanmabhoomi and Babri Masjid controversy followed by communal riots and violence in the country. Large number of communal riots broke out in the 1980s. The Anti-Sikh riots started after the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi by her Sikh body guards. More than four thousand Sikhs were killed in the massacre. Hence the belief that strengthened was that secularism doesn't fit into the country

17.4.3 The Issues of the Majority and Minority

The issue of majority versus minority holds a lot of significance to one's cultural, social and political identity in the country. India has two major religious groups, the Hindus who are the majority and considered to be the early inhabitants of the land and the Muslims who are the largest minority group within the country. Apart from that there are other religious groups like Christians, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Jains and Persis who form insignificant minorities. These groups are insignificant due to their numbers. The Indian state is found to patronize some religious groups by giving them minority status, which is again a distinctive character of Indian secularism. The Constitution has always tried to preserve the rights of religious minority groups and safeguarded their own religious and educational institutions yet

the Indian state is often accused of its incapability to promote tolerance and harmony among different religious groups.

Secularism is a means of uniting the vast differences that exist in Indian society in terms of primordial loyalties. Religion, caste, ethnic groups, linguistic communities are myriad and divided within the country. There is a vast difference between the majority groups who are also the dominant cultural groups of society and the minority sections of society. A major threat or attack on secular values comes from its support of the minority groups or the weaker sections of society like the Muslims, Dalits, women and even the adivasis. Such groups also face social exclusion from the mainstream communities. Today there is a new period of crisis where the issue of majority is not just socially or politically ascendant in India, but it holds secularism where the protection of religious minorities is getting shattered. Religion and politics seem intertwined in South Asian countries including India and hence western concept of democracy in India shows that political instabilities and ethnic tensions are part of the process of nation-building. However apart from religion, other forms of discrimination and marginalization on the basis of language, caste and gender also curtail secular thinking. Rowena Robinson mentions that failure of secularism must be traced to several factors and their amalgamation including the weakness of states and their unwillingness to stand by secularist principles. She writes that prejudices and social exclusion and their complexities are often injected into society. Terms like secularism and affirmative action means that the majority are threatened by the loss of their power and privilege and tends to indulge in violent reactions⁹.

17.5 Conclusion

The limitations of secularism could be felt with the growing religious and cultural discontents in the 1980s and 1990s. At this time there was also the rise of Hindu Nationalism which further challenged the existence of secularism over religious fundamentalism. Hindu nationalists are of the opinion that India is the land of Hindus and it is the land of their ancestors. The Muslims and Christians were considered outsiders and hence 'the other'. Starting from the 1970s, to the 1980s and 1990s India seethed with anger along communal lines. Communal violence and mass killings of minority groups backed by political parties collaborated to the rise of a powerful Hindu Nationalism. Along with this and rising ethnic conflicts debates started centering around the concept of secularism. Scholars were divided in their views on secularism. On the one hand T.N Madan and Ashis Nandy criticized secularism for being ill-fitted and out of place. They believed that in South Asia religion could be pushed into

the private domain. On the other hand there were scholars like Rajiv Bhargava Bharucha and Vanaik for whom secularism should be a fundamental principle of state policy if unity and integrity has to be achieved¹⁰. There were several questions on the rights of minorities and also multiculturalism. Secularism started being studied in the light of religious fundamentalism. The *Hindutva* ideology started moulding the people by institutionalizing them in their everyday lives. In schools, homes, public sphere, *Hindutva* was gaining prominence. People were made to believe in hatred for the other religious groups and took the other religious communities as outsiders. Co-habitation of different religions together all of a sudden became unacceptable. The Hindus were made to believe that Muslims were encroaching in their every life, drawing benefits from the government. Religious festivals, celebrations, *Godmen*, religious books, pilgrimage became instrumental in creating religious divide within the country.

The Godhra riots are the biggest instance of the growing *Hindutva* power. The *Hindutva* movement gradually leads to the emergence of new cults, organizations and movements. There is a growing relationship between Hindu religiosity and Hindu nationalism. Those who stand against this new found Hindu nationalism are termed as Anti Nationalists. The notion of secularism is under much threat along with the ideals of democracy. The recent abolition of Article 370 stripped Kashmir of its special status is an example of anti-secular forces in the country. Kashmir had always been a major controversial communal subject ever since independence. The move of the BJP government to abolish the famous Article 370 from Kashmir was another biggest anti-secular change. It was supported by the Hindu masses at large. The Kashmiris lost their own identity due to curbing of fundamental rights, speeches and expressions.

17.6 Summary

There is a growing curtailment of fundamental rights, speeches and expressions. Kashmiris are forced under curfew and politicians are forcefully driven under house arrest. The media have been blacked out. All these are questioning the role of secular democracy in India today. Recent times have also seen a new trend of Hindu Nationalism where it is equated with the *Bharat Mata* concept¹¹. The Hindus are the real sons of *Bharat*. There have been lynching of minorities over beef eating, worship of Ram and *Gau Mata* are almost forced upon all sections of a heterogeneous Hindu community. The secular academic institutions are also under constant threat and challenge. The Intelligentsia, people with communist ideologies,

the media's independent form are all being shattered. On the whole anti-secularism is on the rise and its basis lies in tramping the freedom and liberty of the citizens. Secularism still remains one of the most contested and disapproved ideas of Indian democracy. Indian secularism on the one hand means withdrawal of the state from any religion while on the other hand the state never refrains from interfering in religious issues. This has not gone down well with the nation and is believed to be anti-sectarian. As a reaction, the recent political system shows a serious crisis to secularist principles that have been laid in the Constitution. Anti-secularism also implies anti-democratic forces in the country and a challenge to national freedom of the citizens. Hence secularism has become a biggest challenge for Indian democracy as well as for the people in their everyday lives.

17.7 Questions

I. Answer in detail:

- a. What do you understand by secularism and what is the significance of secularism in India?
- b. Explain the crisis faced by secularism in India.
- c. What is the problem of communalism? How is it relevant in the context of Indian secularism?

II. Answer briefly:

- a. Write a note on communalism in India.
- b. What is the issue of majority and minority in the context of secularism in India?
- c. What do you understand by anti-secularism?

III. Answer very briefly:

- a. Define secularism.
- b. What is meant by Hindu nationalism?
- c. Explain vote-bank politics.

17.8 Suggested Readings

1. Bhargava Rajeev. 2008. Secularism in *Rajeev Bhargava and Ashok Acharya* (eds). Political Theory: An Introduction. New Delhi. Pearson

2. Bilgrami, Akeel. 2014. *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment*. Harvard University Press. JSTOR
3. Engineer, Ashgar Ali et al. 2002. *Sowing Hate and Reaping Violence: The Case of Gujrat Communal Carnage*. Mumbai. Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism.
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5. Robinson R and Upadhyay Surya Prakash. 2014. Religion and Cultural Pluralism in *Yogendra Singh(ed.) Indian Sociology (vol 3): Identity, Communication and Culture*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press
6. Robinson, Rowena. 2017. The Politics of Religion and Faith in South Asia. *Society and Culture in South Asia*. 3(2)vii-xx
7. Sen Amartya. 1996. Secularism and its Discontent in *Basu, K Subhramahnyam S. Unravelling the Nation: Sectarian conflict and India's Secular identity*. Penguin Books

17.9 Endnotes

1. Bhargava Rajeev. 2008. Secularism in Rajeev Bhargava and Ashok Acharya (eds). *Political Theory: An Introduction*. New Delhi. Pearson. P. 275
2. Sen Amartya. 1996. Secularism and its Discontent in Basu, K Subhramahnyam S. *Unravelling the Nation: Sectarian conflict and India's Secular identity*. Penguin Books. P. 294
3. Robinson R and Upadhyay Surya Prakash. 2014. *Religion and Cultural Pluralism in Yogendra Singh (ed.) Indian Sociology (vol 3): Identity, Communication and Culture*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press. P. 346
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5. Ibid.
6. Engineer, A. Ali et al. 2002. *Sowing Hate and Reaping Violence: The Case of Gujrat Communal Carnage*. . Mumbai. Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism
7. Ibid.
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10. Ibid. 346
11. Robinson, Rowena. 2017. *The Politics of Religion and Faith in South Asia. Society and Culture in South Asia.* 3(2)vii-xx

17.10 Glossary

Secularism - It is a political concept whereby the state policies are kept away from religion.

Hindutva - It is an ideology that sought to define Hindu culture as a way of life popularized by the RSS and the BJP.

Nation-State - It is an independent state which consists of people who share common identity and culture.

Religious Fanaticism - It is a state of extreme devotion or enthusiasm towards ones own religion.

Communalism - It is a system whereby people of one religious community holds strong allegiance towards ones own religion.

Hindu Nationalism - It is an ideology based on the belief that India belongs to the Hindus and is the land of their ancestors where all other religious groups like the Muslims and Christians are considered 'outsiders'.

Unit 18 □ Nationalism: Concept, Growth and Challenges

Structure

- 18.1 Objectives**
- 18.2 Introduction**
 - 18.2.1 Meaning of Nationalism**
 - 18.2.2 Historical Development of Nationalism**
- 18.3 Features of Nationalism**
 - 18.3.1 Nationalism in Debates and Discourses**
- 18.4 Nationalism in India**
 - 18.4.1 Indian Nationalism and its Challenges**
 - 18.4.1.1 Regionalism**
 - 18.4.1.2 Communalism**
 - 18.4.1.3 Fragmented Nationalism**
- 18.5 Conclusion**
- 18.6 Summary**
- 18.7 Questions**
- 18.8 Suggested Readings**
- 18.9 End Notes**
- 18.10 Glossary**

18.1 Objectives

- To understand and comprehend the meaning of nationalism.
- To learn about the historical development of the idea of nationalism.
- To learn about the various features that describe the concept of nationalism.
- To understand nationalism through various academic debates and discourses.
- To learn about the growth of nationalism in India.
- To understand the various challenges of Indian nationalism that act as impediments to the concept.
- To critically reflect upon the concept of nationalism in India.

18.2 Introduction

Nationalism is a term associated with nation building or nationhood. The term is used as a popular usage with the coming of modernity starting from western Europe and spreading to other parts of the globe. Nationalism is a term full of multiple connotations. It is based upon one nation theory backed by concepts like state, citizenship, democracy, civil society etc. It is also a medium uniting the masses under one absolute state. Nationalism has many dimensions. The concept has emerged with the course of modern society and soon became widespread worldwide. However, nationalism has multiple meanings. On the one hand nationalism tries to evoke nationalist or patriotic sentiments towards one imaginary body, the nation, while on the other hand, nationalism becomes responsible in triggering other social issues like fragmented nationalism, multiculturalism, pluralism etc.

This unit tries to understand the meaning of nationalism and to trace the historical development of the concept, its origin in western Europe and its meaning in the history of Indian nation building. The unit also attempts to find out the challenges to the growth of nationalism in India.

18.2.1 Meaning of Nationalism

Nationalism is one of the most intriguing features of modern society. Nationalism emerges out of the feeling of oneness with the nation-state to which one belongs. It implies that people with a distinct language, religion, race or ethnicity, traditions and customs are united under one demarcated geographical territory. This demarcated territory provides a unique identity to its inhabitants - the national identity. This sovereign territory is also a political community and is called a nation.

Several historians, political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists have tried to understand the concept of nationalism from their own perspectives. According to political scientists, nationalism reflects a political sentiment of the people. In this case, a nation becomes a political community whereby its citizens or inhabitants are all closely bound together within the state, abiding common laws and government and its citizens are believed to be culturally, ethnically and linguistically one homogeneous population.

Nationalism is an ideology which is attached to the idea of nation or nationhood. A nation can be defined as people who live in a specific defined territory where people have some unity, shared political interests, aspirations and a shared history. This means that nations should be built out of individual states and each state should represent a nationality. People within a nation are ruled by one political organization

and they hold allegiance to the same. The citizens should enjoy equal rights and be looked after by the nation-state. No nation should be subjugated by other nation-states. People of one nation often want to glorify their nation through one common national language, national emblem, national anthem.

Arnold Toynbee understands nationalism as something which is subjective and creates psychological feeling in people. For Alfred D. Garcia nationalism is more about feeling for one's own country and developing suspicious feelings for outsiders. For Hans Kohn, it is a state of mind for the people who are united under one nation state seen as an ideal political organization. According to historians like Romila Thapar, nationalism did not emerge in the ancient times. A nation is different from a state and government. A state can be ruled by different forms of government. Nationalism arises from the concept of nation. It is related to the different aspects of the state like democracy, territoriality and power. It represents the values and culture of the people residing within the sovereign territory of the state. A nation is never ruled by the rulers. A nation is a representation of the democratic process. In order to understand the concept of nationalism one should look at the historical premise to recognize the development of the concept.

18.2.2 Historical Development of Nationalism

Nationalism originated in western Europe in the late 18th and early 19th century. Prior to that in the ancient and medieval era, people were unknown about the sentiment of the nation. The loyalties of the people were solely restricted to their own territories, the village or the city. Even during the time of the Roman Empire in Europe the nation-state concept failed to emerge. Feudalism was detrimental to the rise of nationalism. Under feudalism the serfs or the subordinate groups in society were ruled by the feudal lords or the vassals. The feudal system developed over land as the primary economic asset. The feudal system was also a vertical power structure starting from the monarchy. All this prevented the formation of a centralized political community in medieval Europe. There were no rules of residence or citizenship in those days. Politics, administration, law and culture were all decentralized. There were differences in language or dialects spoken across Europe along with social practices, local customs and traditions. All these factors prevented the growth of a large homogeneous culture which was crucial for the development of modern nationalism.

The demise of the Roman Empire and the Hundred years of war between the English and the French paved the way for the rise of the first nations in Europe around the 14th century. The feudal system further collapsed or weakened with the rise of Absolute monarchies like the Tudor dynasty in England and the Bourbon dynasty in France.

Religious domination also subsided. This was a time when the new mercantile classes engaged in trade and commerce were growing in strength. With the rise of merchant capitalism and trade, there was the emergence of capitalism in modern Europe. The religious reformation also started in the 15th century. The monarchy started losing their control over the people. They remained confined within their own territories exercising their rule over a standardized set of people. They maintained strict rules, observed religion, education and language and maintained standing armies. Their aim was to have absolute power over their subjects. This had a far-reaching impact in the early periods of modernity in Europe. This gave rise to the absolute state which possessed sovereignty, centralized government and fixed territorial boundaries.

Nationalism grew out of the emergence of a centralized modern state in the 16th and 17th century Europe. The Renaissance and reformation had their own roles to play in cultivating feelings of national identity. One cannot forget the ideals of French Revolution and the slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity, all of which got associated with the modern nation-state.

The modern state is structurally and functionally very different from the pre-modern states. This is because the modern states are not only centralized but also have undivided political power unlike the medieval period where political power was fragmented and divided among different rulers. The modern state possesses the characteristic of sovereignty which means complete undivided power over one's demarcated territory and also nationalist feelings and sentiments. These historical events help us understand the notion of nationalism. The concept of nation graduated from such absolute rule by the monarchy. A nation meant sharing of one culture, one language and a homogeneous ethnic community united within a state. The newly emerging elites or the bourgeoisie soon started cultivating the feeling of nationalism. This was a time when the bourgeoisie rose to power dominating the representative assemblies and parliament in western Europe. The idea of the 'nation' became very significant as a sense of identity for the bourgeoisie. The Industrial Revolution of the 18th century started uniting the bourgeoisie under nationalism. They started looking for greater political power under the modern states. The French Revolution of 1789 was an example of the mass revolts that started taking place against the despotic rule of the absolute monarchies. All these revolts that became widespread across western Europe took place along nationalistic lines and the elites controlled the leadership of the national movements. Soon the absolutist states started transforming themselves into the new democratic states.

Both nationalism and liberalism emerged simultaneously. Soon from a political philosophy, nationalism started concentrating on the economy. The Industrial

Revolution that began in western Europe provoked the European states to engage in lucrative trade and look for market across the globe. Soon trade was followed by colonialism in other parts of the world include Asia, Africa and Latin American countries. Under the new system of colonialism, the focus and identity of the respective European nations shifted to forming colonies in other parts of the world which will help them grow as a nation economically as well as politically. The mission was also to civilize the other so called uncivilized parts of the world. These countries were then colonized by the capitalist countries of western Europe and consequentially got through their own struggle for freedom and nationalism.

As Benedict Anderson said, the doctrine of nationalism was inadvertently ‘exported’ to Latin America, Asia and Africa by European colonial powers. The national liberation movements in the colonies were also started by the elites, the foreign educated middle classes who became the new leaders of the colonized nation and stood opposite to imperialism. The colonized countries soon started mass movements for independence. These movements in the colonies rapidly created a wave of decolonization across the world after the World War II. Shortly they emerged as newly independent nation-states.

18.3 Features of Nationalism

There are several features of nationalism. Every nation should have an identity of its own. This identity is built out of individuality and the ability to take one’s own decision for its citizens. A nation should have the right of governance. Every nation wants to be independent and sovereign, it should have full right over its people and the territory which it abounds. A nation would always protect its citizens from outside attacks physically, economically and politically. Nationalism is like an inspiration for the people. People love to glorify their nation. It is like worshiping God. Nationalism can give rise to heroism or altruism towards the nation. Nationalists would sacrifice their lives for the nation and their fellow countrymen. Nationalism also encourages people to preserve their own culture and heritage. People are proud of their national culture which is yet another source of one’s identity. Nationalism with its origin also develops two concepts like liberty and equality along with democracy. People of one nation feel united and equal under their national territory. They are integrated through nationalistic feelings and patriotism. Heightened nationalism can curb feelings of exclusion, separation and social differences with a nation-state.

Feelings of nationalism always grow out of a common geographical territory. Territoriality is another major feature of nationalism. Even a heterogeneous population

residing in one territory will share mutual feelings and cooperation through exchange of culture. So geographical proximity or closeness always promotes nationalism. People of same nationality often share a common historical background. A common history with a common religion, race or ethnic background can help to cultivate feelings of nationalism easily. People within the same nation are often bounded by some common interests. Nationalism can be boosted with a strong common government and political interests of the people. Over all nationalism is a subjective phenomenon.

While there are several positive features of nationalism, the concept is often used in the negative light. There are humanists like Rabindranath Tagore and others who have laid the criticisms of nationalism. For Tagore nationalism is nothing but an organized self-interest of some people. Nationalism can also be called fictitious where some promote their own interests at the expense of the masses. Nationalism is utilized by the privileged and the powerful people for their own gains. Too much nationalism can lead to intolerance towards other nations or even within the nation. People often discriminate among themselves in terms of race, caste, class, religion under the garb of nationalism and anti-nationalism. There is often exploitation and social exclusion of the minorities by the majorities within the nation. All these are against the basic ideology of nationalism.

18.3.1 Nationalism in Debates and Discourses

Nationalism is an abstract concept. There have been various debates and discourses on what constitutes nationalism- Eric Hobsbaum in his book '*Nations and Nationalism since 1780*' (1990) spoke about a correlation between history and nationalism. Several historical phenomena played important role in creation of nationalism which not only included the elite communities but also the less privileged sections of society. Nationalism unites the dominant classes or the bourgeoisie and creates a false sense of community between them and masses in the face of exploitation of the latter by capitalist forces.

British social anthropologist Ernest Gellner in his book '*Nations and Nationalism*' (1983) had related nationalism to a new kind of society which was born out of the womb of an old society. In this kind of society, every individual shared a common culture, history and education and a common law and order. Gellner in his work discussed about the cultural factors that helped shape nationalism. Nationalism for Gellner was a congruence between culture and power. For Gellner, nationalism had gained political legitimacy because of the cultural factors of nationalism. Gellner observed that it was not the nations that created nationalism but nationalism created nations. Nationalism developed to fulfil the needs of the modern industrial society and was not conducive for the social organization of agrarian society. The modern

industrial economies were in need of a workforce that was beyond the scope of an agrarian society ruled by family and kinship ties. According to Gellner the nation-state concept emerged to suit the needs of the capitalist economy by providing a common education system integrated by one language and within a centralized political and economic system. Education therefore played an important role in imbuing nationalist feelings among the people in modern society.

Nationalism can be spread through widespread universal literacy among the people. A shared high culture can communicate feeling of nationalism in industrial societies. For Gellner the cultural homogeneity is useful for industrial societies in many ways. Unlike the tribal societies, which were stateless, industrial societies need to educate the masses in a culture that is free from familial or corporate ties. Nationalism is therefore the only means of social cohesion. Echoing Gellner's notion Aijaz Ahmad argues how nationalism is a stage of transition from traditional societies to modern societies.

Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (1983) has stated that nationalism is 'imaginary'. It is a shared experience by the people of a nation-state. According to Anderson, nations are imagined because they are not the products of shared language, race or religion. Rather they are created out of imagination and with the help of the technology of print media.

"The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion...regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived of as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is the fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people...". This is how nationalism in Europe and America have provided a model for the rest of the world.

Rabindranath Tagore on the contrary has never supported the ideal of nationalism. He has also been criticized as an anti-nationalist during his time. For Tagore, the concept of nation is associated with the 'nation-state' and is an instance of the western societies. A nation or as per Tagore can be defined in terms of the political and economic need fulfilment of the people. People of a nation are not bounded by ethnicity, language, religion or the like but through the politics and commerce. A nation in this sense exhibits instrumental rationality to achieve its purpose. Tagore's ideas are a contrast to the existing ideas of nation and nationalism in the 20th century. Western modernity is able to give rise to the nation-state whereby the state has full regulatory power along with science and technology. Tagore do not support nationalism, as he has taught that the nation would be greater than its people. Tagore observes that

the nation state is selfish, and it is opposed to self-sacrifice. Tagore believes that the nation-state can divide mankind. What is important is to sustain a free spirit, be self-sacrificial and encourage development of the moral and spiritual man.

18.4 Nationalism in India

Partha Chattrejee pointed out how nationalist forces started in India since 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress. Like other newly independent nation-states of Asia, Africa and Latin America, India too got its gift of nationalism from the western world, i.e., British colonialism. India is a country divided along language, religion, caste and ethnicity. Colonialism had played a major role in cultivating nationalist feelings in India. For Indians, nationalism came into force through the anti-colonial movement.

However right after independence, the newly found nation was doomed under the ills of society like poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, corruption and a large population to deal with. Instead of uniting under one nation, the country was divided along language, religion, region and the caste system.

Indian Nationalism has always been the narrative of the elites in society and the colonial rulers. It fails to capture the perspectives of the lesser-known subalterns, the peasants, the middle class and others. It also fails to uphold the regional variations and their stories of nationalism.

Nationalism has been seen as the power politics of state formation. Nationalism and nation-state are perceived as modern phenomena and creation of modern politics. This nationalism is a problematic concept. Earlier writings of sociology seldom concentrated on nationalism or nation building. However, in between the emergent crisis of communalism and liberalism there have been rising ethnic resurgences in every part of the world which have altered the meaning of nationalism. The ambiguity of nationalism can be gauged from the fact that “nationalism may refer to the doctrine or ideology of an aspiring class or to the political orientation of a state, or to a praiseworthy sentiment of attachment to one’s own nation or state...Both as ideology and movement the concept could be used either in speaking of a state or group or ethnic communities or a single ethnic community”.

Indian nationalism from its very inception was divided along sectarian lines. For instance, the country saw several protests and rebellions by the lower caste groups against the upper castes. The British rule fostered national feelings among the upper caste groups, the Brahmins and the other dwija or twice born castes. On the one hand, the Brahmins and upper castes dominated the nationalist movement and on the

other hand they were in support of the British Raj for their own personal gains. The dominant cultural groups, namely the upper castes helped create political consciousness. The English educated middle class gradually led to the emergence of the Nationalist movement. Side by side, there were other rebellions, movements and uprisings mostly by the lower caste groups taking shape. With the Indian National Congress taking the charge, the national movement had emerged while all other movements, rebellions and uprisings were merely communal movements. There was also an attempt of homogenizing culture. However, the process of homogenization of culture had a toiling effect on Indian nationalism. Indian nationalism was also a false consciousness so far as the masses were concerned. This was because the Hindu and Muslim dominant groups were battling for their own distinct ideas on nation and claimed exclusivity of their own respective communities.

Nationalism at one point had also become nothing but Hindu nationalism. All this started with the revival or reforming Brahmanism through the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and the Theosophical societies. This too became a part of the national renaissance. The emergence of Hinduism was at once Brahmanical and national because this new avatar of Hinduism also dominated Indian nationalism by developing a pan-Indian character. But acquiring a pan-Indian nationalism was difficult for India because people had to accept that India was composed of several nations, nationalities in terms of cultural groups, castes, communities, tribes and linguistic groups. However, this was unacceptable to the British as well as the upper caste elite nationalists. Effort was made to bring India under one uniform administration. Once India secured independence, the problems of nationalism became more complicated. Communalism had penetrated the subcontinent since the British policy of Divide and Rule. This was further exaggerated by the Nationalist leaders for their own interests. India got divided into India and Pakistan while Kashmir got a special status through the Article 370. Communal violence neither ceased to exist. All this further led to several challenges to Indian nationalism.

18.4.1 Indian Nationalism and its Challenges

The major challenge to Indian nationalism comes from the problems of culture, ethnicity and identity. Indian nationalism faces threat from regionalism, communalism, anti-secularism, fragmented nationalism in terms of ethnic nationalism, tribal nationalism and Hindu nationalism.

18.4.1.1 Regionalism

Regionalism in India is rooted in its rich diversity of linguistic, caste, ethnic and religious groups. Regionalism rises from the feeling of integration with one's own region often fueled out of regional deprivation. Regionalism also comes with strong

shared collective identities with a particular region. Regionalism has become a major impediment to nationalism in India. It can be seen as a contradiction to nationalism or nationalist feelings. India is culturally diverse. Each region is fragmented in terms of language, religion, ethnicity and culture. The government's futile effort to impose a particular ideology, language or cultural pattern over the people at large comes as a threat to their own regional identity. Ever since independence, ethnic mass mobilisations have been common in the country revolving around the creation of states.

In the minority areas, economic, social and political deprivation over accentuates feelings of regionalism against the nationalist feeling. Political parties for their own gains at times concentrate on one particular region. Regional disparities are common among states which undergo uneven pattern of development specially, the BIMARU states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are the common examples of this case. Of late, India has gone through the worst forms of regional disturbances. Several disparity issues in terms of language and ethnicity have led to separation of states or the demand for separate state. The Khalistan movement has emerged in Punjab as a separatist movement with the demand for a separate autonomous state. There has also been the creation of three new states- Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal after regional battles. There is also the dispute over Bodoland in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

Regionalism is anti-national. At times it can give rise to militants and terrorists. Regionalism is therefore a very big threat and challenge to national unity of the nation. Regionalism can lead to separatism or even secessionist movements. Regionalism leads to confrontation with the state whereby a particular region often seeks autonomy from state control at times leading to secession. This happens when regional identity takes over national identity. Separatism is common in regions which are economically or politically deprived and exploited. Such regions feel a sense of detachment from the nation. Regional identity is a big threat to national integrity. In India the state of Jammu and Kashmir was a very big example of separatism. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front has been one of the separatist organizations.

18.4.1.2 Communalism

Communalism has a long history in India since the time of the British rule. The Hindus are the majority religious group while the Muslims are the biggest minority in the country. Communalism means when one religious group consider themselves to be superior vis-a-vis other religious groups. They are also engaged in social, economic, political and cultural conflict with other religious groups. Bipan Chandra categorized communalism as national communalism, liberal communalism and extreme

communalism. All these three forms could be found in India during its freedom struggle. Communalism also leads to communal politics. Communal politics are often sustained by political parties for their own interest. This again goes against the policy of secularism and democracy. In case of India, there is a rising force of Hindu nationalism whereby nationalism is perceived as a Hindu prerogative. Hindu nationalism had started ever since the nationalist movement which also became the source of national identity. Hindus always perceived the Muslim minorities as outsiders. This simultaneously led to communal tensions and violence between these two religious groups since Indian independence. On the other hand, secularism in India is also complicated enough to make the situation complex. Anti secular forces try to create frenzy among the masses against the state. The popular notion is that Indian secularism is a sham which tries to shield the interest of the minorities at the cost of the majority. Various anti-secular forces have paved the way through democratic ideals and nationalism.

18.4.1.3 Fragmented Nationalism

Indian nationalism is of a pluralistic nature and hence fragmented. While the anti-colonial nationalists were focusing on one nation and one culture, nationalism was actually fragmented at the local level. Apart from the larger national identity, in the post-colonial societies a kind of sub nationalism is invoked. This is called cultural nationalism¹⁰. The minority groups are often threatened by the superiority of the majority population. The nationalist movement itself was seen as an elitist movement which involved only the upper caste, educated, Hindu nationalists. The Muslim leaders also faced discrimination in the hands of the majority Hindu nationalists (The formation of the Muslim League called for a different nationalist struggle). The sectarian trend of nationalist movement can be perceived from Partha Chatterjee's work *Nation and its Fragments* (1999) which noted how the organized political parties of the anti-colonial movement wanted to replace the colonial state with a bourgeois state while the peasant politics that were on the rise at that time "did not fit into the grid of interests and aggregation of interests that constituted the world of bourgeois representative politics"¹¹. Even in post-colonial India, the political leaders chose a fragmented politics and nation building whereby majority and minority communities are divided in terms of primordial identities like language, religion, region and tribes¹².

In today's globalized world the meaning of nationalism is also transforming. People are reverting back to their ethnic roots. Large scale migration across transnational borders have increased fear of the existence of one's own culture and ethnicity in the multi-cultural world. This has also resulted in ethnocentrism and xenophobia. Nationalist sentiments of the people also come under threat. People no longer believe

in one nation one identity theory. There is increased tension between cultures where national policies centre around the one cultural group while the other groups (minorities) are discontented.

In India there is the emergence of *Hindi Cultural Nationalism* promoted by the RSS. There is an effort to homogenize the masses in a different kind of ethnic (in this case Hindi) nationalism by consumption of cultural products. This also shatters the federal democratic structure of the country. The belief is that India is a nation of the Hindus which in term is a religion of tolerance and hence should be an integral part of the national culture. This type of nationalism shuns the minority Muslim, Sikh and Tribal nationalism.

18.5 Conclusion

This chapter has tried to discuss the meaning of nationalism in modern society and its meaning and implications in modern India. There is a lot of ambiguity revolving round the concept of nationalism. It is a major feature of the modern democratic state. But in the post industrialized world nationalism as a concept needs to be revisited. In a country like India the fervour of nationalism often feels like a promulgated idea of the state.

18.6 Summary

In contemporary times, nationalism emerges as the most contested ideas. The image of nation-state that becomes prevalent at the advent of modernity, uniting and building solidarity among the people of a state, is changing. Nation-states built around ideas of democratic governance is holding less and less significant today. Simultaneously ethnocentric ideas are on the rise across the world. The welfare concept of the modern state with its nationalist ideals are also dwindling. People are losing their trust on the nation. In case of India, the rise of *Hindutva* movement in modern times and its mass support is a clear example of the crisis faced by nationalistic idealism. At this critical juncture one needs to re examine the whole gamut of nationalism in the new political, social and cultural space.

18.7 Questions

I. Answer in detail

- a. Explain the historical development of the idea of nationalism.
- b. What is meant by nationalism? Discuss briefly the features of nationalism
- c. How will you explain the growth of nationalism in India?
- d. What according to you are the various challenges to the idea of nationalism in India?

II. Answer briefly

- a. How has regionalism become a challenge to nationalism in India? Give examples.
- b. What do you understand by fragmented nationalism?

III. Answer very briefly

- a. What is a nation?
- b. Who gave the concept of the 'Imagined Community'?
- c. What is meant by Hindu Nationalism?

18.8 Suggested Readings

1. Aloysius, G. 1997. *Nationalism without a Nation in India*. New Delhi :Oxford University Press
2. Chatterjee, Partha. 1999. The Nation and its Fragments:Colonial and Post colonial Histories in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press
3. Thapar, Romila, Noorani, A.G, Menon Sadanand. 2019. *Prasanga Jatiyatabad*. (Translated by Asim Chattopadhyay). Kolkata: Setu Prakashani

18.9 Endnotes

1. Aloysius, G. 1997. *Nationalism without a Nation in India*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press: 15
2. "The influential Marxist scholar Aijaz Ahmad understands nationalism in a manner similar to Ernest Gellner when he argues that nationalism may be a stage in the

- often painful transition of traditional societies to modernity” (Kumar, Sunalini. 2008 in *Rajeev Bhargava and Ashok Acharya* (eds). *Political Theory: An Introduction*. New Delhi. Pearson: 267)
3. Chatterjee, Partha. 1999. The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post colonial Histories in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press
 4. Collins Michael. 2008. Rabindranath Tagore and Nationalism: An Interpretation in Heidelberg Papers in *South Asian and Comparative Politics*. No 42
 5. Aloysius, G. 1997. *Nationalism without a Nation in India*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press
 6. Ibid. 8
 7. Ibid. 11
 8. Ibid. 104
 9. Ibid. 112-113
 10. Athreya, A 2016. Cultural Nationalism in India. *Anthropol.* 4: 165 doi :10.4172/2332-0915.1000165
 11. Chatterjee, P. 1999. The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post colonial Histories in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press: 159
 12. Ibid. 224

18.10 Glossary

Civil Society - It is a community of citizens, a collective entity that exists for specific and limited purposes. Civil society is separate and independent of the State.

Citizenship - T.H Marshall in *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950) defined citizenship as ‘full and equal membership in a political community’. It holds the promise of equality and integration within the political community.

Communalism - Communalism is a political ideology whereby one's own religious and ethnic community is considered superior to all other minority groups in society. It often promotes intolerance and hatred of one religious group against the other.

Democracy - It is a form of government where the common people take part in decision making process through their elected representatives. Democracy is based upon consent of individuals who form the political community.

Imagined Community - Imagined community is a concept developed by Benedict

Anderson in his book “Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism” (1983) which he used to explain the idea of a nation. Anderson noted that the nation is imagined by the people who share a sense of communion even though they have not seen or met each other. People of a nation imagine belonging to the same collectivity with its history, trait, beliefs and attitudes.

Liberalism - Liberalism is a broad political ideology that promotes the ability of people to make meaningful choices whereby the individuals are free from external coercion of the State.

Nationalism - It is a broad term, an ideology or a movement that seeks to establish the concept of nation-state.

Nation - Nation refers to a united political community who’s people share that same cultural, linguistic, ethnic and racial history.

Regionalism - It is an ideology or political movement that enhances the causes of a particular region within the nation-state. Regionalism especially in India is often seen as against national integration and challenges the legitimacy of the State.

State - State is a political organization which has complete authority over its population within a specific territory and a government.

Sovereignty - The theory of sovereignty looks upon the State as an absolute structure of power and authority over its land and people.

Unit 19 □ Regionalism: Issues and Challenges

Structure

- 19.1 Objectives**
- 19.2 Introduction**
- 19.3 Regionalism: The Meaning**
 - 19.3.1 Characteristics of Regionalism**
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19.1 Objectives

This unit will help you —

- To explain the concept and characteristics of regionalism.
- To find out the causes, forms and dimensions of regionalism.
- To get an overview of the historical lineages on region and regionalism.
- To understand the linkages between gender relations and regionalism.

19.2 Introduction

Regionalism has been an important feature of Indian politics since the dawn of independence. It has posed a serious threat to the unity of India. Regionalism means love of a particular region. Regionalism refers to sub-nationalism demanding the preference for a region as against the country as a whole.

19.3 Regionalism: The Meaning

Regionalism is the extreme loyalty and love shown to a particular region. It expresses itself in such a distorted notion like development of one's own region even at the cost of interests of other regions and people, and unwillingness to allow people from other regions to work and settle in region. Regionalism militates against nationalism and delays the process of national integration. This may be characterized by the commonness of cultural, linguistic or historical and social background. According to Marachell E. Dimock, regionalism is a clustering of environment, economic, social and governmental factors to such an extent that an identity within the whole, a need for autonomous planning, a manifestation of cultural peculiarities and a desire for administrative freedom, are theoretically recognized and actually put into effect.

Regionalism can be seen as an ideology that seeks to advance the causes of regions. But it is necessary, at the very outset, to distinguish two quite different meanings of the term regionalism. At the international level, regionalism refers to transnational cooperation to achieve a common goal or resolve a shared problem or it refers to a group of three countries, such as western Europe, the western Balkans, or southeast Asia, that are linked by geography, history or economic features. Used in this sense, regionalism refers to reinforce the links between these countries. Today, the foremost example of such an attempt is the European Union (EU) (Bevir, 2009). To some scholars, regionalism in Indian politics in generally has been regarded as something that is anti-system, anti-federal and against basic interest of a well-integrated polity (Reddy and Sharma, 1979).

19.3.1 Characteristics of Regionalism

1. Regionalism is a psychic phenomenon.
2. It is built around as an expression of group identity, as well as loyalty to the region.
3. It presupposes the concept of development of one's own region without taking into consideration the interest of another region.
4. It prohibits people from other regions to be benefitted by a particular region.

19.3.2 Forms of Regionalism

Regionalism in India has assumed various forms like:

- (a) **Demand for State Autonomy:** Regionalism has often led to the demand by states for greater autonomy from the centre. Increasing interference by the centre in the affairs of the states has led to regional feelings. Demand for autonomy has also been raised by regions within some states of the Indian federation.
- (b) **Secession from the Union:** This is a dangerous form of regionalism. It emerges when states demand separation from the centre and try to establish an independent identity of their own. Disputes between states over the sharing of river water, primacy given by the states to the language of majority and to people of their own states in job opportunities have also given rise to feelings of regionalism. Migration of people from backward state to a developed state for employment opportunities have often resulted in a hostile attitude against the migrants for example, problems going on in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

19.3.3 Dimensions of Regionalism

Regionalism in India may be viewed from two dimensions – positive and negative. In positive terms regionalism embodies a quest for self-identity and self-fulfilment on the part of two domiciles of a region. In negative terms, regionalism reflects a psyche of relative deprivation on the part of people of an area not always viable in terms of national economic analysis.

It implies excessive attachment to one's region or the preference for their country or the state. In the positive sense it is a political attribute associated with people's love for their region, culture, language, etc., with a view to maintain their independent identity. While positive regionalism is a welcome thing in so far maintaining as it encourages the people to develop a sense of brotherhood and commonness on the basis of common language, religion or historical background, the negative sense regionalism is a great threat to the unity and integrity of the country. In the Indian context generally the term regionalism has been used in the negative sense. The feelings of regionalism may arise either due to the continuous neglect of a particular area or region by the ruling authorities or it may spring up as a result of increasing political awareness of backward people that have been discriminated against. Quite often some political leaders encourage the feelings of regionalism to maintain their hold over a particular area or group of people.

19.3.4 Causes of Regionalism

There are several causes of regionalism in India. These causes are discussed below.

1. **Geographical Cause:** Linguistic distribution along geographical boundaries and isolated settlement pattern induce in people the concept of regionalism. Sometimes people live, in such area which appears as a separate region cut off from the rest of the country and thereby may give rise to feelings of separatism among the inhabitants of the region.
2. **Historical Causes:** Due to historical reasons people believe that they are separate from the rest. A feeling of regionalism may develop among the people of a particular region if they believe that they have been politically dominated by the people of other regions.
3. **Economic factors:** Uneven economic development in different parts of the country may be considered as the prime reason for regionalism and separatism. There are certain regions which are economically more developed. But there are certain regions which are economically backward even after Independence. No effort has been made for regional balance in matters of industrial, agricultural and above all, economic development. This disparity has caused the feeling of relative deprivation and thereby the demand for separate states, for example, Bodoland and Telangana recently have been formed on this principle.
4. **Political and Administrative Factors:** Political parties, particularly regional parties and local leaders exploit the regional sentiments to capture power. They give emphasis on regional problems in their election manifesto and promise for regional development. This has resulted in the feeling of regionalism. The regional parties like DMK, AIADMK in Tamil Nadu and Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh were formed in this basis of principle.

19.3.5 Elimination of Regionalism

Regionalism may be a product of cultural and social differences. Following suggestions may be given for the elimination of regionalism.

1. Development of Transport and Communication

Transport and communication network should be improved so that people of a region may find it easier to visit other regions and develop friendly relations with people therein.

2. Removal of Regional Imbalance

Uneven economic development with regional imbalance has been the main cause of disgruntlement among the people of a particular region for regionalism. Hence,

effort should be made to distribute the national resources in a planned manner to mitigate the problem of regionalism.

3. Economic Development of Deprived Regions

Top priority is to be given on economic development of those regions where people have developed the feeling of relative deprivation. So that they can be drawn into the national mainstream.

4. Acculturation

The cultural distinctiveness of regional groups delimit the interaction between-different groups. Frequent cultural contacts should be promoted to break the regional barriers and to develop the nationalist spirit.

5. Abolition of Regional Parties

The regional parties which play a dirty role in exploiting the regional feelings of the people should be banned.

6. Proper Education

Education can play an important role for the promotion of national integration. It may be construed as a powerful agent for doing away with the separatist tendencies among the countrymen.

7. Appeal through Mass-Media

Mass media, particularly electronic media are powerful agents of social change. Hence, extensive effort should be made to encourage feelings of nationalism among the people through mass media communication.

19.4 Historical Lineage

Pre-independent India was a land with fragmented regions that possessed autonomy in different degree. British colonizers re-structured those regions for colonial exploitation. At the same time, privileged sections of the population responded to British colonialism in two ways. On the one hand, they adopted colonial modernity for their upward mobility. On the other hand, they questioned the colonial onslaught on their region. Thus, the notion of region in India during the period of colonialism and post-independent state was a skewed one. Regional culture persisted in a dynamic fashion even after the formation of India. In other words, various strata of people in India associated themselves with their regional cultures. At the same time, they were governed by the nation at large. Thus, the regional cultures shaped the consciousness of plural and unequal masses who were scattered throughout the country.

19.5 Regionalism in India

Regionalism as a phenomenon in the Indian political system is not new. Regionalism has remained perhaps the most potent force in Indian politics ever since 1947, if not before. Regionalism is rooted in India's manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, communities, religions and so on, and encouraged by the regional concentration of those identity markers, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. For many centuries, India remained the land of many lands, regions, cultures and traditions. The basic point that highlights in this respect is that internal self-determination of community, whether linguistic, tribal, religious, regional, or their combinations, has remained the principal form in which regionalism in India has sought to express itself, historically as well as contemporaneously. In the pre-independence period, it was applied by the British imperialist, as they intentionally encouraged the people of various regions to think in terms of their region rather than the nation as a whole, with an aim to maintain their hold over India during the national movement.

19.5.1 India after Independence

The following two processes were initiated at the dawn of Independence in India by the national leaders.

1. Integration of the country: All parts of the country were not equally integrated by the Britishers. The national leadership took effective steps to integrate the following in the national mainstream: a) The Princely states were brought under unified constitutional framework. The people of these states were no more subjected to the autocratic excesses and the tyrannies of their rulers. b) Uniform administration was gradually extended throughout the country. This was not so during the British days when a very large area of the country remained either non-administered or partially administered.
2. The entire country was uniformly democratized. This brought a change in the quality of life of the people of the Princely states of this country. (Kumar, 1998).

19.5.2 Regionalism as a Sub- State Movement

On the contrary, in its positive sense, regionalism implies an idea of searching the self-identity of the people of that particular area. In other sense, it is rather a separate demand for protecting and preserving racial, linguistic and economic interest of a group of people belonging to a nation. To be precise, regionalism is in fact, a movement of a sub-nationality against a prevailing nationality. It is often distinguished by a particular racial, linguistic or religious group settled in a particular part of the country which demands either separation or sovereignty of special constitutional, administrative,

economic or political status for themselves to the exclusion of the rights and interest of other communities and takes recourse to necessary political measures with a view to coercing the authorities accede to their demands, then that movement is certainly a regionalist movement. Hence, regionalism is the other name of distinctive and restrictive political movement having no broad based liberal and democratic elements but, in some cases, it also had a clear objective of attaining separate statehood, as in the case of Gorkhaland and Telangana. The regional movement is also considered as the 'diverse trend detrimental to national unity'. Regionalism is thus a movement against social, political and economic deprivations and it is also a movement against the hegemonic groups who are dominant in the mainstream of the country as a whole. It is important to note that regionalism in India, in its present form, has various connotations like 'provincialism' (Pratt and Sullivan, 2009), 'localism' (Salloukh and Brynen, 2004), 'son of the soil theory' (Weiner, 1978), 'disintegration of Indian states' (Wadhawan, 1997), struggle for separate statehood or provincial autonomy (Bhattacharjee, 2018), struggle for more power, especially economic power etc., whatever may be the connotations, the concept of regionalism has now become a separatist movement in different parts of India in various forms. India is now infected with regional upsurge of different kinds like geographical regionalism, linguistic regionalism, cultural regionalism, ethnic regionalism and so on.

19.5.3 Regionalism: Issue of Ethnicity and Language

The term 'ethnic' in general can be understood as a group of people who share a common culture and life style but without any homeland. An ethnic group is characterized by a multiplicity of attributes like religion, caste, region, descent, race, language, colour, culture and so on. The focus of interests of an ethnic group is to get some benefits for itself. The group often uses ethnic criteria like religion, language or caste to mobilize itself to give identity which separates it from other group or groups. There are different approaches used by different social scientists to understand the nature of ethnicity as a factor in human life and society. Examples of such approaches are: primordialism, essentialism, perennialism, constructivism, modernism and instrumentalism.

According to Lake and Rothschild (1996) ethnic conflict is a sign of a weak state or a state embroiled in ancient loyalties. In this case, states act with bias to favour a particular ethnic group or region. Therefore, in critical or difficult political situations, the effectiveness of governance is dependent on its ability to address social issues and human needs.

The continuing demand for separate state in India as argued by T.K Oommen is due to two reasons. First, even though the Indian state is conceived as a multi layered entity- a union/federal, provincial or autonomous regions, Zila parishad panchayat

hardly any authority gives to the lower three level. This prompts a demand for provincial state by regional linguistic communities, ignoring their population, size and financial viability. Second, the cultural specificity of subaltern communities is not only ignored but sought to be destroyed through their attachment to the state dominated major linguistic communities which results in the former's marginalization and alienation. He also points out that the failure of the states in India to link culture and governance systematically provides an important agenda for the society. Moreover, the recognition of language as the basis for politico administrative units has attended to the deprivation of most of the speech communities. (Oommen, 2004)

19.6 Contemporary Debates: Region and Regionalism

The existence of relative deprivation is one of the most important aspects in constructing the argument for regionalism. For instance, if the people from any particular region feel that they are more deprived than others in terms of distribution of resources, infrastructures and so on, then it may create regional affiliation. For example, Gorkha Nationalist Liberation Forum (GNLF) started its movement in Darjeeling. In the view of GNLF, Darjeeling was the most underdeveloped region in comparison to the southern part of West Bengal. This sort of sentiment to have a separate region is often manipulated by the community leaders according to their vested interests and ideological inclinations. The second significant factor for the emergence of regionalism is the issue of language and culture. Every individual's identity is based on the categories of language and culture which, once politicized, play an important role in the formation of region. According to Edward Sapir, language plays a vital role in the creation and determination of a region. Thus, the idea of region has to be explored in the context of language debates. Language is defined as the "human and non- instinctive modes of communicating ideas, feelings and desires by a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (Sapir, 1921). Consequently, the need for a region is linked to a population who converse in a particular language. Simultaneously, this premise of a particular language excludes those communities that do not deploy that language for communication (Aloysius, 2007). After Independence, the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru established the State Reorganization Committee which was amended in 1956. Paul Brass argued that it was done according to the traditional linguistic regions. For instance, current states of Gujarat and Maharashtra were formed after the bifurcation of Bombay in 1960 (Brass, 1999). State formation on the basis of language gave rise to some conflicts. For instance, the Tamil revolted against the Hindi belt showed the conflict related to languages. It was argued that language determined the assertions and struggle related to knowledge.

19.7 Linkages Between Women and Regionalism

The issues of region and regionalism have wider linkages with gender and particularly, women. But, the role of women in relationship to region and regionalism remains invisible. In fact, women's participation is seldom recognized by institutions such as state, political parties and so on due to patriarchal modes of operation in several forms. For instance, the formations of separate states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have had various political wings of women. In the recent Telangana movement in which women are protesting against the central government for a separate Telangana state from Andhra Pradesh, the participation of women is often ignored.

The movement began under the banner of Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh (CMSS) which was a trade union of manual mine workers. However, this movement was conceived during the emergency period in 1977. Trade unions emerged in Bengal Nagpur Cotton Mills at Rajnandgaon. There were other upsurges of trade unions during the same period i.e., 1984-1987. A family from Rajnandagoan owned the mill and they deployed Goondas to regulate the labourers. Goondas were even part of the core management activities related to the mills, as well as part of the newly introduced scheme for workers. Unrest of workers emerged in the form of the central trade union for Dalli Rajhara mine workers. Thus, they approached this union, known as 'Lal Hara' (Red Green), which came under Rajnandgaon Mazdoor Sangh.

After the foundation of Bhilai Steel Plant, Durg and Raipur were transformed into an industrial hub. Industrial units at Jamul (Bhilai), Urala and Siltara (Raipur), Sarkanda (Bilaspur), Tedesara (Rajnandgaon) which were part of Raipur Industrial Development (RIDA) were already appropriated into this region. Consequentially, it became a part of M.P. Industrial Development Corporation or Audyogik Kendra Vikas Nigam (AKVN). This particular region witnessed the formation of different industry. This growth was related to the incentives that were provided to Raipur Industrial Development Area.

It was argued that the major part of industrialization happened in privatized fields except public sector Bhilai Steel Plant. It had been contended that a parallel trend was the exploitation of workers through the violation of constitutional and statutory rights. Industrialization accelerated the profit and pauperized the workers and resources. More workers got affiliated to the Lal Hara trade union and it resulted in increase in its membership. Workers who suffered from the inhuman policies and activities of the industries found the aforementioned union as a platform to raise their voices. The Lal Hara trade union had different off shoots such as Pragatisheel Engineering Shramik Sangh (PESS), Chattisgarh Mill Mazdoor Sangh and Chattisgarh Shramik Sangh.

Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha which were related to rural assertions in its earlier phase. Later, it was merged with diverse unions under Red Green Platform. Industrialists and repressive state apparatus declared their solidarity to crush the assertions of workers. Leader of the movement Shankar Guha Niyogi, was assassinated during this period. Police killed 16 protesting workers in the year 1992. Some of the leaders were subjected to physical attack. Mahila Mukti Morcha was always the main aspect of Chhattisgarh Mine Shramik Sangh. In the Dalli Rajhara, where the CMSS was its origin, women formed half of the workforce. CMSS participated in the united struggle and the first strike of which was held in 1977.

Women lived under gruesome conditions in Dalli Rajhara. Women faced sexual harassment from the lumpen elements of that area. Majority of women who were sexually harassed belonged to the working class. However, women resisted such forms of exploitation. Women who were part of CMSS regions and regionalism pursued legal action against CISF jawans who raped a tribal girl. It was argued that Mahila Mukti Morcha emerged during that period (1980-81). It addressed the problems which women faced such as wife-beating, problems related to marriage, sexual harassment of women and so on. These political activities were instrumental in creating political consciousness among women. Thus, women achieved a separate platform to raise different forms of marginalities faced by them. Hence their engagement with Mahila Mukti Morcha created competencies for articulation and leadership for women. Mahila Mukti Morcha operated in the informal living places of the contractual workers and unorganized workers at Dalli Rajhara.

Women started antiliquor agitation. They picketed liquor shops and identified drunken revellers from their area. Women also demanded their rights from the administration. They demanded separate toilets for women. They also urged the authorities to take action against the disobedient men who harassed women in the cinema halls. Activists of Mahila Mukti Morcha created consciousness among women at large. Thus, they mobilized many women and empowered them. Women started participating in demonstrations due to constant efforts of those activists. They conducted elections, public programmes which attracted most of the women. Large membership was a salient feature of the Mahila Mukti Morcha.

19.8 Impact of Region on Women

The social development of a particular region affects the gender relations of that region. For instance, women are socially mobile in places such as Kerala. Development in Kerala is linked to the history of the social movements. In other words, the

movements collectively resisted oppression based on caste, gender and class which led to the upward social mobility of women in Kerala. On the other hand, states such as Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh are backward in terms of development. This is reflected in the gender indices of these states. Women still undergo different forms of oppression. 'Secession' also determines the status of women. For instance, the claims for a separate Kashmir are raised by different political groups, and by Kashmiri militants. Muslim women from Kashmir who have demanded a separate Kashmir are mobilized by the sub-regionalist/extremist politics which act as a threat to the Indian nation. Women in Kashmir are caught in the internal patriarchy of their community, bound by religion and external military apparatus. Women have raised their voice against the military apparatus as well as the impact of militancy on their lives. For instance, the rape of women which took place at Shopian showed the brutal oppression which is determined by patriarchal military apparatus, and against which many women have spoken up.

19.9 Regionalism in Indian Politics

Regionalism in Indian politics is a uniquely powerful experience, and to understand it properly we have to recognize the important factors behind it.

Geographic isolation is considered as one of the important factors. India is a very large country, but it's also a country where a lot of infrastructure is still in the process of being developed. This means that some states and communities within India are isolated from major political centres. Till transportation and communication technologies have failed to connect these communities with the rest of Indian society, the people here tend to have very strong regional identities. The nation is a pretty vague concept to many of them.

India has struggled with unequal development. While some Indian cities and states contain world-class industrial and technological centres, others are still remote, rural, and relying on outdated technologies. People's lives are different and the amount of progress is different, so regional disparities are very common.

Regionalism in India is based on the history of cultural segregation. Indian society has a long history of organizing people into castes, and when large numbers of people in the same caste live in the same area, they can develop a regional sense of belonging, especially if they feel excluded from the rest of the nation. This same phenomenon is true of religious, ethnic, and linguistic minority groups in India as well.

Finally, India's regionalism likely reflects discontentment and distrust with national politics. For people who feel like their communities or states are marginalized, ignored,

or developed unequally, they have to trust on national political leaders, national political parties, and national politics in general.

In Indian states where regionalism is strongest, state politics are dominated by regional political parties. These political parties are generally found in that state, only deal with issues of that state, and advocate for the state to find its own solutions to political problems rather than dealing with the national government.

These regional political parties have existed since Indian independence (and before), but since the 1970s they've grown continually in prominence and influence. Today, some states in India are almost entirely represented by regional political parties both at the state level and within the Indian parliament. This is especially true in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of India's parliament), where regional political parties seem to be gaining more seats every year. Not only are they gaining more seats, but they're often taking those seats from India's preeminent national political party, the Indian National Congress. This is the same party that supported both Gandhi and Nehru, the foundational figures of Indian independence and national identity. So, the rejection of the Indian National Congress by people in states progressing pro-regionalism is significant.

19.10 Conclusion

We can conclude that regionalism is triggered by following factors:

(a) Low rate of economic growth

The economic growth of India has been fluctuating since independence. But with respect to high population growth, the economic growth has been not enough to catch the development with full speed. In the last decade, the economic growth was progressive, but now they are reeling under the influence of world economic crisis and other bottlenecks at domestic level.

(b) Socio-economic and political organisation of states

The states have been unable to do the adequate land reforms and the feudal mentality still persists. Bhoodan and Gramdaan movements, after independence, have not enthusiastically carried out and even land under land banks are not efficiently functional. The political activities in the backward states are limited to vote bank politics and scams.

(c) Lower level of infrastructural facilities in backward states

The level of infrastructural development, such as power distribution, irrigation facilities, roads, modern markets for agricultural production has been at back stage. All these are state list subjects.

(d) Low level of social expenditure by states on education, health and sanitation

The states which have invested heavily on education, health, and sanitation fall under the developed and advanced states. For example Tamil Nadu can be cited for better health care services and their. Primary health centre is bench mark for other states.

(e) Political and administration failure

Political and administrative failure often creates source of tension and gives birth to sub-regional movements for separate states. Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Uttarakhand and recently Telangana are under the resultant effects of these failures only. Many such demands are in pipeline such as- Vidarbha, Saurashtra, Darjeeling and Bodoland, etc. These failures also weaken the confidence of private concerns and do not attract the states.

19.11 Summary

This unit discusses at length the definitions, conceptual clarifications and scope of regionalism. It also discusses the various dimensions, characteristics and causes of widespread regionalism as well as its historical legacies. The unit has also examined the post- independent situations of regionalism as well as the present debate enveloping it. Feminists' dimensions of regionalism and its impact on the women have also taken into consideration. Emphasis has also been given to see the link between regionalism and the Indian polity as well as the possibilities for regional disparities to subsist in the present world

19.12 Questions

Answer briefly:

1. What are the characteristics of regionalism?
2. What are the forms of regionalism?
3. Write short note on regionalism on the basis of ethnicity and language.
4. Why regional disparity still persists?

Answer in detail:

1. What are the causes of regionalism?
2. Write a short note on elimination of regionalism.
3. Write a note on contemporary debates related to region and regionalism.

4. Regionalism as a sub state movement – Explain.

Essay Type Question:

1. Write a note on regionalism in India.
2. Explain the historical lineages of region and how you can relate it to women and regionalism.
3. Critically analyse the relationship between region, regionalism and women.
4. Write a note on regionalism in Indian politics.

19.13 Suggested Readings

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19.14 Glossary

Acculturation - Acculturation is a process of social, psychological, and cultural change that stems from the balancing of two cultures while adapting to the prevailing culture of the society. Acculturation is a process in which an individual adopts, acquires and adjusts to a new cultural environment as a result of being placed into a new culture, or when another culture is brought to you. Individuals of a differing culture try to incorporate themselves into the new more prevalent culture by participating in aspects of the more prevalent culture, such as their traditions, but still hold onto their original cultural values and traditions. The effects of acculturation can be seen at multiple levels in both the devotee of the prevailing culture and those who are assimilating into the culture.

Ethnic Conflict - An ethnic conflict is a conflict between two or more contending ethnic groups. While the source of the conflict may be political, social, economic or religious, the individuals in conflict must expressly fight for their ethnic group's position within society. This final criterion differentiates ethnic conflict from other forms of struggle.

Provincialism - Provincialism is a characteristic behaviour arising from narrowness of mind or outlook. It showcases a kind of orientation or attitude characteristic of a provincial. It refers to the excessive attention to the affairs of one's province rather than the whole nation.

Unit 20 □ Terrorism : Causes and Consequences

Structure

- 20.1 Objectives**
- 20.2 Introduction**
- 20.3 Terrorism : The Meaning**
 - 20.3.1 Characteristics of Terrorism**
 - 20.3.2 Forms of Terrorism**
 - 20.3.3 Dimensions of Terrorism**
 - 20.3.4 Causes of Terrorism**
 - 20.3.5 Consequences of Terrorism**
- 20.4 Terrorism and Social Ethics**
- 20.5 Politics and Terrorism**
- 20.6 Sociology of Terrorism**
- 20.7 Conclusion**
- 20.8 Summary**
- 20.9 Questions**
- 20.10 Suggested Readings**

20.1 Objectives

This unit will help you to explain –

- Concept and characteristics of terrorism.
- History of terrorism.
- Causes, consequences and forms of terrorism.
- The impact of terrorism on human rights.

20.2 Introduction

Terrorism is an international problem but India is the most affected country due to terrorism and terrorism related activities such as insurgency, civil war, guerrilla war, intimidation and extremism in various parts of the country.

Terrorism is a problem faced by India for more than two decades. Earlier, India has been faced with the problems of insurgency in northeast India while dealing with the Naga and the Mizo rebels and the terrorism of the Naxalites in Bengal. Today, terrorism is perceived as a problem capable of destabilizing not only national but also international politics. Terrorism in recent times has affected both the developed and the developing countries.

20.3 Terrorism: The Meaning

The Oxford Advanced Dictionary defines terrorism as the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act. The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes terrorism as the systematic use of terror or unpredictable violence against governments, public or individuals, to attain a political objective. It can be broadly defined as violent behaviour designed to generate fear in the community or a substantial segment of it for political purpose. It is the use of violence on the part of non-governmental groups to achieve political ends. According to the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, terrorism is a method whereby an organized group or party seeks to achieve its vowed aims chiefly through the systematic use of violence.

20.3.1 Characteristics of Terrorism

Terrorism is characterised by a technique of perpetrating random and brutal intimidation, coercion or destruction of human lives and property, and used intentionally by subnational groups operating under varying degrees of stress, to obtain realistic or illusory goals. The main characteristics of terrorism are:

1. It is against the state or community.
2. It has a political purpose.
3. It is illegal and unlawful.
4. It aims at intimidating and creating impact of fear and panic not only for the victim but also for the people at large, caused for the purpose of coercing or subduing.
5. It is accompanied by a feeling of impotence and helplessness on the part of the masses.
6. It stops rational thinking.
7. It leads to reaction of fight or flight, and
8. It contains arbitrariness in violence as victims' selection is random or indiscriminate (Sharma, 2008).

20.3.2 Forms of Terrorism

According to the National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, there are six distinct types of terrorism. All of them share the common traits of being violent acts that destroy property, invoke fear and attempt to harm the lives of civilians.

1. Civil Disorder

It is sometimes a violent form of protest held by a group of individuals, usually in opposition to a political policy or action. They are intended to send a message to a political group that “the people” are unhappy and demand change. The protests are intended to be non-violent, but they do sometimes result in large riots in which private property is destroyed and civilians are injured or killed.

2. Political Terrorism

It is used by one political faction to intimidate another. Although government leaders are the ones who are intended to receive the ultimate message, it is the citizens who are targeted with violent attacks.

3. Non-political Terrorism

It is a terrorist act perpetrated by a group for any other purpose, most often of a religious nature. The desired goal is something other than a political objective, but the tactics involved are the same.

4. Quasi terrorism

It is a violent act that utilizes the same methods terrorists employ, but does not have the same motivating factors. Cases like this usually involve an armed criminal who is trying to escape the law enforcement, utilizing civilians as hostages to help them escape. The law breaker is acting in a similar manner as a terrorist, but terrorism is not the goal.

5. Limited Political Terrorism

These are generally one-time only plots to make a political or ideological statement. The goal is not to overthrow the government, but to protest a governmental policy or action.

6. State Terrorism

It defines any violent action initiated by an existing government to achieve a particular goal. Most often this goal involves a conflict with another country.

Every type of terrorism utilizes distinct methods of violence to get their message across. They can be anything from weapons or explosive devices to toxic

chemicals that are released into the air. These attacks may occur at any time or place, which makes them an extremely effective method of instilling terror and uncertainty into the general public.

20.3.3 Dimensions of Terrorism

Terrorism has been perceived by different scholars with different dimensions. We may identify four such dimensions: historical, political, sociological and legal.

Historical Dimension : It focuses on the origin, development and qualitative changes in different phases in terrorism. Baljit Singh is one scholar who has used this approach to analyse terrorism.

Political Dimension : It perceives political terrorism as a political violence movement organised by an organised political group either at a national or at international level.

Legal Dimension : It concentrates on state laws as well as international laws for cooperation among various states in dealing with international terrorism.

Sociological Dimension : In analysing terrorism from the perspective of sociological dimension, Jordan Paust focuses on: i) the types of participants engaged in terrorism as terrorists, targets, victims and so forth, ii) the objectives of the participants, iii) the situations of actual interaction, iv) the type of resources at the disposal of each type of participant, v) the strategies of terror utilised and, vi) the outcome of the terroristic process.

20.3.4 Causes of Terrorism

Terrorism has several causes which can be related to social, historical, cultural, religious, economic, and psychological aspects. The following could be seen as some of the causes of terrorism:

The Reality of Persistent Disputes: Terrorism has its breeding ground in conflicts. Reasons for conflicts, however, can vary widely. Basically, it is the differences in objectives and ideologies that show the way to conflict. Some of the historical examples to this effect are: dominance of territory or resources by various ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural groups; aspiration for freedom from foreign regimes; imposition of a particular form of government, such as democracy, theocracy, oligarchy, or dictatorship; economic deprivation of a population; and real or perceived instances of injustices.

Dearth of Reasonable Redressal Procedure: The absence of a systematic and proper redressal system can cause continuous terrorist activities. If such a system exists, people will have to take recourse to it in order to solve conflicting situations. When such systems are not available due to their nonexistence, sloth, corruption or

unaffordable cost, the socially and culturally wounded people will get tempted to seek solution by themselves. Terrorist activities thus can arise from a sense of denial of lawful rights of a certain group of people, which they have been demanding determinedly.

Weakness of the Distressed People : When there are violent discords coupled with the absence of a genuine redressal system, there could be attempts to find solutions to the problems by force. This could result in various kinds of organized violence like communal riots and war. However, violence takes an ugly form through terrorism when the distressed people realize their inability to influence the dominator, due to their weakness. In such a situation, they are unable to face the oppressive forces face to face or in a direct manner. Therefore, they go underground and fight for their cause.

Misguidance : When children and youth are not brought up responsibly by their parents or guardians, there is a high risk for them to get involved with violent groups or militancy. There are groups with vested interest who indoctrinate young minds to take up arms to fight for their causes which are sometimes fabricated. Often, an ideology of hatred in the name of religion, ethnic loyalty or nationalism is injected into the minds of people. These youngsters are trained to cause destruction and are armed with deadly weapons. Their misguidance becomes complete when they are taught to regard the death and destruction of their enemies as a glorious achievement and their own possible death in the process as a case of heroic martyrdom.

Influence of the Mass Media : Mass media are showing keen interest in terrorism and in the issues related to it. We find radio stations, television channels, newspapers, and Web pages often discussing this subject. These broadcasts reach a large section of people in the world, especially those in the west and intensify the fear that the threat of terrorism generates. The terrorists make use of this effect of the media, thus turning them into an unwilling ally. The wide coverage given in the media motivates a terrorist organization to go ahead with their plans, since they know for sure that their action will be made known to the whole world and thus draw greater attention to the cause. Often, the live coverage of the terrorist activity helps the perpetrators of violence to get away from the site of the violence in an easy manner. In such cases, the mass media can become an unwilling ally of terrorism.

Democratic State : Though it is opined by researchers that democratic nations are generally less vulnerable to terrorism; however, they too are not free from terrorist activities. There is a complex relationship between terrorism and democracy. Though in one sense democracy diminishes the risk of terrorism by undercutting some of its reasons, in another sense it often contributes to its prevalence. The open nature of

democratic societies makes them vulnerable to terrorism. In such societies, civil liberties are protected, and government control and constant surveillance of the people and their activities are kept to the minimum. Taking advantage of such restraints by the government, terrorists have stepped up their activities. Studies done on the relationship between liberal societies and terrorism suggest that concessions awarded to terrorists have increased the frequency of terrorist attacks. By contrast, repressive societies, where the government closely monitors citizens and restricts their speech and movement, have often provided more difficult environments for terrorists. It should also be noted that in democratic societies, the risk of terrorism is compounded if the law enforcement is slow or inefficient. In such democracies, the aggrieved people, having lost faith in the ability of the legal system of the country to deliver justice, are seen to take law into their own hands, and if they are weak, they do it clandestinely.

Globalization : It can be said that globalization, though not a direct cause of terrorism, it can often contribute to the menace of terrorism. The situation brought about by the linkage, even fusion, around the world of communications and financial systems has contributed to the promotion of global terrorism. Again, new communications such as the Internet and satellite phones have made it possible for the extremist terrorist and political organizations to build large organizational networks, exchange information, and combine resources.

Psychological Factors : Many psychologists believe that the key to understand terrorism lies in understanding people. According to this perspective, terrorism is purely the result of psychological forces, not a well-thought-out strategy aimed at achieving rational, strategic ends. Therefore, psychologists emphasize the study of the mind of the terrorists. Accordingly, various attempts have been made to gain knowledge of the hidden psychic dynamism which incites a person to perform such acts without any qualm of conscience. There is another psychological view which says that the terrorists are normal individuals, who due to their deep emotional need and a high order of motivation on the grounds of nationalism or religious sentiment forces him to take up the path of violence. Another reason for taking up terrorism could be seen due to the desire to overcome loneliness. They claim that many terrorists are people who have been rejected in some fashion by society and tend to be loners. Since it is in human nature to be part of a group, an alienated loner is naturally drawn towards any group that will accept him, give him a sense of mission, and provide him the ways and means of accomplishing it, along with monetary gains too (Kaippananickal, 2017).

20.3.5 Consequences of Terrorism

The causes of the growing terrorism in a state are many. Mostly the terrorists are motivated by religious and political consideration, but there are also economic factors.

Environmental Consequences : Terrorist activities can paralyze the entire cosmos with its vulnerable activities. It can be said that every terrorist attack is a way of demeaning the entire universe. The cosmos, which is the habitat of life, is dishonoured into a place of death and doom. The very fact that a human being is a cosmic reality, he/she is automatically dehumanized in the wake of every terrorist activity. Anything that is done against the cosmic reality is going to affect all the living and non-living beings of the universe. Sowing the seeds of disorder, disharmony and discontent has turned to be the work of a number of psychosomatics.

Political Consequences : Terrorism builds up both direct and indirect pressure on the government to weaken it physically and psychologically. The function of terror can also be to discourage the people from cooperating with or giving information to the government. The deepest anxiety amongst ordinary people arises when they fear a collapse of law and order. Terrorism works towards a collapse of the social order and terrorists exploit this situation by trying to project them as a better alternative. In this state of fear and anxiety the essential services may not function properly. Terrorism grows out of political anarchy. Terror incorporates two facets: first, a state of fear or anxiety within an individual or a group and second, the tool that induces the state of fear. Thus, terror involves the threat or use of symbolic violent acts aimed at influencing political behaviour. Following World War II, political terrorism remerged on the international scene. During the 1960s, political terrorism appeared to have entered into another phase. Perhaps the two most significant qualitative changes were: first, its transnational character and second, its emergence as a self-sufficient strategy, namely, operating independently of the larger political arena.

Political terrorism occurs as the result of a conscious decision by ideologically inspired groups to strike back at what their members may perceive as unjust within a given society or polity. The answers to contemporary political terrorism, therefore, would have to be found within this larger social, economic, political, and psychological context.

Economic Consequences : Terrorism aims at maximizing economic impact in the world at large. The destruction of the twin-towers on that Tuesday of 11th September, 2001 has caused much confusion and disarray in the global economic scenario. Since each act of terrorism is designed in such a way as to have an impact on the larger audience, its reverberations and after effects are largely seen in the economic area. Nations and government machineries are forced to equip themselves with latest

technologies to combat the network of terrorism. All those involve the bifurcation of national funds which could be made use of other purposes. Terrorism, in other words, deteriorates the economy of a nation. The economy of a nation does not include its financial conditions alone. It deals with all forms of wealth such as human resource, natural resource, intellectual power, aesthetic power, creative power, money-power and so on. Therefore, economic consequences of terrorism affect all forms of wealth without which human life would be impossible.

20.4 Terrorism and Social Ethics

Where appropriate, issues relevant to counter-terrorism will be considered in this section, with a more extensive discussion in the following section. The ethical questions of interest which will be discussed include the following:

- Ethical issues related to the commission of terrorist acts, including whether they are ever ethically permissible and, if so, in what circumstances.
- Ethical issues involved in counter-terrorism activities, including whether it is justified to suspend human rights in the fight against terrorism and if so, in which circumstances and which rights.
- Contextual issues related to the resources and attention given to fighting terrorism and other threats, many of which actually or potentially result in much higher numbers of deaths and injuries.

It has been suggested that ‘terrorist attacks by the groups victimized by the Nazis, for example, would hardly have deserved any negative evaluations’ (Lutz and Lutz, 2004). However, the issue is much wider than terrorism on its own and relates to whether it is ever justified to use violence and, if so, in what circumstances. Moral positions should preferably be coherent and consistent. Therefore, the labelling of particular acts as ‘terrorist’ rather than, for instance, ‘warfare’ should not affect ethical judgments about them. Discussions about the circumstances in which the use of violence might be justified are part of the wider argument of the relationship between ends and means or consequentialist and deontological ethics. It has been suggested that the use of political violence cannot be justified unless all channels of non-violent protest have been exhausted. While it is clearly desirable to use nonviolent means if at all possible, this argument is problematic, since it is not always clear what channels of non-violent protest are available and the need for change may be urgent due to the existing state of violence and oppression. In addition, engaging in non-violent protest may itself put participants at risk and could lead to reprisals and repression. However, on the other side of the argument,

there is no guarantee that political violence will be successful in achieving its aims or even that it has a greater likelihood of success than non-violent means. In addition, non-violent resistance has the potential to involve a much greater proportion of the population and to empower them. There is also sometimes a relationship between the ends achieved and the means used. Thus, the use of peaceful means has the potential to achieve change at a deeper level and which is longer lasting, whereas change achieved by violence may require a further peaceful 'revolution' to remove the violence that has become embedded. Several different authors have suggested conditions under which the use of political violence or terrorism might be justified. These include the use of terrorism by a morally innocent individual (however moral innocence is defined) to defend themselves or other morally innocent people against a significant injustice using terrorist activities which are directed proportionately and only against those guilty of committing acts of significant injustice. Further suggestions include the justification of the use of political violence (Narveson, 1991) to prevent immediate injury or longer-range threats to oneself or others and to prevent or rectify the loss of legitimate liberty by oneself or others. However, it has also been suggested that the use of political violence is probably not justified to obtain conditions of a minimally acceptable life even when there are no other means available to do this and that it is also not justified to promote a better life for oneself, a particular group or people in general. The logical conclusion of not accepting this as a fundamental right is accepting an unequal distribution, with some individuals and groups having significantly reduced and probably inadequate shares of these resources and goods.

While the difference in perspective is largely based on a difference in political philosophy or ideology, an unequal division of the world's resources and goods is also counter to many ethical theories (Harsh, 2015), implying that access to equal shares is a fundamental right in ethical terms. In terms of deontological ethics making significant differences in the shares received by different individuals or groups is not innately virtuous and is unlikely to be based on good intentions. With regard to positive utilitarianism the benefits of an unequal distribution are likely to be low and the costs high. In terms of negative utilitarianism there are likely to be significant present and future harms due to many people receiving insufficient for their needs.

With regard to virtue ethics an unequal distribution is unlikely to build good character either of those who receive less or those who receive more than an equal share. In terms of normative ethics there is an inherent injustice in an unequal distribution, it is unlikely to promote autonomy and is maleficent rather than beneficent. Since unequal distributions frequently lead to feelings of resentment, the result is unlikely to promote relationships and is therefore counter to the ethics of care. Differences in beliefs about

the fundamental entitlement to an equal share of the world's resources will affect any analysis of the ethical justification for using terrorism to access basic needs or a fair share of the world's resources, assuming no other means are available to do this. However, acceptance that everyone is entitled to (approximately) equal shares of the world's resources does not imply that the use of terrorism is ethically permissible and this would have to be further evaluated through application of ethical theories.

Rights ethics is based on consideration of fundamental moral rights, with actions which violate these rights considered to be wrong. Both terrorism and counter-terrorism raise issues of whether it is morally justified to kill, injure or torture one or a relatively smaller number of people in order to save a larger number of other people. The issues related to counter-terrorism will be discussed in a later section. In the case of terrorism, the existing situation is generally categorized by frequent serious violations of human rights, hostility between different groups, state sponsored violence and other forms of violence. Thus, applying rights ethics to the analysis of terrorism leads to an evaluation of the relative importance of different rights and decisions about which rights and whose rights it is least unjustifiable to violate (Held, 1991). Wherever possible it is clearly preferable to use non-violent methods to ensure respect for human rights. However, situations where this has been tried without success or non-violent approaches seem unlikely to be successful, give rise to the ethical questions of whether any rights violations are permissible in the short term in order to end human rights violations on a long term basis and, if so, what rights. There is also the practical question with ethical consequences of the likelihood of success. Where success is unlikely or its probability is not sufficient high (however that is judged) violation of rights of any type to achieve change should not be considered from either an ethical or practical perspective. Although all rights are important, broad categories of rights of different degrees of importance can be defined. In general, respect for the more important rights should be prioritized and care taken to avoid the violation of important rights in order to achieve respect for less important rights (Held, 1991). This implies that terrorism in support of the right to personal security or sufficient access to resources to meet basic needs is more likely to be justified than terrorism in support of less important goals.

20.5 Politics and Terrorism

A totalitarian state makes use of violence as a system of government. But a democracy resorts to it only selectively during a period of crisis, when they even overlook the international convention that insists on respect for human rights. The gravity of situation is assessed by the government and such situation is prone to possible abuse. The term crisis implies a threat to the regime. In weak democracies also rulers resort

to direct or indirect violence to continue in power. In order to stay in power, rulers who had reached a point at which their follower is disowned them or because a minority, may overturn democracy. The military may help them behind the scenes. Every democratic constitution has provisions to enable the government to assume special powers. Here again there is danger of abuse of power. Terrorism demoralises the population of a region or state. In some instances, however it serves as an integrating factor. However, terrorism itself always invokes problems of law and order. Yet it is not capable of disrupting the entire social system. Terrorism is not a revolutionary movement and so far, terrorists have not succeeded in fulfilling their aims. Terrorist killings do not change the structure of politics. However, this is not to say that they have no effect on the social and political fabric. They do loosen it somewhat. Mechanisms have to be created to prevent acts of terror.

20.6 Sociology of Terrorism

A holistic sociological perspective of terrorism will be possible only when we discuss large-scale political events not only in aggregate numerical terms but also in impact terms, that is, we focus not only on quantitative macro-politics but also on qualitative micro-politics.

Terrorism demoralizes and demobilizes populations and disintegrates societies, though it is also true that terrorism in some instances serves as an integrative mechanism binding people together in a common cause. Terrorism may involve the problem of law and order, that is, of killing or kidnapping of one group by other group because of its religious affiliations or sub-cultural differences, but it does not disrupt the social system. Nor is terrorism a special method for hastening historical change.

No terrorist movement has ever succeeded in achieving its goals. Terrorists, therefore, do not shape the course of historical events. For understanding terrorism, it is necessary to measure the amount of violence engaged in by the terrorists of effect their desired ends, the quantum of force utilized by the police and the armed forces to prevent social change, and also to measure the types of violence. Using this perspective to terrorism in India, the number of people killed and kidnapped in Bihar in one year is much more than the killings and kidnappings in Punjab or Kashmir.

The social impact of terrorism which may totally affect the society on a long term basis, thus, should be the central focus in any system of analytic measurement. It may, therefore, be concluded by claiming that terrorism disintegrates society or affects the survival of the system will not be very correct.

Nevertheless, mechanisms have to be created to prevent acts of terror. Terrorism and political violence have become the bane of Indian society today. Both are leading the

country towards anarchy and chaos. Terrorists kill in the name of religion and region, in the name of language and culture. It is time that the prevalent frustration and a sense of deprivation amongst people, particularly the youth, are checked. On one hand, the government has to deal with the terrorists with a very firm hand and on the other minorities have to be protected.

20.7 Conclusion

India has been faced with the Kashmir problem for the past half a century and has been faced two Indo-Pakistan wars on this issue, but the government has not been able to take hard decisions and evolve a definite coherent policy. Our policy makers have been chasing the mirage of soft options and have been following a weak kneed approach in dealing with the terrorists. Terrorism in Kashmir assumed a new shape 1988 onwards. The militants launched a bloody battle to underline their separate identity. The neighbouring countries, determined to see turmoil continuing in the valley, are providing training and weapons to the militants even today.

The people have also been so brain washed that talk of the excesses of the police and the para-military forces. For the militants, the criticism of the government by the people means that people are more than willing to support them. On the other hand, the Hindus have been forced by the militants to leave Kashmir. It is claimed in one report that nearly two lakh Hindus have fled Jammu and Kashmir between 1988 and 1991.

The Hindus claimed that the fundamentalists and militants had infiltrated every sphere of the government in the Kashmir valley till the middle of 1996 and that what ruled the roost was not the writ of the government but that of the militants. They maintained that the pro-Pakistan forces had overtaken the valley and in a way, there was a collapse of the administration and the terrorists wanted them to quit the valley.

Some sources claimed that till two years ago, Muslims from other countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Turkey were engaged in terrorist activities in Kashmir (Indian Today: May 15, 1994).

20.8 Summary

Thus, It has been seen that there are several opinions regarding the origin of terrorism. According to one theory, the term terrorism comes from the French word terrorism, which is based on the Latin verb *terrorer* (to cause to urinate), and which refers to a kind of violence or the threat of imminent violence. It is noted that the terrorism as a concept was first used by the British statesman Edmund Burke. He used it in

the context of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. In those days, terror was understood to be a tool of dictatorship and as a symbol of power. We also saw the various characteristics of power and its present nuances in our current society.

20.9 References

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20.10 Suggested Readings

Answer briefly:

1. Define Terrorism
2. What are the features of Terrorism?
3. What are the dimensions of terrorism?
4. Short note on Politics and terrorism.

Answer in detail

1. What are the Consequences of terrorism?
2. Short note on ethics and terrorism.
3. Critically explain sociology of terrorism.
4. What are the situations now 'terrorism in India' – explain in your own words.

Essay Type Question

1. Write a note on causes of terrorism.
2. Establish a relationship between terrorism and social ethics.
3. Write a note on Sociology of Terrorism and Terrorism in India.

