# POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

MA [Political Science]

901 C

Third Semester

[ENGLISH EDITION]

**Directorate of Distance Education**

## TRIPURA UNIVERSITY

# Reviewer

**Dr Nivedita Giri**

Assistant Professor, Jesus & Mary College, University of Delhi

**Authors**

**Swaha Das,** (M.Phil), Assistant Professor, Indraprastha College for Women, New Delhi

**Swati Priyambada Das,** (M.Phil), Masters in Sociology, Delhi School of Economics

**Punyasloka Priyadarshi Das,** LLB, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi

**Units:** (1.2-1.4, 2.2-2.3.3, 2.4, 4.2-4.2.1) © Authors, 2017

**Dr. Namrata Prasad,** Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Bapu Post Graduate College, Pipiganj, DDU Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur

**Units:** (1.5, 2.6, 3.4.1, 4.4-4.4.2) © Dr. Namrata Prasad, 2017

**Dr Jaya Shrivastava,** Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, School for Ambedkar Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University) Raebareli Road, Lucknow, U.P.

**Units:** (1.6, 2.3.4, 3.2-3.3.3) © Dr Jaya Shrivastava, 2017

**Vikas Publishing House**

**Units:** (1.0-1.1, 1.7-1.11, 2.0-2.1, 2.5, 2.7-2.11, 3.0-3.1, 3.4, 3.4.2-3.4.4, 3.5-3.9, 4.0-4.1, 4.2.2-4.3, 4.4.3-4.9) © Reserved, 2017

# SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

## Political Sociology

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

Political sociology is a discipline that is primarily concerned with the relationship between the State and society. The discipline looks at how major social trends can affect the political process. It explores how various social forces work together to change political policies. The historical context of political theories, the role of social groups and the formation of the State constitute an integral part of the subject. There are various perspectives to the study of political sociology. The primary perspectives include functionalism, fundamentalism, social stratification, elitism and bureaucracy.

This book *Political Sociology* introduces the students to the evolution, nature and scope of political sociology, defines political sociology as a discipline, explores political socialization, the concepts of elitism, social ethics, discrimination, politics in India, and is divided into four units. This book has been written in the self-instructional mode (SIM) wherein each unit begins with an 'Introduction' to the topic followed by an outline of the 'Unit Objectives'. The detailed content is then presented in a simple and an organized manner, interspersed with 'Check Your Progress' questions to test the understanding of the students. A 'Summary' along with a list of 'Key Terms' and a set of 'Questions and Exercises' is also provided at the end of each unit for effective recapitulation.

# UNIT 1  NATURE AND SCOPE OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

**Structure**

## 1.0    INTRODUCTION

Political sociology lies at the intersection of the disciplines of political science and sociology. Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori had suggested that there was an ambiguity in the term 'political sociology' as it could be interpreted as a synonym for 'sociology of politics'. Due to this ambiguity, it became difficult to be precise concerning the objects of study and the approaches of inquiry within the field of political sociology. There thus arose the need for a clarification.

Political sociology is a subdiscipline within the broader framework of sociology. It deals with the social circumstances of politics, that is, how politics is shaped by and shapes other events in societies. It can be safely called the sociology of politics, because politics is described only in terms of social factors. Politics is a dependent variable that varies according to society. In other words, society comes first and politics second. This unit discusses the nature, scope and importance of political

sociology and traces the evolution of political sociology as a discipline. It also discusses social stratification and politics, and the concept of power, authority and legitimacy.

## 1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the nature, scope and importance of political sociology
- Assess the evolution of political sociology as a discipline
- Discuss the various approaches to the study of political sociology
- Analyse the concept of social stratification and politics in the field of caste and class
- Explain the concept of power, authority and legitimacy

## 1.2 POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY: NATURE, SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE

Dowse and Hughes define political sociology in the following way: 'Political sociology is the study of the interrelation between politics and society.' Society is the pre-condition of politics; politics takes place when there is society. We do not have politics when there is no society, and we cannot find a society without politics. The moment society comes to existence, politics emerges. As Sartori claims:

> A real political sociology is, then, a cross-disciplinary breakthrough seeking enlarged models which reintroduce as variables the 'givens' of each component source.

> For Sartori, such a clarification would be possible only 'when the sociological and "politico-logical" approaches are combined at their point of intersection'. This point of intersection is the site of interdisciplinary studies. However, to understand the dynamics of such a site, one must delineate the contours of the two parent disciplines—political science and sociology.

Although the discipline of political science traces its history back to Aristotle, it evolved into an academic field of study in the United States of America. According to Lipset, one of the earliest usages of the term 'political science' occurred with the founding of the Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University, New York, in the late 19th century. A few years later, in 1903, the American Political Science Association was founded, and, soon, the first issue of the *American Political Science Review* was published, which is now more than a century old. As *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states:

> Aristotle's word for 'politics' is *politikê*, which is the short form of *politikê episteme* or 'political science'. The word 'political' is derived from *politikos* meaning 'pertaining to the polis', where the polis may be understood as a city-state.

Gradually, as the 20th century unfolded, political science acquired a certain focus. It included a historical study of political thought, an analytic and comparative study of distinct polities, as well as a normative approach to politics. Notwithstanding such a broad scope, if one were to narrow down the object of study of the discipline of political science to a single theme, it would be the State.

If political science is largely focussed on the study of the State, sociology may be understood as the study of society. The latter discipline was the consequence of the Enlightenment—an intellectual epoch in the history of Europe that awarded primacy to the critical application of human reason as opposed to blindly following the dictates of human and divine authorities.

Let us look at some more definitions:

- R. Bendix and S. M. Lipset state that 'political sociology starts with society and examines how it affects the state'.

- Robert E. Dowse and John Hughes call political sociology as 'the study of political behaviour within a sociological perspective of framework'.

- As mentioned by Michael Rush and Phillip Althoff: 'Political sociology is a subject area which examines the links between politics and society, between social behaviour and political behaviour.'

Finally, Coser states:

Political Sociology is that branch of sociology which is concerned with the social causes and consequences of given power distribution within or between societies, and with the social and political conflicts that lead to changes in the allocation of power.

And, according to Keith Faulks:

At its broadest level, political sociology is concerned with the relationship between politics and society. Its distinctiveness within the social sciences lies in its acknowledgment that political actors, including parties, pressure groups and social movements, operate within a wider social context. Political actors therefore inevitably shape, and in turn are shaped by, social structures such as gender, class and nationality. Such social structures ensure that political influence within society is unequal.

It follows from this that a key concept in political sociology is that power, where power is defined as the capacity to achieve one's objectives even when those objectives are in conflict with the interests of another actor. Political sociologists therefore invariably return to the following question: which individuals and groups in society possess the capacity to pursue their interests, and how is this power exercised and institutionalized.

### 1.2.1 Nature

Political sociology seeks to understand the process of interaction between government and society, decision-making authorities and conflicting social forces and interests. It is the study of interactions and linkages between politics and society; between the political system and its social, economic and cultural environment.

It is concerned with problems regarding the management of conflict, the articulation of interest and issues, and political integration and organization. The focal point in all these concerns is the independence of the interplay of socio-cultural, economic and political elements.

The perspective of political sociology is distinguished from that of institutionalism and behaviouralism. The institutionalists have been concerned primarily with institutional types of political organization, and their study has been characterized by legality and formality. The behaviouralists have focused on the individual actor in the political arena; and their central concern has been the psychological trait, namely, motives, attitudes, perception and the role of individuals. The task of political sociologists is to study the political process as a continuum of interactions between society and its decision-makers, and between decision-making institutions and social forces.

Political sociology provides a new vista in political analysis. Yet, it is closely linked with the issues which have been raised in political philosophy. Political philosophy, as we know, has a rich and long tradition of political thought that began with the ancient Indian and Greek philosophers, and has amply followed since Machiavelli, who made a bold departure from Greek idealism and medieval scholasticism. It was Karl Marx, however, who brought into sharp focus issues concerning the nature of political power and its relationship with social or economic organization.

The Marxist theory of economic determinism of political power laid the foundation for the sociology of politics. Marx was, however, neither the first nor the only thinker to conceive of government as an organ of the dominant economic class. The Arabian scholar Ibn Khaldun and several European predecessors of Marx had argued that ideology and power were the superstructures of economy.

The early origins of sociology are often traced to Auguste Comte's six-volume work *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830-42). This work offered an encyclopedic treatment of sciences. It expounded positivism and initiated the use of the term sociology to signify a certain method of studying human societies. Comte proposed a historical law of social development, and according to this scheme, human societies pass from an initial stage of interpreting phenomena theologically to an intermediate stage of metaphysical interpretation before arriving at the final stage of positivist interpretation. This idea of a historical development of human societies obeying laws of nature was adopted by Karl Marx.

The works of Marx, which emphasized the role of capitalist mode of production and Marxism in general, were important stimuli for the development of sociology. The early Marxist contribution to sociology included the works of Karl Kautsky on the French Revolution; Mehring's analysis of art, literature and intellectual history; and Grunberg's early studies on agrarian history and labour movements. It is important to note that Marxist studies of society also developed independent of universities as it was intimately related to political movements and party organizations.

In the decades following the death of Marx, sociology was gaining ground as an academic discipline, and the critics of Marxism had an important role to play in its development. The most notable critics were Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Weber's work on capitalism, the State, and methodological writings were largely

directed against historical materialism. In the later works of Durkheim, an attempt was made to distinguish the social functions of religion from the explanation provided by historical materialism.

Given the inevitability of political role in society, a body of thinkers from Aristotle to Tocqueville has rightly emphasized the point that instead of deploring the evils of human nature or social circumstances, it is more prudent and worthwhile to accept the 'given' and improve it for the good of man and society. It is wiser to face and manage it so as to achieve reconciliation and accommodation.

Conflict, though apparently an evil, is a condition of freedom, as it prevents the concentration of power. This kind of political realism recognizes the necessity and utility of the political management of conflict through compromise and adjustment among various social forces and interests. Political sociology aims at understanding the sources and the social bases of conflict, as well as the process of management of conflict.

### 1.2.2 Scope

The broad aim of political sociology is to study and examine the interactions between social and political structures. The determination of the boundaries of what is social and political, however, raises some questions. The relevant question in delineating the scope of political sociology is that of the kinds of groups which form part of the study of the discipline of political sociology. Some scholars believe that politics depends on some settled order created by the State. Hence, the State is political, and is the subject matter of political sociology, not the groups.

There is another school according to which politics is present in almost all social relations. Individuals and small groups try to enforce their preferences on their parent organizations—family, club, or college, and thus indulge in the exercise of 'power'.

Sheldon S. Wolin takes quite a reasonable view of the word 'political', which, according to him, means the following three things:

(i) A form of activity that centers on the quest for competitive advantage between groups, individuals, or societies

(ii) A form of activity conditioned by the fact that it occurs within a situation of change and relative scarcity

(iii) A form of activity in which the pursuit of advantage produces consequences of such a magnitude that they affect, in a significant way, the whole society or a substantial portion of it

Two groups of scholars have discussed the scope of political sociology in two different ways. According to Greer and Orleans, political sociology is concerned with the structure of the State, the nature and condition of legitimacy, and nature of the monopoly of force and its use by the State, as well as the nature of the sub-units and their relation with the State.

They treat political sociology in terms of consensus and legitimacy, participation and representation, and the relationship between economic development and political

change. By implication, whatever is related to the State is alone held as the subject matter of political sociology. Andreu Effrat takes a broader view of the picture and suggests that political sociology is concerned with the causes, patterns and consequences of the distribution and process of power and authority 'in all social systems'. Among social systems, he includes small groups and families, educational and religious groups, as well as governmental and political institutions.

Lipset and Bendix suggest a more representative catalogue of topics when they describe the main areas of interest to political sociologists as voting behaviour, concentration of economic power and political decision-making, ideologies of political movement and interest groups, political parties, voluntary associations, the problems of oligarchy and psychological correlates of political behaviour, and the problem of bureaucracy. To Dowse and Hughes, one area of substantive concern for the political sociologist is the problem of social order and political obedience.

Richard G. Braungart has pointed out that political sociologists are concerned with the dynamic association among and between three things, namely:

(a) The social origin of politics

(b) The structure of political process

(c) The effects of politics on the surrounding society and culture

Political sociology should include four areas, which are as follows:

(i) Political structures (social class/caste, elite, interest groups, bureaucracy, political parties and factions)

(ii) Political life (electoral process, political communication, opinion formation)

(iii) Political leadership (bases, types and operation of community power structure)

(iv) Political development (concept and indices of its measurement, its social bases and prerequisites and its relationship to social change and modernization)

To illustrate, it can be pointed out that, on one hand, sociologists focus their attention on the sub-areas of the social system, and political scientists concentrate on the study of law, local, state and national governments, comparative government, political systems, public administration and international relations.

On the other hand, political sociologists ought to be concerned with topics of social stratification and political power—socio-economic systems and political regimes, interest groups, political parties, bureaucracy, political socialization, electoral behaviour, social movements and political mobilization.

A significant concern of political sociology is the analysis of socio-political factors in economic development.

### 1.2.3 Importance

There are four main areas of research that are important in present-day political sociology. They are as follows:

(i) The socio-political formation of the modern state

(ii) How social inequality between groups (class, race, gender) influences politics

(iii) How public personalities, social movements and trends outside of the formal institutions of political power affect politics

(iv) Power relationships within and between social groups (families, workplaces, bureaucracy, media)

Contemporary theorists include Robert A. Dahl, Seymour Martin Lipset, Theda Skocpol, Luc Boltanski and Nicos Poulantzas.

This introductory purview of the disciplines of political science and sociology should allow us to now characterize the field of political sociology. The latter may be understood as the study of varied and multiple relationships between the State and society. In this sense, political sociology evolved into an interdisciplinary field lying between the academic disciplines of political science and sociology.

---

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How is conflict related to power?
2. What does political sociology aim at?
3. What, according to Richard G. Braungart, are the four areas of political sociology?

---

## 1.3 EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE

Modern political sociology has existed for more than a century. According to Ronald H. Chilcote, the early political sociologists were interested in studying political and social life by incorporating data based on empirical research and an examination of informal institutions and processes. Some of them went beyond the Marxist conception, wherein employers and the propertied class wield political power.

Gaetano Mosca, in his *Elementi di Scienza Politica* (1896), distinguished between elites and the masses. Mosca's elites comprised of civil servants, managers and intellectuals. These elites formed the political class in parliamentary democracies. However, this class underwent transformation through recruitment of members from the lower strata and new social groups, leading to a phenomenon known as the circulation of elites. Vilfredo Pareto, on the other hand, sought to differentiate between governing and non-governing elites in his work *Cours d'Economie Politique* (1896-97).

Max Weber, in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1921), examined the entrepreneurial drives of individuals in capitalist economies. In his other works, he also analysed the impact of science, technology and bureaucracy in the evolution of Western civilization. The works of these early political sociologists influenced the studies of American political scientists of the 20th century.

**Historical Contexts of Political Sociology**

Let us take a look at the historical context from within which political sociology evolved as an important field of interdisciplinary scholarship.

Peter Wagner has sketched a history of political sociology within the larger process of modernity. This sketch is relevant in so far as it allows us to locate the work of political sociologists within intellectual and political contexts. Wagner's scheme comprises three phases:

  (i) Classical sociology and the first crisis of modernity

 (ii) Organized modernity and the consolidation of sociology

(iii) Second crisis of modernity and the renewed debate on the possibility of sociology

Let us look at the first phase, which outlines the political context of those writings that are now known as 'classical sociology'. Soon after the American and French revolutions, the philosophy of liberalism dominated intellectual debates. Nonetheless, towards the end of the 19th century, scholars began to realize the inadequacies of liberal theories. These inadequacies contributed to the first crisis of modernity.

Although liberalism, in theory, sought to establish principles of liberty, equality and democracy, the reality it presented was different in practice. Women, workers and non-European people were not actually 'free and equal citizens'. In fact, many intellectuals of the first half of the 19th century did not even advocate a totally inclusive liberal society. The ideas of liberalism were restricted largely to male property owners, who were believed to be reasonable and free. Thus, market relations were restricted to economic ties between these individuals.

As this century was drawing to a close, there occurred a gradual erosion of the elements that constituted this society. Migration, growth of industrial cities, struggles for suffrage and the increased strength of the workers' movements altered the social structure, and consequently, the traditional social identities as well. The ideology of socialism, trade unions and labour parties strengthened the new collective identity of the working class. The works of Durkheim, Weber and Pareto were produced within this context of changing social identities and polities.

Wagner's sketch highlights certain currents that created discontinuities within the sociological tradition in Europe and the United States following the disillusionment of intellectuals with liberalism. The following points are to be considered:

- The rise of the 'philosophy of the deed', which emphasized a strong man and his willpower to rejuvenate the nation

- The growth of empirical social research towards acquiring strategically useful knowledge about a certain populace

- The political philosophy of John Dewey, which was linked to the social theory of George Hebert Mead, and the empirical sociology of the Chicago School also reinforced the belief in the human ability to create and recreate one's own life, both individually and collectively

- American sociology witnessed a shift of hegemony from the Chicago School to the Columbia School, and the focus shifted to social policy research in the 1960s

According to Peter Wagner, 'The social sciences in general, and sociology in particular, were consolidated and modernized in the decades following World War II.' The goal of the modernizing paradigm was to explain how traditional societies could be modernized, while maintaining societal coherence. This process was called development and its goal is the establishment of a modern society. The works of Talcott Parsons, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba are prime examples of the modernization paradigm.

Parsons appropriated elements from classical European intellectual heritage to create a theory of modern societies, which were represented as systems. According to his theory, each social system was comprised of subsystems. To maintain stability of the system, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba argued that restricted political participation and exclusion of social actors, voluntarily or otherwise, was a legitimate objective for the sake of societal coherence. They recognized that liberal ideals such as liberty and autonomy were not always conducive for stability and coherence of societies.

The work of these systems theorists occurred during a phase described by Peter Wagner as 'organized modernity'. This phase was marked by an unprecedented growth of production and consumption accompanied by a relative stability of authoritative practices. This meant that this period saw limited restrictions to political liberties when compared to other epochs. The presence of economic growth, political stability and nominal liberty was treated as the final goal of all social change. Thus, modernization was defined as the process leading to the achievement of this goal. These circumstances would later provide the ground for an increased faith in those ideologies that proclaimed the 'end of history'.

As organized modernity placed restrictions on human freedom created by the boundaries of convention, certain intellectuals directed their efforts at creating ambivalence in the social structure instead of seeking a well-ordered society. Order, for them, meant placing limitations on human endeavour. So, they worked towards de-conventionalization. This questioning of the goal of a regimented society created a crisis, which Wagner denominates as the second crisis of modernity. This second crisis provided the context for the emergence of the post-modern sociological discourse.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

4. What are the three phases in Peter Wagner's scheme of political sociology?

5. How did Peter Wagner describe the phase of 'organized modernity'?

---

## 1.4 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Political sociology is characterized by two approaches—classical approach and behavioural approach. In this section, we will study these approaches in detail:

### 1.4.1 Classical Approaches to Political Sociology

Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man* (1960) and Theda Skocpol's *State and Social Revolutions* (1979) are two influential works of political sociology. However, an influential work is not necessarily a 'classic' text.

Political sociology lies at the intersection of political science and sociology. Some of the classical works and approaches in these two parent disciplines may be considered as classics of political sociology.

### What are 'Classics' and why should we study them?

A 'classic' is a work that enjoys a 'privileged position' in a given discipline. The works of William Shakespeare are considered to be classics in the field of literature because these influenced English literature in particular. Likewise, the works of Plato and Aristotle are considered classics of Western philosophy. The works of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau are some prominent examples of classics of modern political thought.

A classical work enjoys a privileged position because it establishes the fundamental criteria in a particular field. The practitioners of this particular field learn as much from classical work as they do from their contemporary scholars. The privileged position of a classical work is reinforced through their interpretation and re-interpretation by generations of scholars in search of the 'true meaning'.

Gianfranco Poggi proposed an alternative justification for studying classics. He believes that the classics of sociology contribute to one's intellectual education because they form the best material produced within the discipline in the course of its history.

### Emergence and General Characteristics of Classical Social Theory

*Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* states:

> The term 'sociology' emerged in the first half of the 19th century, when Comte used the term in a letter of 1824. It reappeared in the volume 4 of his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1838) to replace the expression 'physique sociale'.

The period between 1890 and 1920 is considered to be the classical period of sociology. During this period, sociology was established as a university discipline with professional journals as well as clear teaching and research aims.

It is believed that classical sociology was a reaction to the French Revolution and Industrial Revolution. Classical social theory gained an epistemic status of its own by consolidating its autonomy from moral and political philosophy as well as by claiming the status of being an area of systematic knowledge.

## General characteristics

Before we highlight the contributions of some of the leading classical social theorists, let us first outline the general characteristics of classical social theory.

Classical social theory was born due to people's critical attitude towards nature and human society. This critical attitude was not merely theoretical but was based on moral and political engagement with society. Although classical social theory aimed at social change, it attached primary importance to the realization of human freedom and equality. Classical social theory employed conceptual dichotomies for the analysis of societies and social change. These dichotomies are:

- Traditional versus modern
- Community versus individual
- Sacred versus secular
- Status versus contract

Are human beings free to choose their own actions or are individuals controlled by predetermined destiny or some superior force?

This question is known as the problem of freewill versus determinism. It has been one of the perennial problems of Western philosophy and is tabulated in Table 1.1. Classical social theory transformed this philosophical problem into a sociological one by which free will versus determinism was conceptualized as a problem of agency versus structure.

*Table 1.1  Problems of Western Philosophy*

| The Philosophical Problem | Determinism versus Free Will |
| --- | --- |
| Transformation from Philosophy to Sociology | Determinism $\rightarrow$ Structure<br>Free will $\rightarrow$ Agency |
| The Sociological Problem | Structure $\times$ Agency |

Structure was understood as one of the fundamental and overarching social systems and institutions like the capitalism, the market and the State. Classical social theory sought to know whether human beings were capable of altering these systems and institutions. In this context, the ability to alter is known as agency.

## European Social Theory

Out of many European scholars who influenced social and political theory since the 19th century, a few thinkers stand out as classical social theorists. There are four major classical social theorists that are discussed in this section—Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Alex de Tocqueville. There are specific reasons as to why each one of them is considered to be important.

## The question of structure and agency in marx and durkheim

Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim are reckoned to be classical social theorists because they distinguished the 'social' as a realm different from 'nature'. Durkheim's distinction of the social is important because he argued that social facts could be explained by other social facts. This meant that the study of society was an

autonomous venture, and therefore, social phenomena could not be explained through biological or psychological data alone.

## Gains of Classical Social Theory

Classical social theory questioned the relevance of transcendental entities, whose existence is questionable, as the measure of merits and weaknesses. It also brought into focus a theoretical agenda and empirical themes. While the former is constituted by studying the role of human agency within social structure, the latter deals with such human social institutions like the market, private capital and the modern democratic state.

## 'Silences' of Classical Social Theory

Classical social theory is largely silent on human societies located outside the West. When not silent, it is largely condescending and/or Eurocentric. Another area of societal study ignored by classical social theory is the subject of gender relations.

Both Marx and Durkheim believed that social structures were not permanent and changed overtime. Nonetheless, there were differences in their conceptions. For Marx, social structure was determined by the mode of economic production of a given society, whereas for Durkheim, social structure was regulated by morality and norms.

For Karl Marx, human actors (rather than social structures) make history and constitute a society. However, they do so within social relationships which are over-arching structures. These structures do not emerge from ideas but from the material base of social life, which is constituted by modes of production. These modes of production create social groups called classes.

Thus, the slave mode of production creates slave owners and serfs, while the feudal system creates lords and serfs, and the capitalist mode of production creates capitalists and wage earners. In brief, the modes of production are determined by ownership of property. The different modes of production alienate human beings from their nature, which lead to class struggles and these struggles become a motor for the evolution of society from one mode to another. Bottomore mentions:

> Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the state are continually developing out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals not as they appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are, i.e., as they are effective, produce materially, and are active under definite material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of their will. […]

> […] Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this, their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking.

## Social action in Weber

If Marx stressed on the material and Durkheim on the normative aspects for explaining the causal factors of social action, Weber attempted a multi-dimensional approach in which structure and agency, material and normative causes, were employed in the study of social action. He arrived at this method by emphasizing the viewpoint of the individual instead of the group.

This image of the individual actor was a combination of German idealism of Immanuel Kant and the economic individualism of late 19th century neoclassical economics. While Durkheim's structuralism was less voluntaristic than that of Marx, Weber's approach provided for an effective account of social action from the viewpoint of the actor.

Max Weber (1864-1920) was a German social theorist and sociologist. He was born in Berlin and taught Economics at Heidelberg until 1889. He quit this job owing to a nervous breakdown. However, he continued to be active in the public sphere as advisor to various commissions, including those that drafted the Treaty of Versailles and the Weimar Constitution. In *Economy and Society* (1914), which is a major work in social theory, Weber provided a methodological introduction to some of the basic concepts of sociology.

Weber's theory of social action is based on the interplay of individual actors, who attach subjective meaning to their actions. He specified four types of actions based on rationality. These are actions of instrumental rationality where the actor chooses the most effective means to an end; value rational actions where a goal is pursued outweighing costs and consequences; traditional action where an actor is governed by norms; and finally, affective action where an actor is prompted by unreflective desire.

Weber is considered a classical social theorist because he brought in subjective perceptions of human actors in the study of society. No account of society was acceptable to Weber if it excluded the meaning of actions of social actors. This is best seen in his explanation of the rise of capitalism. While Marx analysed capitalism in strictly economic terms, Weber emphasized the role of meaning in the development of this economic system. That meaning was in the form of religious or moral values of a certain group of social actors. He argued that values of self-discipline and moral accountability of Protestants during the 17th and 18th centuries had the unintended consequence of being conducive to entrepreneurial activity.

The problem of structure versus agency, which was a central feature of classical social theory, influenced the work of many scholars across disciplines. This will be explained in detail in the further sections. However, let us now move from sociology to political science and look at Alexis de Tocqueville, a figure who made significant strides in comparing political systems. He compared the highly centralized political structure in France to the decentralized democratic system in the United States of America. His *Democracy in America*, which is truly a *magnum opus*, is now considered to be a classic work in political sociology.

## Tocqueville's Democratic Theory and Classical Social Theory

The work of Alexis de Tocqueville is integral to classical social theory because of its contribution to the study of democratic polities. Tocqueville believed that the modern democratic state represented a major historical change as it altered previous structures of authority. Prior to the French Revolution, authority in the *ancien regime* was generally parceled into sovereignties of feudalism, aristocratic rule and the early modern state. With the coming of the modern democratic state, political authority became more centralized and was based on the principle of the 'rule of law'.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59), who was born into a French aristocratic background, rejected the aristocratic regime but nonetheless doubted the efficacy of the French Revolution. He wrote extensively and traveled widely to America, England, Switzerland, Ireland and Algeria. His writings included reports on slavery, poverty, the colonies and penitentiaries. The two volumes *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime and the Revolution* are his most well-known writings. For his writings, he was made a member of the *Academie des sciences morales et politiques* and *Academie francaise*.

Tocqueville identified political science as the art of writing which served the logic of ideas, ingenious and original. However, it was far removed from the art of governance, which was led by passions and commonplaces of the world. Tocqueville was probably speaking from his own experience as a writer of politics and its practitioner.

Tocqueville was also keen on studying the penitentiary system in the United States. His work *Democracy in America* was a consequence of this nine month long trip to America. The book was an attempt to portray the 'general traits of democratic societies of which no complete model existed'. The explicit purpose of this book was to explain and narrate how a great democratic revolution has been gradually emerging over a period of nearly seven hundred years. For Tocqueville, a democratic revolution was the gradual emergence of democracy. In his Introduction to *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville writes:

> Among the new objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, none struck my eye more vividly than the equality of conditions. […] Then I brought my thinking back to our hemisphere, and it seemed to me, I distinguished something in it analogous to the spectacle the New World offered me. I saw the equality of conditions that, without having reached its extreme limits as it had in the United States, was approaching them more each day; and the same democracy reigning in American societies appeared to me to be advancing rapidly toward power in Europe […]

How did democracy emerge? For democracy to emerge, the recognition of the principle of equality was necessary. Thus, Tocqueville wonders how this principle came to be established in Europe. He looks at the history of France and, discovering the gradual establishment of the principle of equality over the last seven hundred years, mentions that power was originally with families owning land.

Then, with the emergence of the clergy, the possibility of social mobility was realized. As kings and feudal lords became impoverished in their expensive

enterprises, the commoners gained wealth and this wealth became transferable. As wealth spread, people became enlightened and receptive to the arts.

In this classic work, Tocqueville also explains the effects of democratic system on various aspects of the American society. These include the effects on political institutions and rights of citizens; the effects on the denominations of established religions and religious beliefs such as pantheism; the cultivation of the arts like rhetoric, poetry and theater; the practice of science; the influence of democracy on manners, on girls and women, on family and wages as well as on sentiments.

Tocqueville's work brought into focus the role of political institutions in the study of societies. That is why Tocqueville's study is a classic work of political sociology.

**American Social Theory**

According to Robert Holton, the most important contributions of American classical social theorists were the theory of the individual in relation to human action and the theory of urban social structure in relation to urban space and subculture.

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) expanded the social analysis of the self. For him, the self stabilized through social interaction. If the self was not innate but was constructed socially in relation to the views of others, then the study of social groups such as black migrants, juvenile delinquents and others must be located within the spatial setting of the city. Although Mead's achievements were not received well in Europe and America, where he influenced the school of symbolic interactionism, his study of the self and interpersonal interaction went beyond the work of his European counterparts.

Mead's study of society has parallels with that of Robert Park (1864-1944), who was an important member of the Chicago School of Sociology. Park's empirical research technique of 'participant observation' was employed in the study of community and race relations within urban life. More importantly, his writings significantly influenced later generations of American scholars of sociology.

## 1.4.2 Behavioural Approaches to Political Sociology

Behavioural approach in political sociology came into being after the emergence of the behavioral sciences. This approach examines the actions of individuals rather than the characteristics of institutions in social settings.

Behaviouralists used empirical research and strict methodology to authenticate their study. This approach was important as it changed the purpose of inquiry of social theory. Behaviouralism used a number of methods such as sampling, interviewing, scoring, scaling and statistical analysis to understand political behaviour.

There is a difference between behaviouralism and behaviourism. David Easton was the first political scientist to explain the difference between these two terms. Easton laid down eight 'intellectual foundation stones' of behaviouralism:

1. **Regularities:** It deals with the explanation and generalizations of regularities in political behaviour.

2. **Commitment to verification:** It means that people should be able to verify generalizations made them.

3. **Techniques:** It refers to techniques used for verification should be testable.

4. **Quantification:** It states that result of experiments should be expressed in numbers wherever possible.

5. **Values:** It is stated that values and explanations should be kept distinct.

6. **Systemization:** It is stated that theory and research should be interlinked with the help of a proper system.

7. **Pure Science:** It states that political scientists should prefer pure sciences over applied sciences.

8. **Integration:** It states that political science should be integrated in such a manner that it becomes interdisciplinary.

Easton also believed that behaviouralism should be 'analytic rather than substantive, general rather than particular, and explanatory rather than ethical.'

This approach has been criticized by radicals as well as conservatives. According to Neal Riemer, behaviouralism does not pay attention to 'the task of ethical recommendation'. Christian Bay also criticized this approach on the grounds that it did not represent 'genuine' political research.

### 1.4.3 Perspectives of Contemporary Sociology

Contemporary sociology focuses on four perspectives, some of which are borrowed from other disciplines. These are as follows:

 (i) Structuralism

 (ii) Functionalism

 (iii) Exchange theory

 (iv) Systems theory

Let us study these perspectives in detail:

**1. Structuralism**

The word 'structure' has its origin in the Latin verb *struo-struxi-structum*, meaning order. The idea of structure was related to the disciplines of geometry and architecture. With the expansion of physical and natural sciences in the 17th century, this idea passed into the realm of modern engineering and biology. Later, it was incorporated in sociology.

> The principal feature of the structuralist method is that it takes as its object of investigation a 'system', that is, the reciprocal relations among a set of facts, rather than particular facts considered in isolation. Its basic concepts, according to Jean Piaget, are those of totality, self-regulation and transformation.
>
> Jean Piaget, 1970, *Structuralism*

### Structure and social structure

Early sociologists borrowed the idea of structure from the physical, chemical and biological sciences. Consequently, social structure was perceived in two ways—as a social organism and as a social mind. In the former, society was considered to be similar to a biological organism and in the latter society appeared akin to a soul. Sociologists who perceived society as a social organism relied on material interdependence, while those who perceived society as a social mind focused on flow of ideas, thus, shaping the 'spirit of a society'.

### Emergence of Structuralism

Structuralism rejected the idea of human freedom and choice, and focused on the manner in which various structures determine human behaviour. The earliest work on this subject was Claude Lévi-Strauss's volume *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. In this work, he analysed kinship systems from a structural viewpoint. In the late 1950s, he published *Structural Anthropology*. By the early 1960s, structuralism developed as a significant movement and some people believed that it provided a single unified approach to human life that included all disciplines.

Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida studied structuralism in the context of literature. Blending Freud, De Saussure and Jacques Lacan used structuralism in studying psychoanalysis, while Jean Piaget used the concepts of structuralism to study psychology. According to Piaget, structuralism is 'a method and not a doctrine' and 'there exists no structure without a construction, abstract or genetic'. Michel Foucault's book *The Order of Things* analysed the history of science to examine how structures of epistemology or episteme, shaped the manner in which people thought of knowledge and knowing. Similarly, Thomas Kuhn, in his seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* addressed the structural formations of science.

French theorist Louis Althusser blended the theory of Marx and structuralism. He is famous for introducing his own style of structural social analysis that gave rise to 'structural Marxism'. After this, several authors in France and other nations have extended structural analysis to almost every discipline. Thus, the definition of 'structuralism' also changed from time to time.

### Structural Marxism

The main structuralist current in Marxist thought has its source in the work of Louis Althusser, a French philosopher. According to Althusser, Marx constructed a science of human practice in the economic, political, ideological and scientific terrains, which are located within the structure of a social totality.

In *For Marx* (1965) and *Reading capital* (1966), Althusser tried to show that human subjectivity was consciously excluded. This was due to a distinct break that occurred in the development of Marxism around 1845. Althusser's aim seems to have been to convert Marxism into something scientific rather than ideological. He seems to claim that Marxism is complete and does not require intellectual assistance from Existentialists, Phenomenologists or Christian theology—schools of philosophical thought that were then in existence in Europe.

Structuralism within Marxist thought stands opposed to the theories propounded by Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci and the members of the Frankfurt School, all of whom stressed the role of human consciousness and action in determining human history.

**Theory of Structuration**

The word 'structuration' was introduced by Anthony Giddens into social theory. Structuration theory was the consequence of the theoretical expansion witnessed by social sciences in the 1960s. It was aimed at bringing some kind of order within the theoretical framework of human and social sciences. Specifically, it sought to resolve the problem of 'duality of structuralism', which was the central problem of social theory.

The term 'duality of structure' refers to the relationship between structure and agency. Social structure is used by active human agents to transform social phenomena. Therefore, structuration requires conceptualization of the nature of structure, of the agents who use structure, and the mutual interaction between structure and agency. As the task of sociology is to explain the transformation of social phenomena which are structured, the concept of structuration becomes a core concept. This resulted in the theories of structuration of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu in the 1970s.

The theory of structuration is reflected in Anthony Giddens' works such as *Positivism and Sociology* (1974), *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976), and *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979). Giddens' structuration theory is the consequence of his belief that classical sociology was limited in its ability to explain the dynamics of the modern world.

The structuration theory of Giddens investigates the intersection of the long-term existence of institutions, the long duration of institutional time and the duration of daily life. Another important element of the structuration theory of Giddens is the duality of structure and agency, because neither of these has an independent existence. The power of agency to influence structure depends on the agent's knowledge of the legacy of structure.

Pierre Bourdieu is another scholar whose work is important to understand the structuration theory, although he preferred to use the term 'generic structuralism' instead of structuration. For Bourdieu, structures are orders of economic, political, social and cultural capital, and beneficiaries of these orders are agents. When agents defend or increase their holding, realignments occur within the distributional structure.

**2. Functionalism in Sociology**

The functionalist perspective analyses how parts of a society are structured to maintain the stability of the entire society. Functionalists do not make value judgments on social phenomena instead they explain how a particular social phenomenon is reproduced. Three kinds of functions are commonly used in the functionalist perspective namely manifest, latent and dysfunctions. The first term refers to openly

stated functions of social phenomena; the second refers to unconscious, covert or hidden purposes; and the third refers to those social phenomena that disrupt the social system.

The origins of functionalism in sociology may be traced to Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer. However, it became a dominant school of analysis in the mid twentieth century.

### Structural Functional Approach

Structural functionalism is a broad perspective in sociology and anthropology which interprets society as a structure with interrelated parts. Talcott Parsons', 'structural functionalism' came to describe a particular stage in methodological development of social science rather than a specific school of thought. Parsons called his theory 'action theory' and argued that the term 'structural functionalism' was an inappropriate name for his theory.

Herbert Spencer, a British philosopher, popular for applying the theory of natural selection to society was in many ways the first sociological functionalist. Durkheim is widely considered the most important functionalist.

### Talcott

The concept of 'structural functionalism' is derived from the writings of Talcott Parsons. Parsons inserted 'structure' into 'functionalism', i.e., he analysed society as a living entity in a structure of its own. The social system had many sub-systems. The coherent functioning of the sub-systems ensured the stability of the entire social system. A social system could survive only if it was able to adapt to its environment.

As a society needs a sense of belongingness to remain integrated as a community, codes of behaviour and social control were created. The value system is reinforced by the kinship system and other social institutions. It was through the value system that an individual was integrated into a society. The integration took place through socialization, institutions of social control and the efficient performance of social roles by the members of a given society. Like Emile Durkheim, Parsons emphasized the role of morality within the value system.

Parsons tried to show how society functioned as a stable system through patterns of institutionalized culture. Social institutions and values of a particular society are instilled within an individual through roles, norms and expectations in order to ensure the stability of societies.

The works of Parsons has been criticized as being conservative because it failed to explain sudden social upheavals. Many critics believed that his portrayal of the individual in a society appeared to be that of a puppet who does not have any free will.

### Robert Merton

Merton tried to deal with the drawbacks of Parsons' theory of functional unity. He tried to make his theory more practical by developing concept of deviance and by demarcating manifest and latent functions.

Merton states that all parts of a society do not work for its functional unity. Some institutions may have some other functions and some of them may be totally dysfunctional. Another possibility is that some institutions might be dysfunctional for some and not for others. This is because not all structures are functional for the whole society. At this point, Merton introduced components of power and coercion which may lead to struggle and conflicts. Merton states 'just as the same item may have multiple functions, so the same function be diversely fulfilled by alternative items.' He also states that it is absurd to believe that the existing structures and institutions are indispensable for the society.

Merton's theory of deviance has been originated from Durkheim's *idea of anomie*. To Merton, anomie means discontinuity between cultural goals and accepted methods which are available for reaching the goals.

Merton believes that there are five situations that an individual faces:

- **Rebellion:** This situation occurs when an individual uses his own goals and means without considering the goals and means of his society.
- **Ritualism:** It occurs when an individual continues to do as prescribed but is popular for achieving goals.
- **Tentative:** It occurs when an individual rejects goal and means prescribed by the society in order to achieve his goals.
- **Conformity:** Such situations occur when an individual is able to achieve his cultural goals.
- **Innovation:** It occurs when an individual tries to achieve his goals using unaccepted new methods.

Society tries to negate the changes till the time it can compel an individual but when the individual rebels, society either adapts or faces dissolution. Merton also demarcated manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions are forced as conscious intentions of an individual and latent functions are objective and unintended consequence of their actions.

### 3. Exchange Theory

Exchange theories are a mixture of utilitarian economics, functional anthropology, conflict sociology and behavioural psychology. In the strict economic sense, human beings are viewed as seeking to maximize material benefits. Exchange theory is one of the prominent perspectives in sociology. It seeks to explain social relations in terms of an exchange of social and material resources that forms the basis of interactions between people. Within exchange theory, two approaches can be identified—collectivist and individualist.

Marcel Mauss insisted that the individuals involved in the exchange actually represent the moral codes of the group. Exchange theories in anthropological studies have collectivist approach. On the other hand, modern exchange theories that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s adopt individualist approach. We shall take a brief look at the exchange theories of George Homans, Peter Blau and Richard Emerson.

Their work merge the behaviourist traditions of psychology and the utilitarian school of economics in explaining issues of power, conflict and inequality.

George Homans' work adopts the behaviouristic approach in explaining the actions of individuals. He established certain propositions about human social actions, which are listed as follows:

- **The success proposition:** If the actions of an individual are rewarded, it is likely that he/she would perform that action as often as these actions are rewarded.

- **The stimulus proposition:** If a person has been rewarded in the past for acting under a particular stimulus, or a set of stimuli, then, he is likely to perform that action in the future as well under similar circumstances.

- **The value proposition:** If the result of an action is valuable to a person, it is likely that he would perform that action more often.

- **The deprivation-satiation proposition:** If a person has received a particular reward in the recent past, any further unit of that reward becomes less valuable for him.

- **The aggression-approval proposition:** This proposition is divided into two parts: part A and part B. Part A: When a person's action does not receive the reward he expected or receives punishments that he did not expect, he is more likely to perform aggressive behaviour. The results of such behaviour become valuable to him. Part B: When a person's action receives rewards he expected, especially a greater reward than he expected, or does not receive punishment that he expected, he would be pleased. He is more likely to perform approving behaviour and the result of such behaviour becomes more valuable to him.

- **The rationality proposition:** In choosing between alternative actions, a person will choose that action in which the probability of getting the desired result is greater.

  Homans also recognized that people do not always attempt to maximize profit but tend to seek some profit in exchange relations. Exchanges could be money or things such as approval, esteem, compliance, love, affection and other less materialistic goods.

  Peter Blau, in his *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (1964), stated that rewards can be classified into money, social approval, esteem or compliance. Money is often an inappropriate and the least valuable reward. The most valuable class of rewards was the compliance with one's request because it was a sign of power.

  Richard Emerson attempts to conceptualize social structure where actors are seen as points in a system of interconnections. Thus, network analysis describes the flow of events among actors.

## 4. Systems Theory

The word 'system' in political science represents a variety of entities such as legislature, political parties, labour unions, nations and states. Systems are abstractions

of real society, thus, any social phenomenon may be viewed as a system. Variables of a system include structures, functions, actors, values, norms, goals, inputs, outputs, response and feedback.

The literature on systems theories dominated the field of comparative politics in the1950s. David Easton employed the concept of political system in his book *The Political System* (1953). A few years later, Gabriel Almond offered a conceptualization of 'system' in a study titled 'Comparative Political Systems', which was published in the *Journal of Politics* (1956). Some of the recent theorists of systems are Gabriel Almond, David Apter, Leonard Binder, James Coleman, David Easton, S. N. Eisenstadt, Arend Lipjhart, Fred Riggs, Edward Shils and F. X. Sutton. Systems theory in political science has multiple origins. Biology, cybernetics, economics and sociology have especially influenced the works of systems theorists in political science.

**David Easton's General Systems Theory**

Canadian political scientist, David Easton is currently a Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Irvine.

He was once the President of the American Political Science Association and also President of the International Committee on Social Science Documentation. For several years he was active in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was one of the primary leaders of the behaviouralist and post-behaviouralist revolutions of political science during the 1950s and 1970s. The most popular definition of politics was given by Easton. He identified the political system with the 'authoritative allocation of values for a society'. He is also known for his application of the systems theory to the study of political science. He has served as a consultant to many prominent organizations and written many influential scholarly publications. He has written many articles and books on the analysis of political systems and modern political theory.

The ostensible purpose of David Easton's classic work *The Political System* was to 'win back for theory its proper and necessary place'. The idea of a political system was a part of his attempt to define political science and awarding it a place as an independent field of study.

> Essentially, in defining political science, what we are seeking are concepts to describe the most obvious and encompassing properties of the political system. [...], the idea of a political *system* proves to be an appropriate and indeed unavoidable starting point in this search. […] a system which is part of the total social system and yet which, for purposes of analysis and research, is temporarily set apart. […] In short, political life constitutes a concrete political system which is an aspect of the whole social system.

David Easton's systems theory was stimulated by the theoretical work of Charles Merriam, George Catlin and Harold Laswell. Easton sought to extend the domain of political science. His theory was influenced by the works of Talcott Parsons, Merton, Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski. Thus, Easton's framework for political science was the product of an interdisciplinary exploration.

### Gabriel Almond's Structural Functionalism

Gabriel Almond was an American Political Scientist who was best known for his pioneering work on comparative politics as well as political development and culture.

Almond chaired the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Comparative Politics for many years and was also president of the American Political Science Association. He was also the first recipient of the Karl Deutsch Award of the International Political Science Association.

Almond broadened the field of political science in the 1950s by integrating into his work, approaches from sociology, psychology and anthropology. He systematically studied comparative political development and culture as part of his examination of foreign policy. In *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (1966), Gabriel Almond and co-author G. Bingham Powell suggest several cultural and functional ways to measure the development of societies.

Gabriel Almond's theory of structural functionalism was influenced by David Easton, Max Weber and Talcott Parsons. It evolved through a number of phases. In Almond's formulation, the modern political system is different from the traditional one on two major dimensions. While the modern political system is characterized by structural differentiation and is secular, the traditional one is characterized by structural non-differentiation and is theocratic. Structural differentiation means that there are structures in the political system that have 'a functional distinctiveness, and which tend to perform a regulatory role in relation to that function within the political system as a whole.'

From Easton, Almond adopted the notion of *system* as an 'inclusive concept which covers all of the patterned actions relevant to the making of political decisions.' 'Totality' referred to the system, and 'changing equilibrium' referred to interactions among the units of the system. The influence of Weber and Parsons led him to analyse political systems of action. Thus, he did not focus on institutions, organizations or groups rather he focused on roles. Roles were the interacting units of the political system and structures, and represented the patterns of interaction.

While David Easton put forth the framework of inputs, outputs and feedback in political system, Almond reworked it into four inputs and three outputs. The four inputs were political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation and political communication. The three outputs were rule making, rule application and rule adjudication. The three outputs correspond to the traditional separation of powers within the government, i.e., within the legislature, the executive and the judiciary respectively.

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's book titled *The Civic Culture* (1963) studied and analysed political attitudes and democracy in five countries: the USA, the UK, West Germany, Italy and Mexico. They identified three general types of political culture: participant, subject and parochial culture.

The participant political culture was the one in which individuals were active and involved in the system as a whole, and regarded popular participation as both desirable and effective. In the subject political culture, individuals recognized that

their capacity to influence government is limited, thus, they did not participate in the processes of policy-making. The parochial political culture was the one where individuals identified with their locality rather than with the nation, and had low expectations and awareness of government. While the participant culture was the closest to the ideal of democracy, Almond and Verba said that the civic culture was a blend of all the three political cultures.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

6. Name two influential works of political sociology.
7. How did classical social theory transform philosophical problem into a sociological one?
8. What was the central feature of classical social theory?
9. What was essential for the emergence of democracy?
10. How did behaviouralism understand political behaviour?

---

## 1.5 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND POLITICS: CASTE AND CLASS

The concept of social stratification came into existence in the 1940s. The term 'stratification' was borrowed from Geology. Geologists viewed the earth as the layering of rocks, wherein each layer had its own composition and was distinct from other layers. Similarly, sociologists opine that society consists of different strata in a hierarchy where the most privileged are at the top and the least privileged at the bottom.

Sociologists believe that the rich have better life chances than the poor because of their accessibility to quality education, safe neighbourhood, nutritional diet, health care facilities, police protection, and a wide range of goods and services. Max Weber's term 'life chances' refers to the extent to which individuals have access to important societal resources such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. There is scarcity of resources in the society due to their unequal distribution among different social groups.

Societies distinguish people by their race, caste, age and gender as well. This kind of stratification results in inequality. A nation's position in the system of global stratification also affects the system of stratification in a society. Thus, we can say that division of society into strata results in social stratification. Now, let us see how different sociologists and critics define stratification.

**Definitions of Stratification**

P. Gisbert says that 'social stratification is the division of society into permanent groups of categories linked to each other by the relationship of superiority and subordination'.

According to William J. Goode, 'Stratification is the system through which resources and rewards are distributed and handed down from generation to generation.'

Chris Barkar opines that social stratification involves 'classification of persons into groups based on shared socio-economic conditions...a relational set of inequalities with economic, social, political and ideological dimensions'.

Based on these definitions of social stratification, we can list out the attributes of social stratification as follows:

- Unequal distribution of power, privileges, prestige, resources, and rewards
- Rank-status groups based on the criteria by which power, privileges and prestige are distributed
- The notion of high and low positions in the interaction and relations between these groups
- Prevalence of step-wise social inequality among different social groups in a given society

### 1.5.1 Principles of Social Stratification

Some of the principles of social stratification are as follows:

(i) **Social stratification is a trait of society, not of an individual:** Social stratification reflects social traits and not individual traits. For example, irrespective of individual traits, children born into wealthy families enjoy better health, better schooling, better career opportunities, and improved life chances *vis-à-vis* those children who are born in poor families.

(ii) **Social stratification carries over from generation to generation:** The division of society into a hierarchy is not a one-generation affair, it continues from generation to generation. People who are in higher stratum of society pass their land, properties, and titles to their inheritors. There could be upward and downward mobility in their status, but they are viewed with respect in the society. In contrast, neo-rich families are not given the same respect.

(iii) **Social stratification is universal but varies from society to society:** Social stratification is found in all societies but the basis of stratification may vary. In primitive society, social stratification was on the basis of physical strength. However, in industrial society and socialist society, basis of stratification are wealth and power, respectively.

(iv) **Social stratification includes not just inequality but beliefs:** Social stratification not only stratifies society on the basis of inequality but also establishes beliefs and norms among the people. People who are in the lower strata of society believe that they are at the lower position and behave according to their class position.

## 1.5.2 Forms of Social Stratification

Historically, human societies have four basic forms of social stratification. These are (a) slavery, (b) estate, (c) class and (d) caste (Figure 1.1). Now, let us discuss these forms in detail:

(a) **Slavery:** It is one of the extreme forms of inequality. Under this system, slaves are treated as property by their owners. Some social analysts believe that there have been five slave societies in the recorded history. Here, slave societies mean those places where slavery affected the social and economic conditions to a great extent. These societies were ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, the United States, the Caribbean, and Brazil.
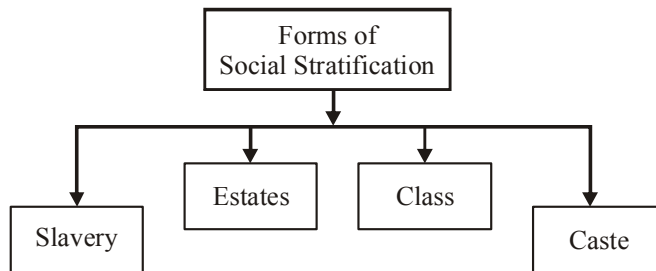


*Fig. 1.1 Forms and Social Stratification*

L. T. Hobhouse says that slave is a man whom law and custom regard as property of some other person. He further states that in some cases, slaves do not have any rights, and in other cases, they may be victims of cruelty. According to Thomas Burton Bottomore, the basis of slavery is always economic.

In the 1600s, the United States imported slaves; which was a legal practice in the United States in those days. This is evident from the fact that the early presidents of the United States, such as George Washington, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson owned slaves.

Some of the characteristics of slavery, as practiced in the United States, are as follows:

- Slavery was hereditary in nature, that is, children of slaves were also considered slaves.
- Slaves were not treated like human beings as they were considered owners' property.
- Slaves did not have any rights.
- Slaves were treated in a cruel manner.

Most of the slaves considered themselves powerless, thus, they did not attempt to bring a change in the system. However, some tried to challenge the system and their position by being careless in their work, working at a slow speed, not working at all, and running away from their master's house. This practice has officially ended many years ago.

Many sociologists opine that the ideologies of equality and justice have led to the abolition of slavery from the world. Other reasons behind the abolition of this practice include denunciation of slavery as a barbaric institution and the inefficiency of slave labour.

However, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) stated that the legacy of slavery is deeply embedded in the United States even in the present scenario which can be seen in the current patterns of prejudice and discrimination against African Americans.

Economist Stanley L. Engerman also believed that the world is not completely free from slavery. In this context, he says that slavery cannot end from the world as long as there are 'debt bondage, child labour, contract labour, and other varieties of coerced work for limited periods of time, with limited opportunities for mobility, and with limited political and economic power'.

(b) **Estates:** The system of estates was prevalent in many traditional civilizations, including European feudalism. The feudal society was divided into three different estates. The first estate included clergy, the second included aristocracy and gentry, and the third included common people. Each estate had different obligations and rights.

According to Bottomore, some of the characteristics of estates are as follows:
- Feudal estates were political groups
- Each estate had a defined legal status based on its privileges and obligations

There was clear division of labour among these estates. Each estate had to perform certain functions. The nobility had to defend all estates from enemies, the clergy had to pray for all estates, and the commoners had to produce food for all estates.

Growing industrialization weakened the estate system in Europe.

(c) **Class:** Social class means a group of people in a society who have similar levels of wealth, power and status. There are three methods which are used for the determination of social class. These are as follows:

  (i) **Objective method:** Under this method, sociologists use 'hard facts' for the determination of social class.
  (ii) **Subjective method:** Under this method, sociologists ask various questions from people to know their perception about their own class.
  (iii) **Reputational method:** In this method, various questions are asked from people of different social classes to know their perception about other classes.

According to Barbara Katz Rothman, 'Class system is a type of stratification based on the ownership and control of resources and on the type of work people do.' This form of social stratification is not fixed as it is achieved by people on the basis of their property, profession and achievements. Thus, it is flexible and changeable. Change of class can take place with the help of social mobility, be it upward mobility or downward mobility.

Members of a class have common economic interest and class consciousness. There is no concrete, objective or scientific criterion of class structure. Sociologists have considered family, property, lifestyle, prestige, residential place, type of house, children's school, membership of associations and clubs, for determining class-status. Karl Marx analysed two types of class: (i) bourgeoisie, and (ii) proletariat. According to Marxist theory, bourgeoisie is the ruling class which consists of capitalists, manufacturers, bankers, and other employers; and proletariat is the working class. The former class owns the means of production, whereas the latter sells their labour in order to survive.

According to Bottomore, there are four types of classes. These are:

- Upper class
- Middle class
- Working class
- Peasantry

People who belong to the upper class are exceptionally rich. They live in exclusive regions and send their children to the best schools. They are influential and powerful people. The middle class consists of white-collar workers and professional groups. The working class includes industrial skilled and semi-skilled workers who are minimally educated and engage in manual labour. People who belong to the peasantry class earn their livelihood by cultivation and allied occupations.

(d) **Caste:** The term 'caste' is derived from a Portuguese term *casta* meaning breed or race. André Béteille (1965) defines caste in the following words:

A small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation, and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system, based on concepts of purity and pollution.

Many people believe that caste system is only present in Indian society, however, sociologists say that it is found in many parts of south Asia. Some of the characteristics of the caste system in India are as follows:

- **Name:** Each caste has a name. Every caste claims its origin from some mythological ancestors, rishis or natural objects.
- **Hereditary:** It means that Indian social stratification is largely based on caste system. The membership of caste is determined by birth. Thus, caste is hereditary in nature.
- **Hierarchy:** Indian caste system is distributed in five major strata. These are as follows:
    (i) Brahmins, or the priestly class
    (ii) Kshatriyas, or the warrior or ruler class
    (iii) Vaishyas, or the merchants, farmers and skilled artisans
    (iv) Shudras, or the labourers and those performing polluted works

(v) Untouchables, or those people who lay outside this caste system, and in a sense form a fifth category

In the hierarchy of the caste system in India, Brahmin occupied the summit of the social pyramid. The occupation of Brahmins is to perform rituals which is considered the purest occupation, thus, they are placed at the top of the hierarchy.

The next place in the hierarchy is that of Kshatriyas who are warriors. Vaishyas occupy the third place in the hierarchy. Shudras are at the bottom of the hierarchy as their occupation is cleaning and scavenging which is considered an 'impure' occupation (Figure 1.2).
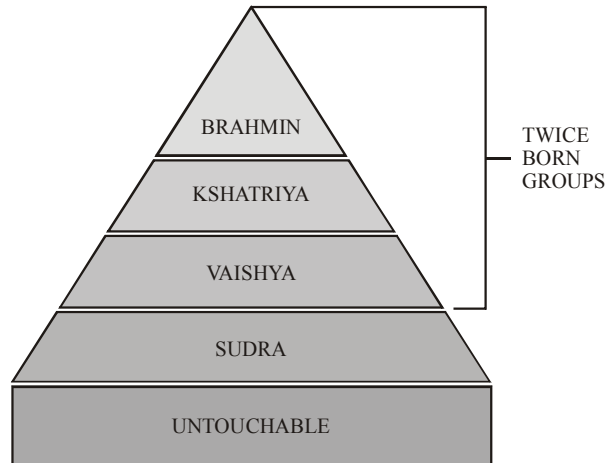


*Fig. 1.2  Hierarchy of Indian Caste System*

Following is a list of restrictions that is imposed on different castes in India:

- **Restrictions on food and drink:** According to the caste system, different castes do not share food and drinks. There are two types of food, *pucca* (food prepared in ghee like *puri*, *kachori* and *pulao*) and *kachcha* (food prepared in water like rice, pulses and vegetable curries). Some castes exchange only *pucca* food among themselves. Generally, high castes do not take anything from low castes. For instance, Brahmins do not take food from any other caste.

- **Endogamy:** The caste system is an endogamous group, that is, inter-caste marriages are prohibited. However, among educated people, particularly in the urban areas, inter-caste marriages are gradually becoming common.

- **Purity and pollution:** The caste system is based on the notion of 'purity and pollution'. Purity and pollution are judged in terms of deeds, occupation, language, dress patterns and food habits. For example, liquor consumption, consuming non-vegetarian food, working in occupations like sweeping, carrying garbage and lifting dead animals are considered 'impure'. People of high castes are not supposed to indulge in 'polluted' activities. However, these kinds of notions are diminishing day by day, especially in urban areas.

- **Occupational association:** Each caste is given a specific occupation. For instance, Brahmins perform rituals, Kshatriyas are warriors, Vaishyas are

engaged in business, and Shudras are engaged in works like sweeping. However, due to industrialization and urbanization, new job opportunities are available to people. Thus, some people have shifted from their traditional occupation.

- **Permission to participate in social and religious activities:** People of low castes are debarred from participating in various social and religious activities. For instance, they are not allowed to enter temples. However, these rules have changed considerably; these restrictions are hardly found today.
- **Determination of the direction of a person's life:** The caste controls almost the entire life of man. It lays down rules like what and with whom he could eat, what occupations he can take up and whom he can marry.
- **Caste panchayat:** Each caste has its own council and caste panchayat, which deals with caste disputes.
- **Distinct style of life:** Each caste has its own style of living such as customs and dress pattern. In addition, they also have their own gods and goddesses, rituals and folklore.

**Mythological Background of Indian Caste System**

According to the *Rig Veda*, a sacred text which is approximately 3000 years ago, Brahma created a primordial man out of clay. The ancestors of the four caste groups sprang from various parts of his body.

Brahmins sprang from his mouth and were given the task of fulfilling spiritual needs of the community. Kshatriyas sprang from his arms and they were entrusted with the task of protecting people of other castes. Vaishyas sprang from thighs and were asked to take care of commerce and agriculture. Shudras sprang from feet and they were to perform manual labour. Thus, each group had an important role in the functioning of the society. A fifth category named 'untouchables' was conceptualized later. The untouchables were supposed to carry out menial work related to decay and dirt.

**Historical Background of Indian Caste System and Varna**

The Sanskrit word *varna* means 'colour'. The early Aryans used the colour of the skin to differentiate themselves from the dark-skinned non-Aryans. This was the first division in Indian society.

The Aryan brought numerous slaves from the conquered non-Aryan population and named them *dasas*. The institution of slavery in Aryan society had a profound influence on the development of caste system, on one hand, and the status of women on the other. The slaves were given menial tasks which involved strenuous physical labour. The large number of female slaves in these societies lowered the status of women in general.

Gradually, with the growth of a composite 'Indian race', Aryans lost their distinct social identity. *Dasas* now became accepted as members of this composite community and were called Shudras. The composite society then got divided into

four groups namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. In the course of time, numerous racial and tribal groups came together and each of these became a separate caste. It is possible that with the assimilation of such groups, the institution of untouchability came into being.

In the early religious texts, there are references that Brahmins avoided the sight or presence of Shudra at the time of recitation of sacred texts or performance of rituals. For instance, it is written in a religious text that a Brahmin must interrupt his study of sacred texts if he discovers that there is a Shudra present. Such references clearly show that the custom of considering Shudra as unclean and his presence as polluting had made its appearance as early as the 2nd century BC. This ritualistic 'untouchability' soon developed into life long 'untouchability' for Shudras.

Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who came to India in the early part of the 7th century AD, mentioned that groups like the 'Chandalas' were required to warn the passerby of their coming or their presence on the road by striking two blocks of wood against each other. This shows that the institution of untouchability had been firmly established in the society by then.

The caste system is still prevalent in India. However, it is undergoing a lot of changes due to industrialization, urbanization, modern education, means of communication, and transportation.

### 1.5.3 Theories of Caste System

There are a number of theories on the origin of caste system. It is because the caste system is a complex phenomenon. There is no unanimity among scholars about its origin. Let us study some of the theories of caste system.

(i) **Traditional Theory:** The sources of the emergence of this theory are *Vedas*, *Shastras*, *Upanishads* and *Dharmshastras*. This theory states that Lord Brahma created a primordial man out of clay. The ancestors of the four varna groups sprang from various parts of his body. Further, the theory states other castes emerged through the process hypergamy and miscegenation of the varnas.

Critics opine that this theory explains the emergence of varnas but fails to explain the creation of various castes among varnas. On these grounds, they find this theory irrational and inaccurate. Many critics feel that caste does not emerge merely through the process of hypergamy and intermarriages, and that several other factors are responsible for this phenomenon.

(ii) **Racial Theory:** Some sociologists like G. S. Ghurye, Herbert Risley and N. K. Dutta believe that caste emerged due to racial mixture and miscegenation. Risley adds that castes came into existence with the advent of Aryans to India during 1500 BC. When Aryans invaded India and won battles from non-Aryans, they believed that they were physically, culturally or racially superior to the defeated races of India.

After sometime, Aryans began to marry non-Aryan women. In this way, hypergamy began to be practised but hypogamy was prohibited. Whenever

the rules of hypergamy and hypogamy were disobeyed, the child of that union was called *varna-sankara*. Further, this group developed into a distinct caste. In this process, several other castes emerged.

Ghurye too agreed with Risley's theory of caste. He believed that the racial and cultural contact between Aryans and non-Aryans are the determining factors of the origin of the caste system. He held the view that to maintain the purity of blood, Aryans prohibited hypogamy.

This theory has been criticized on various grounds. Critics believe that racial mixture is a significant factor of the origin of caste, but it is not the sole factor. Thus, they criticize this theory because it does not mention other significant factors. Some of them question that if racial contact is a dominant factor of emergence of caste then why this system could emerge only in India.

(iii) **Religious Theory:** A. M. Hocart and Emile Senart are the proponents of this theory. According to Hocart, caste system came into existence due to religious practices and rituals. Religion held an important place in ancient India.

The king, who was considered the representative of God, was the chief of religious as well as administrative works. Religious works were performed in the form of *yagya*, *havans* and *bali* (offerings to God). These rituals were performed after the contributions made by several groups like Brahmins recited hymns for *havans*, potters used to make utensils for religious practices, and gardeners used to bring flowers for worship. These groups were divided into different social strata according to the 'purity' of their respective works.

This theory is criticized because it considers religion as the only determining factor of caste. Thus, it is a unilateral theory that ignores other factors.

(iv) **Occupational Theory:** J. C. Nesfield propounded this theory. He said that 'function and function alone is responsible for the origin of caste system'. He criticized racial and religious theories of caste and claimed that occupation is the only determining factor of caste.

Nesfield states that occupation of most of the castes is fixed to a large extent. It is because caste is determined by the occupation which a man's forefathers were in. The high and low rank of caste depends on 'pollution and purity' of their jobs. The people who were in the occupations which were considered to be 'pure' in that society were ranked higher in the hierarchy of the caste system than the people who performed 'impure' jobs.

Sir Denzil Ibbetson states that the process of formation of caste has three stages. The first stage was tribal stage when people had some knowledge of all the current works. The second stage was of professional association in which every occupation had its own association. In the third stage, these occupational groups developed into hereditary groups and took the form of caste.

John Henry Hutton criticized this theory on the ground that these types of 'professional groups' developed in other parts of the world as well, but there was no development of caste in those parts.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

11. What are the four basic forms of social stratification in human societies?

12. Name the three methods which are used used for the determination of social class.

13. How does Marxist theory define the bourgeoisie and the proletariat?

---

## 1.6 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF POWER, AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY

Political sociology concerns itself with power in the broadest sense. In order to investigate how power operates, Political sociology takes into consideration not only the states but also many primary and secondary groups in society. Political sociology emphasizes that there is no difference between the power of the state and the power to be found at any level of society. Hence, to understand the character and operation of political power. political sociology places it in the perspective of social variables.

Political power is essentially conditioned by the social process and political power will differ according to the variations in the nature and working of the social process. Thus, the same set of political institutions generates different results in different social environments. Political sociology also seeks to analyse political power against the background of the social process, but moves on further to investigate the pattern of the distribution of political power.

The English noun 'power' derives from the Latin word '*potere*', which stresses potentiality and means 'to be able'. The term 'power' is identifiable with some terms like influence, coercion, force, domination, authority, control and the like, but it has its own meaning on the basis of which it is differentiated from all other related themes. In other words, we can say that the term power means the ability to affect or control the decisions, policies, values or fortunes of others. The reasons behind discussing the concept of power in political sociology are as follows:

1. Power is not merely a political or economic phenomenon but is a social phenomenon.

2. Power has the ability to determine behaviour of others in accord with one's own wishes.

After World War II, the behaviouralists affirmed that politics is about power and consists of relationships of subordination, of dominance and submission of the governors and the governed. The study of politics is the study of these relationships. According to Lasswell and Kaplan, politics is a discipline is the study of the shaping and sharing of political power. It is the study of the influence and influential. Morgenthau also describes that the re-examination of the Western tradition must start with the assumption that power politics, rooted in the lust for power, which is common to all

men, for this reason, is inseparable from social life itself. Following are a few branches where power operates:

1. **Political power:** Political power belongs to the State and it manifests itself through executive, legislature, bureaucracy, judiciary, military and police. The state exhibits political power through the agencies of a government and this power is shared by elites, political parties, political leaders, pressure groups.

   A liberal would say political power is dispersed and diffused and it varies from hands to hands, whereas a Marxist would say power is concentrated in the dominant class which never permits its replacement. It is widely accepted that because of possessing the political power, the capitalist class is capable of exploiting and oppressing the working class.
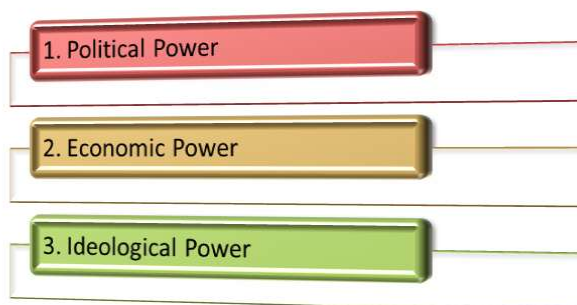
   

   *Fig. 1.3 Forms of Power*

2. **Economic power:** Economic power depends upon the political power. It manifests itself in the ownership and control of national wealth. It is true that economic power manifests itself in the form of ownership and control of the land and other means of production and distribution.

   In the view of the liberals, economic power is diffused throughout the society and anybody can get his/her share on the basis of merit or hard work. Economic and political powers are closely associated. So, if a dominant class has economic power, political power automatically concentrates in its hands.

3. **Ideological power:** The word 'ideology' was propounded by French theorist Destutt de Tracy in 1797. The term 'ideology' signifies a set of ideas ranging from one desiring change in the prevailing order to another striving for a total transformation of a society. Ideological power is born of a set of ideas having a strong faith at its core.

   Therefore, the people of dominant caste or class propagate and implement ideas that are suitable to their interest. In this context the press, radio, television and all the agencies of mass communication play a crucial role. The Church, parties, schools, groups and numerous unions play their part in popularizing and establishing a particular type of ideology and also collectively constitute 'ideological apparatus of the State' (ISA). According to Althusser:

   Marx says that the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.

## 1.6.1 Authority and Legitimacy

Authority is a type of power that articulates, orders or controls the actions of others through commands which are effective because those who are commanded look upon the command as legitimate. Authority is different from coercive control because the latter generates conformity with its prescriptions and commands through its ability to punish or reward.

In simple words, authority is the legal and legitimate power. Due to its legitimacy, the power addressee recognizes the authority of the power holder. In a democracy, it emanates from the constitution that expresses people's sovereignty and guarantees legality of the law. Furthermore, authority doesn't simply imply command and obedience but also involves the ideas of rationality and criticism. Weber provides a sociological explanation of people's compliance to authority rather than philosophically analysing the concept of authority.



*Fig. 1.4 Classification of Authority*

### Types of Authority

There are three types of authority: traditional authority, charismatic authority and rational-legal authority. Traditional authority rests on customs and prescription. It commands obedience of the people on the basis of unwritten but internally binding rules that are customary, religious or historical, e.g., authority of the tribal chief and the divine rights of Kings. Some examples of charismatic authority were Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela.

Political sociology apparently favours the last without denying the existence of the first two. The first two, however, are rejected since they weaken the society. The modern and developed society advocates rational-legal authority. Hence, political sociology disfavours unlimited power. It has to be adjusted according to the democratic relationship between the power holder and the power addressee. Political power in a society is unequally distributed. In every society, the elite rule the masses or non-elites. Further, it is also true that there is not one but several elites in a society. Power, therefore, is pluralistic in nature.

## 1.6.2 Max Weber: Power, Domination, Legitimacy and Authority

According to Max Weber, power is an aspect of social relationships and refers to the likelihood of imposing one's will upon the behaviour of another person(s). He

stated that power is present in social interactions and generates circumstances of inequality because the one who possesses power imposes it on others. The consequences of power vary among different circumstances. In one way, it depends on the ability of the powerful individual to exercise power. In another way, it depends upon the degree to which it is resisted or opposed by others. Weber states that power may be exercised in almost all walks of life.

Weber stated that 'power' (*macht*) as a common concept is different from 'domination' (*herschaft*) as a definite phenomenon. Power is referred as an actor's probability to impose his/her will on another (even if opposed by the latter) in social relationships. We can say that 'power is the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action'.

The essential proposition of the Weberian theory of power is that the extent of power depends upon the nature of compliance over the one on whom it is being exercised. In other words, the extent of power is more if the prospect of submission to the will of the one who holds it is greater. It can be securely stated that the power of an individual(s) is measured in terms of the prospect(s) of imposing the will.

Weber distinguishes three types of authority:

1. **Rational-legal authority:** It is based on ordinances, norms and legality of the offices/institutions of those who exercise authority, e.g., the authority exercised by the policemen, tax collectors and bosses in the office.

2. **Traditional authority:** It is based on a faith in the sacred nature of long-held traditions and in the legality of those who exercise authority, e.g., the authority of the eldest individual the family.

3. **Charismatic authority:** It is based on loyalty to the sacred attribute, heroic force or commendable character of an individual, e.g., authority of god men.

Weber states two discrete sources of power. These are as follows:

1. **Common interest:** Under this source, power is drawn from an assortment of interests which evolve in formally free market. For instance, a group of textile producers controls and directs the supply of production in the market for profit maximization.

2. **An established system of authority:** This source of power allocates the right to command and the duty/responsibility to obey. For instance, in the army, a soldier is under obligation to obey the senior's command. The officer draws his powers through an established/institutionalized system of authority.

**Power and Domination**

According to Weber, power is the 'chance that an individual in a social relationship can achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others'. It is a very wide definition and incorporates a broad range of types of power. Some of the important highlights of Weberian though on the issue of power and domination are summarized below:

- According to Weber 'domination' is 'the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons'.
- There are certain key features of domination, e.g., interest, obedience, belief and regularity.
- Weber maintains that 'every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience'.
- Instances of dominance may include employer–employee relationships, teacher–student relationships, parent-child relationships or the relation between a priest and church member, authority within a family, political rule which is commonly obeyed and accepted, etc.
- If dominance persists for a substantial amount of time, it transforms into a structured phenomenon. Further, the forms of dominance become social structures.
- Temporary or momentary types of power are not generally considered as dominance.
- The definition of domination also excludes those kinds of power which are based on absolute force, since force might not result in approval of the dominant group or voluntary observance of its orders.

Basic elements of domination are as follows:

- Deliberate conformity or obedience means that individuals are not compelled to obey, rather do it voluntarily.
- Those who obey do it since they have an interest in doing so, or at any rate believe that they have such an interest.
- The belief in legitimacy of the actions/policies of the central individual or group is present (although it is defined by Weber as authority), i.e., 'the particular claim to legitimacy is to a significant degree and according to its type treated as "valid"'.
- Conformity or obedience is not random or associated with a short-term social relationship; instead, it is a sustained relationship of dominance and subordination in order that customary patterns of inequality are established.

## Power and Legitimacy

When power attains legitimacy or justification it is known as authority. It may be noted that a person who has authority may exercise command or control over other persons. For example, a senior bureaucrat who assigns tasks to his/her subordinates and may even transfer some of them to another city.

The reason behind this is that the bureaucrat has the authority to take this type of decision by virtue of his/her position and status in the government machinery. In formal organizations authority is clearly specified, and distributed under the ambit of rules and laws of the organizations. It may be understood at this stage that the exercise of authority does not necessarily imply the superiority of the person who commands.

A professor may be a better scholar than the Vice Chancellor of the University who dismisses him/her. It is simply because of the authority, which vests with the Vice Chancellor that he/she may suspend a teacher. Power may, therefore, be executed in formal organizations as institutionalized authority and as institutionalized power in informal organizations.

**Power, Legitimacy and Authority**

The idea of political legitimacy and effectiveness is associated with the name of a German sociologist of the present century, Max Weber. As we can notice in Weber's ideology, any discourse of power takes us to the questions about its legitimacy.

According to Weber, legitimacy constitutes the core of authority. He said that in any type of legitimate dominion, legitimacy is based on belief and elicits obedience. In this way, the ruling group in a state must be legitimate. Weber states that authority is the legitimate form of domination, i.e., those forms of domination which are considered to be legitimate by the followers or subordinates.

The expression 'legitimate' does not essentially mean any sense of rationality, rightness or natural justice; rather, domination is lawful when the subordinates admit, comply with, and consider domination to be desirable, or at least endurable and not worth challenging. It is not so much 'the actions of the dominant that create this, but rather the willingness of those who subordinate to believe in the legitimacy of the claims of the dominant'.

**Bases of Legitimacy**

The veracity of legitimacy may be assigned to an order by those acting subject to it in the following manner:

- By virtue of tradition, i.e., belief in the legality of what has all the time existed.
- By virtue of logical belief in its supreme value, hence lending the validity of an absolute and final commitment.
- By virtue of affectual attitudes, particularly emotional, for instance, legitimizing the soundness of what is recently revealed or is a model to emulate.
- Legality, i.e., willingness to conform to formally correct rules which have been imposed by accepted procedure. It has accomplished in a way that is accepted to be this legality and may be treated as legitimate.

### 1.6.3 Weber: Authority/Types of Legitimate Domination

Famous sociologist Max Weber gave a theory of authority that included three types of authority. He laid down a path towards understanding how authority gets legitimized as a belief system. The English translation of his essay 'The Three Types of Legitimate Rule' was published posthumously in 1958. It is the most lucid explanation on the issue.

Weber demarcates three fundamental types of legitimate domination: (i) traditional, (ii) charismatic and (iii) legal or rational. These three forms do not comprise

the entirety of domination types but they represent how it is feasible for some individuals to exercise power over others. Authority broadens and maintains power and proves that a study of its origins can show how people get ready to accept this domination as a customary and structured phenomenon. It is noteworthy that these are ideal types, with any real use of power being prone to have aspects of more than one kinds of authority, and may be even other forms of power like the use of force or intimidation. Hence Weber's classification of legitimacy is taken as the basis of a righteous investigation of the nature of authority in the modern-day civilization. He states three types of legitimate authority: Traditional, Charismatic and Rational-legal.

## 1. Traditional Authority

Throughout history the traditional authority has existed in various societies. The sanctity of tradition legitimizes the traditional authority. Usually the capability and the right to rule are passed down through heredity. However, it does not assist social change. On the other hand, it tends to be inconsistent and irrational, and perpetuates the status quo. Weber analysed why this particular form of authority was maintained, and what were the obstructions to the development of more logical or legal forms of authority characteristic of the Western societies. Specifically, Weber was focused upon how these traditional forms of authority restricted the development of capitalism in non-Western societies.

Weber stated that traditional authority is a means through which inequality gets created and preserved. If there is no challenge to the authority of the traditional leader or group, the leader is expected to stay dominant. Traditional form of authority is derived from an established faith in the sanctity of age-old traditions and the legality of the status of those wielding authority over them. In this kind of authority, the traditional rights of an influential and dominant individual or group are accepted and are not challenged by the subordinate individuals.

Weber stated that this traditionalist domination 'rests upon a belief in the sanctity of everyday routines' (Gerth and Mills, p. 297). Ritzer states that 'traditional authority is based on a claim by the leaders, and a belief on the part of the followers, that there is virtue in the sanctity of age-old rules and powers' (p. 132). These rights can be: (i) religious, sacred or spiritual forms, (ii) well-established and gradually changing culture, or (ii) tribal, family or clan type structures.

The types of traditional authority are as follows:

(i) Gerontocracy or rule by elders

(ii) Patriarchy wherein positions are inherited

(iii) Patrimonialism or rule by an administration or military force that are entirely personal instruments of the master

(iv) Feudalism type of authority was important historically; it is a more routinized form of rule, with 'contractual relationships between leader and subordinate'

Traditional authority is characteristically embodied in feudalism or patrimonialism. In an entirely patriarchal structure, 'the servants are completely and personally dependent upon the lord'. On the other hand, in an estate system (i.e.,

feudalism), 'the servants are not personal servants of the lord but independent men' (Weber, 1958:4). However, in both cases the system of authority does not change or evolve.

Hence, gerontocracy and patrimonialism are the forms of traditional authority. Gerontocracy means the rule by elders, and patrimonialism stands for the rule by someone designated by inheritance. There is still a common idea of everybody being a member of the group, although there is by no means equal distribution of power. A patrimonial retainer may be supported through: maintenance at his lords table, allowances from the chief (mainly in kind), rights of land use in lieu of services, and appropriation of property income, fees or taxes by fiefs.

## 2. Charismatic Authority

Charismatic authority is possessed by a leader whose vision and mission is capable of inspiring others. Its roots are found in the perceived astonishing characteristics of a person. Weber defined a charismatic leader as the leader of a new social movement, and the one endowed with divine or supernatural powers, e.g., a religious prophet. According to him, charismatic authority subsists on the devotion to the explicit and exceptional heroism, sanctity or commendable character of a person and of the normative patterns of order revealed or ordained by him.

Charisma stands for the quality of an individual personality which is viewed as extraordinary. The followers might view this quality to be endowed with supernatural, superhuman or exceptional qualities or powers. Whether such powers exist in reality or not is not relevant—the mere fact that followers believe that such powers exist is more significant. Weber views charisma as a driving and creative force that rushes through traditional authority and established rules. The singular basis of charismatic authority is the acceptance or recognition of the claims of the leader by the followers. 'While it is unreasonable, in that it is not computable or systematic, it can be revolutionary, breaking traditional rule and may even put up a challenge to the legal authority' (Giddens, p. 160–161).

A particular leader might possess extraordinary characteristics which make him/her a leader. It may relate to an extraordinary gift of a leader, a distinguishing speaking style and acting, or astonishing qualities, for instance personalities like Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, Hitler and so on. The charismatic leader attains and maintains authority exclusively by proving his mettle in life. If he desires to be a prophet, he should perform miracles; if he wants to be a warlord, he should perform heroic acts. Finally, nonetheless, his divine mission should 'prove' itself in that those who devotedly surrender to him must fare well. In case they do not fare well, he is perceptibly not the master sent by the Gods.

Charisma has deficiencies as a long-term source of authority. However, it may be really effective during the lifetime of the charismatic leader. If it has to be continued, it should be transformed into a legal or traditional form of authority. Further, it might be exercised in an illogical way, preventing the development of more rational forms, particularly the ones leading to capitalism. Also, there is a chance that administration of charismatic authority results in the development of legal and rational authority. Charismatic authority gets 'routinized' in various ways. According to Weber,

'Orders are traditionalized, the staff or followers change into legal or "estate-like" (traditional) staff, or the meaning of charisma itself may undergo change.'

It would be appropriate to discuss the process of the routinization of charisma. In basic form, charismatic authority exists just in the process of originating. It turns either rationalized or traditionalized, or a combination of both for the following reasons: ideal and material interests of the followers in the repeated reactivation of the community interests of the administrative staff, followers or disciples of the charismatic leader in maintaining their positions, so that their own standing is established on a day-to-day basis. Huge masses of people exist; it paves the way for the forces of daily routine. There is an objective requirement of patterns of order and organization of the administrative staff to fulfill the normal, everyday needs and conditions of running the administration. Further, there is a craving for security, needing legitimization of positions of authority and social prestige and economic advantages held by the followers.

Thus the process of routinization is not limited to the succession problem, and does not come to an end when it is solved. The most basic problem is the changeover from the charismatic administrative staff and its administrative mode to one which can tackle everyday circumstances. Following are the possible types of solution:

1. Search for new charismatic leader on the basis of criteria that will entitle him for the position of authority.

2. Revelation thorough oracles, lots, etc. Legitimacy is then dependent upon the technique of selection, which represents a form of legalization.

3. By the leader designating his successor.

4. The designation of a successor by the charismatically qualified staff, and the successor's recognition by the community. The legitimacy may come to depend upon the technique of selection.

5. Hereditary charisma which may lead to either traditionalization or legalization (divine right, etc.).

6. The charisma transmitted through ritual means from one bearer to another, or created in a new individual, which might become the charisma of office (e.g., the Big Potato, the Pope himself).

In one form routinization also appropriates the powers of control and economic advantages by the disciples. Further, it may be either legal or traditional, on the basis of whether or not legislation of some kind is involved.

### 3. Rational-Legal Authority

Legal-rational authority gets empowered by a formalistic belief in the content of the law (legal) or natural law (rationality). A specific individual leader does not get entitled to obedience by the people—whether charismatic or traditional—but a set of uniform principles is put at his/her disposal. According to Weber, bureaucracy (political or economic) was the best example of legal-rational authority. This kind of authority is commonly found in the modern state, city governments, private and public corporations, and many voluntary associations. Rational-legal authority or

legitimate domination resting on 'rational grounds—resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issues commands' (Weber, p. 215).

It is stated to subsist upon a faith in the legality patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to the authority under such rules to issue commands. It might also be stated that rational legitimacy—identified with legality by Weber—is the only kind of legitimacy to survive in the contemporary world. All the bearers of the power of command are legitimated in so far as these correspond with the norms.

There are numerous ways through which legal authority may establish. These are:

1. Systems of convention
2. Laws and regulation evolve in various societies
3. Various principles of legality occurring around

The evolution of law in the West goes on to establish a legal system which ensures that there is a rule of law, written legal codes, legal rights and rules, and the 'professionalized administration of justice by persons who have received their legal training formally and systematically' (Ritzer, p. 129).

As the political or legal system develops in this logical way, authority adopts a legal shape. Those governing or ruling either possess, or seem to possess, a lawful legal right to do so. The subordinates within this system recognize the legality of the rulers, with a belief that they possess the lawful right to exercise power. Those with power then use it on the basis of this right of legitimacy.

As the rational legal system develops, there has to be a political system that becomes rationalized in a similar manner. The constitutions, codified documents and established offices, streamlined means of representation, regular elections and political procedures are the basic elements of this systematization. These are developed in opposition to earlier systems like monarchies or other traditional forms, where there are no established sets of rules. This rational-legal form of authority might be challenged by the ones who are in a subordinate position. This opposition is usually not likely to bring about dramatic changes in the system's nature very rapidly.

Weber stated that in future the rational-legal types of authority will become more and more dominant. A charismatic leader or movement may occupy the scene, but the predominant tendency will be for the organizations to become more routinized, rational and bureaucratic in nature. The legal authority can be interpreted in this sense. In contemporary societies, authority is in big part exercised on the basis of bureaucracies.

**Inter-relationships between Traditional, Charismatic and Rational-Legal Authority**

Weber's theory of authority is very comprehensive and elaborate in nature. Weber and several other political sociologists have denoted various interesting relationships and processes taking place between the different types. The three types of authority may be consolidated by the characteristics that distinguish them from others.

- Charismatic authority is dynamic (unlike tradition) and non-rational (again, unlike legal-rational).

- Traditional authority is impersonal (unlike charisma) and non-rational (unlike legal-rational).

- Legal-rational authority is dynamic (unlike tradition) and impersonal (unlike charisma).

However, Blau (1974) stated that 'traditional authority is un-dynamic, charismatic authority is personal, and legal-rational is rational'. The possibility of retaining a specific type of authority might depend on the ability of that authority system to maintain the features which make it exceptional and reject the characteristics that make it more beneficial for another type of authority.

Further, it has been observed that a specific kind of authority may lose its power to—and hence transition into—other kind of authority in the following manner. For instance, revolutionary ideals may be advocated by a charismatic leader or the logical pursuit of ends through abstract formal principles can both deteriorate traditional authority. The revolutionary charismatic movements may be crystallized into a traditional order or bureaucratized into a logical formal organization. Ultimately, the illogical forces and powers of tradition or charisma may lessen the position of legal-rational authority. It has also been observed that Weber's three kinds of authority are comparable to his three categories of inequality: (i) class, (ii) status groups and (iii) parties. Traditional authority is the basis for status groups. Charismatic authority depends on a market scheme (like the potential for life chances), and Weber viewed it to be the result of class. Ultimately, parties are the codification of legal-rational authority, particularly in the case of bureaucracies.

### 1.6.4 Distinction between Power, Authority and Legitimacy

The expression 'authority' stands for an abstract concept possessing both sociological and psychological components. Hence it is very difficult to differentiate these concepts. In fact, the ideas of power, authority and legitimacy are basically interrelated. It is a concern not just in the abstract sense in terms of how these three are related, but also in the concrete since scholars themselves are usually accountable for entangling them. One is defined as the function of the other and vice-versa till the reader doesn't understand where to turn anymore to get help.

**Power and Legitimacy**
- Power is the ability, whether personal or social, to get things done — either to enforce one's own will or to enforce the collective will of some group over others. Legitimacy is a socially constructed and psychologically accepted right to exercise power.
- A person can have actual power but not legitimacy (the usurper who exiled the king and appropriates the symbols of office). A person can have legitimacy but no actual power (the legitimate king might reside in exile, destitute and forgotten).

**Power, Authority & Legitimacy**
- In all social situations a person is treated as an authority only when they have both power *and* legitimacy.

***Fig. 1.5*** *Distinctions between Power, Authority and Legitimacy*

## 1.7 SUMMARY

- The broad aim of political sociology is to study and examine the interactions between social and political structures.

- The relevant question in delineating the scope of political sociology is that of the kinds of groups which form part of the study of the discipline of political sociology.

- There is another school according to which politics is present in almost all social relations. Individuals and small groups try to enforce their preferences on their parent organizations—family, club, or college, and thus indulge in the exercise of 'power'.

- According to Greer and Orleans, political sociology is concerned with the structure of the State, the nature and condition of legitimacy, and nature of the monopoly of force and its use by the State, as well as the nature of the sub-units and their relation with the State.

- Andreu Effrat takes a broader view of the picture and suggests that political sociology is concerned with the causes, patterns and consequences of the distribution and process of power and authority 'in all social systems'.

- To Dowse and Hughes, one area of substantive concern for the political sociologist is the problem of social order and political obedience.

- A significant concern of political sociology is the analysis of socio-political factors in economic development.

- According to Ronald H. Chilcote, the early political sociologists were interested in studying political and social life by incorporating data based on empirical research and an examination of informal institutions and processes.

- Gaetano Mosca in his *Elementi di Scienza Politica* (1896) distinguished between elites and masses.

- Max Weber, in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1921), examined the entrepreneurial drives of individuals in capitalist economies.

- The works of these early political sociologists influenced the studies of American political scientists of the 20th century.

- Soon after the American and French revolutions, the philosophy of liberalism dominated intellectual debates.

- Nonetheless, towards the end of the 19th century, scholars began to realize the inadequacies of liberal theories.

- Although in theory, liberalism sought to establish principles of liberty, equality and democracy, the reality was different in practice.

- As the 19th century was drawing to a close, there occurred a gradual erosion of the elements that constituted this society.

- According to Peter Wagner, 'the social sciences in general, and sociology in particular, were consolidated and modernized in the decades following World War II'.

- As organized modernity placed restrictions on human freedom created by the boundaries of convention, certain intellectuals directed their efforts at creating ambivalence in the social structure instead of seeking a well-ordered society.

- A classical work enjoys a privileged position because it establishes the fundamental criteria in a particular field.

- The privileged position of a classical work is reinforced through their interpretation and re-interpretation by generations of scholars in search of the 'true meaning'.

- It is believed that classical sociology was a reaction to the French Revolution and Industrial Revolution.

- Classical social theory was born due to people's critical attitude towards nature and human society.

- Classical social theory employed conceptual dichotomies for the analysis of societies and social change.

- For Karl Marx, human actors (rather than social structures) make history and constitute a society.

- The different modes of production alienate human beings from their nature, which lead to class struggles and these struggles become a motor for the evolution of society from one mode to another.

- If Marx stressed on the material and Durkheim on the normative aspects for explaining the causal factors of social action, Weber attempted a multi-dimensional approach in which structure and agency, material and normative causes, were employed in the study of social action.

- Max Weber (1864-1920) was a German social theorist and sociologist. He was born in Berlin and taught Economics at Heidelberg until 1889.

- Weber's theory of social action is based on the interplay of individual actors, who attach subjective meaning to their actions.

- Weber is considered a classical social theorist because he brought in subjective perceptions of human actors in the study of society.

- Alexis de Tocqueville compared the highly centralized political structure in France to the decentralized democratic system in the United States of America.

- Tocqueville believed that the modern democratic state represented a major historical change as it altered previous structures of authority.

- The two volumes *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime and the Revolution* are his most well-known writings.

- Tocqueville identified political science as the art of writing which served the logic of ideas, ingenious and original.

- Tocqueville's work brought into focus the role of political institutions in the study of societies. That is why Tocqueville's study is a classic work of political sociology.

- George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) expanded the social analysis of the self.

- Although Mead's achievements were not received well in Europe and America, where he influenced the school of symbolic interactionism, his study of the self and interpersonal interaction went beyond the work of his European counterparts.

- Behavioural approach in political sociology came into being after the emergence of the behavioral sciences.

- The concept of social stratification came into existence in the 1940s.

- According to William J. Goode, 'stratification is the system through which resources and rewards are distributed and handed down from generation to generation'.

- L. T. Hobhouse says that slave is a man whom law and custom regard as property of some other person.

- According to Thomas Burton Bottomore, the basis of slavery is always economic.

- In the 1600s, the United States imported slaves; which was a legal practice in the United States in those days.

- Many sociologists opine that the ideologies of equality and justice have led to the abolition of slavery from the world.

- The caste system is still prevalent in India. However, it is undergoing a lot of changes due to industrialization, urbanization, modern education, means of communication, and transportation.

- After World War II, the behaviouralists affirmed that politics is about power and consists of relationships of subordination, of dominance and submission of the governors and the governed.

- According to Max Weber, power is an aspect of social relationships and refers to the likelihood of imposing one's will upon the behaviour of another person(s).

- The essential proposition of the Weberian theory of power is that the extent of power depends upon the nature of compliance over the one on whom it is being exercised.

## 1.8 KEY TERMS

- **Delineating:** It means to describe or portray (something) precisely.
- **Consensus:** It refers to a general agreement.
- **Indices:** It refers to a useful way of more simply expressing large numbers.
- **Autonomy:** It means the right or condition of self-government, especially in a particular sphere.
- **Epistemic:** It refers to something relating to knowledge or to the degree of its validation.
- **Voluntaristic:** It refers to a doctrine or system based on voluntary participation in a course of action.
- *Ancien regime:* It means a political or social system that has been displaced, typically by one more modern.
- **Interactionism:** It refers to the theory that there are two entities, mind and body, each of which can have an effect on the other.
- **Hypergamy:** It refers to the action of marrying a person of a superior caste or class.
- **Veracity:** It means conformity to facts; accuracy.

## 1.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Conflict, though apparently an evil, is a condition of freedom, as it prevents the concentration of power.

2. Political sociology aims at understanding the sources and the social bases of conflict, as well as the process of management of conflict.

3. According to Richard G. Braungart, political sociology should include four areas that are as follows:
   - Political structures
   - Political life
   - Political leadership
   - Political development

4. Wagner's scheme comprises three phases:
   - Classical sociology and the first crisis of modernity
   - Organized modernity and the consolidation of sociology
   - The second crisis of modernity and the renewed debate on the possibility of sociology

5. This phase was marked by an unprecedented growth of production and consumption accompanied by a relative stability of authoritative practices.

6. Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man* (1960) and Theda Skocpol's *State and Social Revolutions* (1979) are two influential works of political sociology.

7. Classical social theory transformed philosophical problem into a sociological one by which free will versus determinism was conceptualized as a problem of agency versus structure.

8. The problem of structure versus agency was a central feature of classical social theory.

9. For democracy to emerge, the recognition of the principle of equality was necessary.

10. Behaviouralism used a number of methods such as sampling, interviewing, scoring, scaling and statistical analysis to understand political behaviour.

11. Four basic forms of social stratification in human societies are:
    - slavery
    - estate
    - caste
    - class

12. The three methods which are used for the determination of social class are:
    - Objective method
    - Subjective method
    - Reputational method

13. According to Marxist theory, bourgeoisie is the ruling class which consists of capitalists, manufacturers, bankers, and other employers; and proletariat is the working class.

14. The three types of authority Weber distinguishes are:
    - Rational-legal authority
    - Traditional authority
    - Charismatic authority

15. The sanctity of tradition legitimizes the traditional authority.

16. The possibility of retaining a specific type of authority might depend on the ability of that authority system to maintain the features which make it exceptional and reject the characteristics that make it more beneficial for another type of authority.

## 1.10  QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

**Short-Answer Questions**

1. How does Sheldon S. Wolin explain the word 'political'?

2. How did liberalism operate in the 19th century? Briefly explain how the concept and perception of liberalism changed post the 19th century.

3. What, according to Peter Wagner, is the second crises of modernity?

4. What are the conceptual dichotomies employed by classical social theory?

5. What are David Easton's eight 'intellectual foundation stones' of behaviouralism?

6. Write a short note on traditional authority.

**Long-Answer Questions**

1. Briefly explain Weber's theory of social action.

2. How does Tocqueville explain the effects of democratic system?

3. Explain the various attributes of social stratification.

4. What does the occupational theory of the caste system state?

5. Name and explain two discreet sources of power as proposed by Weber.

6. Explain how the State is political and a subject matter of political sociology.

7. Critically evaluate the various perspectives of contemporary sociology.

## 1.11 FURTHER READING

Nash, Kate. 2009. *Contemporary Political Sociology: Globalization, Politics and Power*. Singapore: Blackwell Publishers.

Gupta, Dipankar. 1996. *Political Sociology in India: Contemperory Trends*. New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited.

Lenski, Gerhard E. 2013. *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*. United States: University of North Carolina Press.

Scott, John. 2014. *Stratification and Power: Structures of Class, Status and Command*. United States: Polity Publishers.

# UNIT 2  POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION AND CULTURE

**Structure**

## 2.0  INTRODUCTION

It is well said, 'citizens are not born, but created'. Political socialization is concerned with the learning of political response, of absorbing preferences, and in a sense, with the wide problems of allegiance to and alienation from the body politic. Effective political participation is possible only if citizens are trained for political tasks at all levels. The virtues of a good citizen must be inculcated in children through schooling for which teachers should be sufficiently enabled. Great care should be advanced in the drafting of curricula so that students are not indoctrinated rather taught to think and act critically and responsibly.

Political socialization is a concept concerning the 'study of the developmental processes by which children and adolescents acquire political cognition, attitudes and behaviours'. It refers to a learning process by which norms and behaviour acceptable to a well running political system are transmitted from one generation to another. It is through the performance of this function that individuals are inducted into the political culture and their orientations towards political objects are formed.

This unit discusses the concept of political socialization, communities, media and politics and explores the area of gender politics.

## 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the concept of political socialization and political culture
- Evaluate political participation and communication in India
- Discuss the cultural basis of politics, from modernism to post-modernism
- Analyse the role of media and politics in the electoral system in India
- Explain the role of gender politics and women empowerment in India

## 2.2 POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

The key strands of an informed curriculum for creating effective citizens should have at least the three following features:

(i) Knowledge and understanding about becoming an informed citizen

(ii) Developing skills of enquiry and communication

(iii) Developing skills of participation and responsible action

**Agents of Socialization**

Agents of socialization influence, in one degree or another, the individual's political opinions. Such agents are family, media, friends, teachers, religion, race, gender, age and geography. These factors and many others that people are introduced to as they are growing up affect their political views throughout the rest of their lives. Most political opinions are formed during childhood. Many political ideas are passed down from parents to young adults.

**Factors**

The agents a child surrounds him/herself with during childhood are crucial to the child's development of future voting behaviours. Some of these agents include:

(i) **Family:** Glass (1986) recognizes family as a primary influence in the development of a child's political orientation, mainly due to constant relationship between parents and child.

(ii) **Schools:** This is the most influential of all agents after the family, due to the child's extended exposure to a variety of political beliefs through friends and teachers.

(iii) **Mass media:** Becker (1975) argues that the media functions as a political information-giver to the adolescents and young children.

(iv) **Religion:** Religious tradition can have a strong effect on someone's political views; for example, Protestants tend to be more conservative at the political stage.

(v) **Political parties:** Scholars such as Campbell (1960) note that political parties have very little direct influence on a child due to a contrast of social factors such as age, context, and power.

(vi) **Workplace:** Workplace also plays an important role in shaping up the political thinking of an individual.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. What is meant by agents of socialization?
2. List the agents of socialization that are crucial to the child's development.

---

## 2.3 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION

The general level of participation in a society is the extent to which the people as a whole are active in politics—the number of active people multiplied by the amount of their action, to put it arithmetically. However, the question of what it is to take part in politics is massively complex and ultimately ambiguous. It raises the question of what constitutes politics.

For instance, we would assume that activity within a political party or an organization which regarded itself as a pressure group should count as political participation. However, what about activity in other sorts of organization, such as sports associations and traditional women's organizations? Although not overtly political, these organizations set the context of politics, give their active members administrative experience and are capable of overt political action if their interests or principles are threatened.

There is an opposite problem about political losers—if people act ineffectively, perhaps because they are part of a permanent minority in a political system, can we say they have participated in the making of decisions? One implication of this doubt is that possessing power is a necessary condition or logical equivalent of true political participation. If one is merely consulted by a powerful person who wants one's views for information, or if one is mobilized or re-educated within the control of another, one has not participated in politics in any significant sense.

Political participation is so fundamental to democracy that the latter would not exist without the widespread, regular and active participation of citizens. Liberal political philosophy believes that the rights of an individual are protected by the exercise of citizens of civil and economic rights and other constitutional guarantees. Political participation is necessary because it enables citizens to consciously fashion their conditions of existence within a political community, thus converting citizens into genuinely autonomous agents—the citizens to trust fellow beings by overcoming alienation, deracination, and many other anomalies of modern life. Political participation not only refers to engagement with government and the State but also with civil society by developing social trust and a improving communal values and benefits.

Genuine and effective political participation must also acknowledge the rights of non-participants to stand outside the political process, if the latter chooses to do so. It must be noted that participation does not always and necessarily imply that the political actors accept the political system. Although violent revolutions and direct political action, such as civil disobedience, are modes of political participation, democratic theorists are inclined towards structuring political participation through the constitutional framework. Of course, it is also important to note that it is not the quantity of political participation but the quality that is more important. It hardly makes sense to claim that India is the largest democracy if the democratic process does not efficiently protect the poor, the women and the minorities.

An effective means of political participation is the work that an individual could do within the civil society because such political activity could range from being against the State to being part of it, in dialogue with the State, in partnership with the State, in support of the State, or perhaps even beyond the State. In a country where the civil society is empowered, political participation may appear in a variety of formal and non-formal modes, where citizens and non-citizens (like refugees) could work towards social change.

The most persuasive argument in favour of political participation of citizenry is that it complies with the comprehensive function of development. It helps an individual to exercise and develop the capacity to reason.

## Milbrath's Theory of Political Participation

Political system functions on the basis of political participation. Lester Milbrath has suggested that members of the society can be divided into four categories in terms of their degree of political participation. First, the politically apathetic who are literally unaware of the politics around them; second, those involved in spectator activities, including voting and taking part in discussions about politics; third, those involved transitional activities, which include attending a political meetings or making financial contributions to a political party; and finally, those who enter the political arena and participate in activities such as standing for and holding public and party offices.

These levels of political participation are not uniformly distributed throughout the population. In general, the higher an individual's position in the class structure, the greater his degree of participation. Studies have shown that political participation is directly proportional to income level, occupational status and educational qualification. It has also been associated with a variety of other factors.

For example, men are likely to have higher levels of participation than women, married people than single people, middle-aged people than either young or old, members of clubs and associations than non-members, long-term residents in a community than short-term residents. However, those with low levels of participation often lack the resources and opportunities to become more directly involved in politics.

They lack the experience of higher education, which brings a greater awareness of the political process and knowledge of the mechanics of participation. Secondly, individuals are likely to participate in politics if they are likely to be rewarded for their involvement.

**Dahl's Theory of Political Participation**

Robert Dahl argues that an individual is unlikely to participate in politics, if he feels that the probability of his influencing the outcome of events is low. Levels of political participation appear to be related to the degree of involvement and integration of an individual in the society.

Thus, an individual who is not likely to be involved in local or national politics does not feel a part of either the local community or the wider society. Dahl suggests that individuals are not likely to have high levels of political participation if they believe that the outcome of events will be satisfactory without their involvement.

## 2.3.1 Political Participation Through Elections in India

Basic to democratic polity is the concept of sovereign powers vesting in the people. In modern democracies, people govern themselves through their elected representatives. In a parliamentary system, the executive comes out of the legislature and remains part of it and responsible to it. The election of members to the houses of legislatures is conducted through an institutionalized electoral process.

Therefore, this electoral process, no matter how it is designed and conducted, forms the foundation of a parliamentary democracy. Elections are critical to the maintenance and development of democratic tradition because at one level, these are influenced by the political culture in which they operate, but at another, they also generate strong influences that can improve or distort this political culture.

As a representative parliamentary democracy, India has a well-established system of direct and indirect elections to man its institutions. A general election in India is a gigantic exercise. It is equal to holding polls in Europe, United States, Canada and Australia all put together. General elections to Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies in India are held under the supervision, direction and control of a constitutional body—the Election Commission of India. Elections to local bodies—Panchayats and Nagarpalikas—are the responsibility of State Election Commissioners.

A general election in India is a gigantic exercise. Statistically, the number of voters in India remains more than 600 million (sixty crores). The number of polling booths all over the country adds up to about 9,00,000 (nine lakhs), making an average of 667 voters for each booth. However, the population is not so uniformly spread over unequal territorial constituencies and usually, a polling booth caters to no more than 1200 voters even in highly populated metropolitan areas.

Five persons are needed for each polling booth making a total of 4.5 to five million election personnel to be mobilized and administered. These polling personnel are drawn from the Central and State governments and other bodies. In addition to this, about two million security personnel need to be used to maintain law and order on polling day. These basic figures give some idea about the enormity of the exercise to elect some 545 members of parliament. Once you take state and local elections into account the figures become truly staggering. India has upwards of about 3.2 million (thirty-two lakhs) directly elected peoples' representatives spread over various tiers of governance.

Our fifty years of experience with successive elections at various levels has highlighted that generally people are able to deliver electoral verdicts in a democratic way. But, this general statement hides substantial irregularities at the micro level. In fact, our experience with elections has also brought out to fore many distortions, some very serious, that have crept in either due to loopholes in the electoral laws or due to the incapacity of the system to punish deviant and in many ways unacceptable behaviour. There have been constant references to three MPs (money power, muscle power and mafia power) and to four Cs (criminalization, communalism, corruption and casteism). Basically, all of this has vitiated the political atmosphere in the country and even compromised the legitimacy of the political process.

**Merits of Political Participation through Elections in India**

Indian political system shows a multi-party system. The democratic government is formulated on the basis of majority win in the elections.

In India, elections are fought on party lines with different proclamations. But nowadays, the election process has just become the game of coalitions instead of majority of the single party. Political parties that participate in different elections all over India and are recognized in four or more states are considered as national parties. Few of the popular national parties in the country are Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Janata Dal and Communist Party of India.

Political parties that participate in different elections only within one state are referred to as state parties or regional parties. Prominent state parties in the country are as follows:

- Shiv Sena in Maharashtra
- National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir
- Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh
- Muslim League in Kerala
- Akali Dal in Punjab
- Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh
- Bahujan Samaj Party in West Bengal

There are many independent candidates also who participate in election constituencies independently without the support of any party.

**Problems**

The main problems that have been generally recognized and debated are as follows:

- Increasingly, money-centered elections leading to unethical, illegal and even mafia-funded electoral process. The terribly high cost of elections in turn has led to increased corruption, criminalization and black money generation in various forms.
- With the constituents/electors being the same for all directly elected representatives from the lowest Panchayat level to the Lok Sabha level, there are competing role expectations and conflict of perception. For example, the

constituents expect even members of the Union Parliament to attend to their purely local problems.

- With the electorate having no role in the selection of candidates and with majority of candidates being elected by minority of votes under the first-past-the-post system, the representative character of the representatives itself becomes doubtful or so to say their representational legitimacy is seriously eroded.

  In many cases, more votes are cast against the winning candidates than for them. One of the significant probable causes may be the mismatch between the majoritarian or first-past-the-post system and the multiplicity of parties and large number of independents.

- Another one is the question of defections and the tenth schedule.

- Inaccurate and flawed electoral rolls and voter ID leading to rigging and denial of voting right to a large number of citizens.

Given below are a few problems that are usually faced in the conduct of elections:

- Booth capturing and fraudulent voting by rigging and impersonation

- Flagrant use of raw muscle power in the form of intimidating voters either to vote against their will or not to vote at all, thus taking away the right of free voting from large sections of society and thereby distorting the result

- Involvement of officials and local administration in subverting the electoral process

- Engineered mistakes in counting of votes

- Criminalization of the electoral process—increasing number of contestants with serious criminal antecedents

- Divisive and disruptive tendencies including the misuse of religion and caste in the process of political mobilization of group identities on non-ideological lines

- An ineffective and slow process of dealing with election petitions, rendering the whole process meaningless

- Fake and non-serious candidates who create major practical difficulties and are also used to indirectly subvert the electoral process

- Incongruities in delimitation of constituencies resulting in poor representation

- Problems of instability, hung legislative houses and their relation to the electoral laws and processes

- Loss of systemic legitimacy due to decay in the standards of political morality and decline in the spirit of service and sacrifice in public life

### Suggested Reforms

The suggestions for reform can generally be placed into three broad categories. The first category attempts to tackle the problems within the boundaries of the current electoral system. The second category goes a bit further and takes a stand that the

present electoral system itself needs to be modified (with emphasis on modification or reform and not on altering the basic framework of the system). Both of these categories have to be dealt with together because there is considerable overlapping between the two and we have to view reform suggestions as an integrated package and not piecemeal.

There is a third approach which seeks to strike at the root of the problem—the terrible high costs of elections and the question of finding legitimate funds for the purpose. The suggestion is to cut down the costs drastically by following the Gandhian principles of decentralization of power down to the grassroots levels and building multitiers of government from below instead of the prevalent top-down approach.

It is stated by those advocating this approach that the only way to conduct a meaningful electoral exercise in this country is to have direct elections only at local levels with the upper tiers filled by representatives indirectly elected by an electoral college consisting of the representatives manning the lower tiers.

A true democracy, as advocated by Gandhi, ensures that local, state and national representatives are accountable to the people for local, State and national matters respectively through effective transparency. Such one-to-one accountability may promote responsible politics and attract patriotic and competent professionals and social workers to politics. Our present system based on diffused accountability breeds corruption and attracts self-seekers to politics. For this breed, interests of national development, welfare of the people and needs of god governance take lower priorities, if any at all.

The elected representative is too far removed from the people as there are an average of one million voters for each Lok Sabha constituency spread over a large geographical area. To influence the choice of such a large and geographically dispersed number of voters, social action on the part of the candidate is totally inadequate.

This creates space and scope for using both money and muscle power. It is no surprise that the candidates have to spend huge amounts of money at the time of campaigning to 'purchase' the votes of these distant voters. This is done mostly through a host of intermediary brokers who become the link in this transaction. These huge election expenses breed huge corruption; the electors are in no position to hold the candidate accountable nor does the candidate consider himself accountable to these people.

Based on the Indian ethos, Gandhi had advocated a low-expense election system linked with watchdog councils and separate elected chief executives at each local level. He proposed a highly democratic and, what is more important, a highly accountable system. More thought-out and more in keeping with the evolution of political culture in our country, many scholars have, in recent years, adapted these thoughts in their work and advocated a system of direct elections only at the grassroots of the Indian democracy. They propose that without in anyway interfering with the basic structure or features of the constitution and while fully continuing the parliamentary system, some reforms be brought in the electoral system.

Direct elections should be held on the basis of adult franchise at the level of Panchayats and other local bodies. Panchayats and other local bodies could elect the *Zila Parishads* and they could together elect the State legislature. These three could elect the Parliament and in the last analysis the four of these could elect the President. The Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers could be elected by the Parliament and the State Legislatures concerned.

The President, the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers, in order to be elected, should each necessarily secure no less that fifty per cent plus one of the votes cast. Once elected, the Prime Minister or a Chief Minister should be removable only by a constructive vote of no-confidence.

The fact that the directly elected representatives are all at the grassroots level where they are in contact with their electors on a daily basis, would mean that their accountability to the people will always be high. Corruption will not get the kind of boost and inducement that it gets presently because of an unaccountable remote representative doing what he pleases.

The representatives elected at the grassroots level will also have to win on a fifty-per-cent-plus-one vote principle so that their appeal is more universal than parochial. They would then be truly legitimate representatives of their people. In the alternative, at the lowest tier, double-member or multiple member constituencies could be considered. Local elections do not entail heavy costs. The cost to political parties of indirect State and national elections will be low.

Since the national and State governments will handle only higher-level infrastructure and coordination, indirect elections backed by party primaries will facilitate emergence of the best leadership. The ills in the present 'first-past-the-post' system will be eliminated because local governments will handle all social issues and State and national governments shall be accountable to local governments as advocated by Gandhi who will have elected them.

This will nurture culture, education and values and gradually eliminate social discords. Also, this election process, it is claimed, has the greatest potential to bring public service spirited and sacrifice-oriented people to the fore.

## 2.3.2  Political Participation of Women in India

The current conditions of the women in India and their status is ironical. On one hand, the women in India have climbed the ladder of corporate success, and, on the other, they unconditionally undergo the violence that her own family members afflict on her.

Looking at the recent past, it can be certainly said that the modern Indian women have achieved a lot; however, in reality, there are still so many horizons that remain to be touched. Coming out of the secured domain of their homes, women have entered into the battlefield of their lives, where they display the best of their latent talent. However, in India, they are still to get their dues.

There are many issues which the Indian women deal with on a daily basis. These issues have become part of their lives and some of them have admitted them

as their destiny. In addition, others have taken these issues as challenges and adopted certain strategies to fight against discrimination. In present day, though Indian women are struggling to cope with the problem of malnutrition, poor health, female feticide, lack of education, dowry, rape, domestic violence, job opportunity, poor sex ratio and marital problem of divorce, they do not deter to overcome these challenges.

Since its independence, the Government of India has been trying its best to fulfill its obligation. The women's movement of India has taken up the part which the government has not been able to accomplish. This moment did not start in the post-liberal society; it was started during the struggle of independence and, latter on, many activists got involved in this movement. Women in India were fortunate enough that they had not to fight for equal constitutional and legal status. However, their struggle for equal social status and equal opportunity in social hierarchical system has become endless.

A positive development is that women's issues have been taken up by women's organizations as well as by the mainstream political parties and grassroots movements. Accordingly, the more visible forms of gender injustice, such as dowry deaths, rape and alcohol-related domestic violence have been given the utmost attention. From 1970s onwards and through the 1990s, various movements have been launched in this regard. Sometimes, these movements have had local nature; sometimes they had a bigger spatial reach. Therefore, the public awareness on these has increased.

Women have also played an important role in the movements of farmers, trade unions and environment and this practice has enabled them to raise women's issues along with these issues.

One such example of this can be seen in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when there was a new political ferment in the country. This gave rise to a host of new political trends and movements such as the Naxalite movement, the Chipko movement and the anti-price rise movement. In the anti-price rise movement of 1973-75, which was organized by the Communist and Socialist women in the urban areas of Maharashtra, thousands of housewives joined in public rallies, and those who could not leave their houses joined by beating *thalis* (metal plates) with *lathis* (rolling pins). The movement spread to Gujarat where it was converted into the Nav Nirman movement influenced by Jayaprakash Narayan's 'Total Revolution'.

From 1974, women in Uttarkhand actively participated in the Chipko movement, which got its name from the actions of women who hugged trees in order to prevent them from being cut down by timber contractors. It became famous as the first major movement for saving the environment.

The Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan played the leading role in the effort to secure justice for the victims of the chemical gas leak in the Union carbide factory in Bhopal in 1984.

Another stream of the women's movement took the form of what have been called 'autonomous' women's groups. These mushroomed in the urban centres from around the mid-1970s. Many of these comprised women who had been active in or influenced by the Maoist or Naxalite movement, and its decline in the early 1970s

triggered off a process of debate and rethinking in which the issues of gender relations and the place of women in political organizations were prominent.

Among the earliest of these were the Progressive Women's Organization in Osmania University in Hyderabad in 1974, the Purogami Stree Sangathan in Pune and the Stree Mukti Sanghatana in Bombay in 1975. The 1975 declaration of the UN, in which the year was declared as the International Women's Year, probably contributed to a flurry of activity in Maharashtra in that year. There, the party-based and autonomous organizations celebrated 8 March as the International Women's Day for the first time.

In addition, women from all over the state belonging to the Maoist groups, the Socialist and Republican parties, the Communist Party of India (CPM) and Lal Nishan Party attended a women's conference in October 1975 in Pune.

After the Emergency in 1977, a women's group in Delhi began the publication of a journal, which turned out to be one of the most enduring institutions of the women's movement. The name of the journal was *Manushi*. It documented and analysed the Women's Movement, told its history, presented literature of women, and has continued until today under the able leadership of Madhu Kishwar, undoubtedly among the most original, self-reflective and fearless voices in the Women's Movement.

The anti-dowry and anti-rape agitations seemed to have spent the energies of the movement for some time, and while there were protests around the Shah Bano case in 1985-86, there was not the same enthusiasm or unity. The issue was also less clear. It was complicated largely by the communal atmosphere in the country that dissolved the issues of Muslim identity with the basic issue of women's rights, and the Hindu communalists' keenness to attain the Muslim women's rights has frequently left women's rights activists confused and vulnerable.

The agitation against Sati (burning of the Hindu widow), which followed the murder of Roop Kanwar, a young woman in Deorala in Rajasthan, was also based on the same lines. It was entangled with the issues that were muddled by the Hindu communal groups portraying it as an attack on Indian tradition and putting women on to the streets to defend their right to Sati.

In Hyderabad, Anveshi was set up as a platform for theoretical studies of women's issues, and in Delhi, the Centre for Women's Development Studies promoted research and documentation, including, in later years, the launching of a journal for gender studies. Many more university-based centres also came up in the 1990s. By that time, sufficient matter related to research and writing on women's studies began to appear in the university curricula.

Another important factor in improving gender justice is the provision of free primary health facilities at the grassroots level. As in the case of education, if health facilities are not easily accessible or are expensive, women and female children equally lose out. In fact, unequal access to improved facilities as well as improved living standards is the major cause of the sharp decline in the female-male ratio in India from 972 (1901) to 927 (1991). It does not mean that the chances of survival of women have decreased in absolute terms.

Compared with men, women have gained less from improved access to health facilities and better living standards and, therefore, their proportion has declined. To correct this imbalance, health facilities have to be brought within the reach of women. This has been done in Kerala, where over ninety per cent of women deliver their babies in medical institutions and the results are dramatic within the family.

Second, lack of knowledge about contraceptives or lack of family planning facilities can also be a significant source of vulnerability. The lack of family planning facilities, in fact, leads to women's deprivation. Third, there are cultural or even religious factors which give a passive position to young women, making them agree to bear and rear children as and when their husband or the parents-in-law wish. These inequities may not even be physically enforced, and women's subservient role and repeated child bearing may appear 'natural' because these practices have been sanctified by a long past that generates their unsuspecting acceptance.

Open and informed public discussion, promotion of women's employment opportunities, female literacy and family planning facilities can improve the voice and decisional role of women in the affairs of their families and bring about fundamental changes in the differentiation of just and unjust practices.

In present day Indian society, there is unanimity at the government and institutional level that women empowerment is essential for the overall development of nation. Nevertheless, the irony of fact is that whenever the issue of women empowerment is brought before our apex law-making intuition of (i.e., the Parliament), the real character of man chauvinism comes at fore. A number of initiatives taken until date to remove gender inequality from sociopolitical sphere are as follows:

- Fifty per cent of reservation for women in the Panchyati Raj system
- Legislation for thirty-three per cent reservation for women in the legislative body
- Job reservation for women in many states
- Recruitment of women officers in the field of defence
- Constitution of women commission
- Free education to women child; in this case, many states increased the upper limit up to the graduation level
- Establishment of gender sensitization committee against sexual harassment
- Protection of victimized women from public eye

However, it can be concluded that gender differences exist in the Indian society. How to overcome them and how to give women equal social and political statuses along with social dignity are the main challenges for gender debate in the Indian context.

### 2.3.3 The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 and its Provisions

Though the Panchayati Raj institutions have been in existence for a long time, it has been observed that these institutions have not been able to acquire the status and

dignity of viable and responsive people's bodies due to a number of reasons including absence of regular elections, prolonged super sessions, insufficient representation of weaker sections like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women, inadequate devolution of powers and lack of financial resources.

Article 40 of the Constitution which enshrines one of the Directive Principles of State Policy lays down that the State shall take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. In the light of the experience in the last forty years and in view of the short-comings which have been observed, it is considered that there is an imperative need to enshrine in the Constitution certain basic and essential features of Panchayati Raj institutions to impart certainty, continuity and strength to them.

The provision provided to women under the 73rd amendment of the Indian constitution is that not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Another provision provided to women is that no less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women.

## 2.3.4 Political Communication

Bell and Salvaggio mentioned the following about political power:

> As we know all societies are constituted by communication and all social processes are performed by exchanging information. So, the control of information and communication has become a central determinant of political power and social structure.

According to Franklin: 'The field of political communication studies the interactions between media and political systems, locally, nationally, and internationally.' The communication between leaders and citizens is necessary condition for the political system to function in representative democracies. Voters have to be informed about political programmes, policy issues and political alternatives presented by the candidates and political parties. On the other hand, political representatives should also know the wishes and needs of those whom they are supposed to govern.
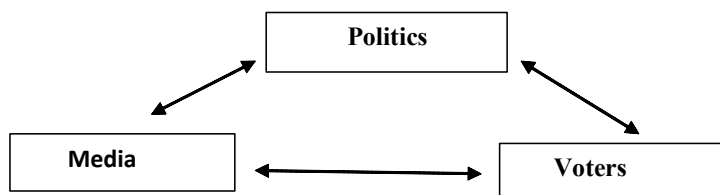


***Fig. 2.1*** *Political Communication and its Main Actors*

Political communication is also known as 'political cybernetics'. The term 'political communication' has a different connotation when it is used in the context of 'political cybernetics'. It comprises:

(a) Theory of communication nets

(b) A model drawn from the information theory and cybernetics

(c) A set of propositions partially derived from other theoretical areas such as organization theory, democratic theory and decision theory about the characteristics and effects of communications and their media on attitude change, public opinion formation, voting behaviour, maintenance and stability of political system, consensus, coercion, political development, and political socialization

Therefore, the study of political communication is closely related to the study of political system. It is only the communication that gives strength to political system. According to Karl Deutsch, political communication—the transmission of politically relevant information from one part of the political system to another, and between the social and political systems—is dynamic element of a political system and the process of political socialization. Further, political participation and political recruitment are dependent upon it. Each political system has its own network of political communication.

According to Young, political communication has four characteristics:

- Political communication is related to the process of decision-making rather than the result of decisions.

- It deals with various processes and dynamic movements.

- It deals with the problems of the sustenance of systems and the various processes of adaptation within the system.

- It is also familiar to the problem of evolutionary change.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

3. To what extent is political participation fundamental to democracy?

4. When does Robert Dahl see it unlikely for a citizen to participate in politics?

5. What is meant by true democracy as advocated by Gandhi?

6. How does Karl Deutsch define political communication?

---

## 2.4 CULTURAL BASES OF POLITICS: MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM

The concept of 'political culture' emerged from the wave of democratization studies and the seminal study was *The Civic Culture* (1963) by Gabriel Almond and Sidney

Verba. Here, they studied five democratic societies and concluded that a nation's political culture exerted an independent influence on social and political behaviour.

In 1965, a group of area specialists published their comparative study of the political systems of select countries in Africa (Egypt and Ethiopia), America (Mexico), Asia (India, Japan), Europe (England, Germany, Italy) and Eurasia (Soviet Russia and Turkey) in the form of a book *Political Culture and Political Development*. It was edited by Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba and dedicated to Gabriel Almond, who was the guiding force behind the endeavour. This work epitomized the 'political culture' approach. The concept of political culture was based on the observation on Gabriel Almond that 'every political system is embedded in a particular pattern of orientation to political actions'.

The concept of political culture thus suggests that the traditions of a society, the spirit of its public institutions, the passions and the collective reasoning of its citizenry, and the style and operating codes of its leaders are not just random products of historical experience but fit together as a part of a meaningful whole and constitute an intelligible web of relations. For the individual, the political culture provides controlling guidelines for effective political behaviour, and for collectivity, it gives a systematic structure of values and rational considerations which ensures coherence in the performance of institutions and organizations.

Political culture does not refer to the formal or informal structures of political interaction, i.e., the study of governments, political parties, pressure groups or cliques. Instead, it refers to the system of beliefs about patterns of political interaction and political institutions. It does not refer so much to what is happening in politics as much as what people believe is happening. Political culture therefore is an important link between political events and people's reactions to those events. It studies the fundamental political beliefs of the people because these are particularly relevant to understanding social change as well as political stability.

### 2.4.1 Elements of Political Culture—Approach of Almond, Verba et al.

A political culture is the product of the collective history of the political system and the life histories of individuals who make up the system. The theories of political culture are bridges between the behavioural approaches of political science and the macroanalysis based on the variables common to political sociology.

Political culture is a systematic study of political ideology, national ethos and spirit, national political psychology, and the fundamental values of the people. Political culture also studies non-political behaviour such as feelings of basic trust in human relations, orientations towards time and the possibility of progress.

Political culture stems from explicit citizenship training and conscious learning about the workings of the political system, rational understanding and the articulation of concepts. It includes an emotional dimension such as loyalty towards community and geography. The 'political culture' approach is relevant because it provides structure and meaning to the political sphere. It is the study of the total political system and includes micro and macro analysis.

The study of political culture has had a long history before American political scientists began studying different areas of the world. Though it could be even traced back to the Ancient Greeks, scholars such as Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba derived their inspiration from Montesquieu, Tocqueville and Walter Bagehot. Although the political culture approach provides a subjective orientation to the study of politics, it is but one aspect of the study of the political system.

The concept of political culture helps one to separate the cultural aspects of politics from other forms of culture. It ties the study of political beliefs to the sociological and anthropological works on culture and focuses attention on basic values, cognition and emotional commitments. The study of political culture also leads to political socialization, because the manner in which political knowledge is learned or transmitted from one generation to the next determines the political culture of a system.

Besides the work of Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba on political culture, there are others who have worked on the same theme since the decade the 1960s. The earliest is that of Eckstein, who studied how culture could play a role in political change. This tendency is known as the 'authority-culture' theory. Aaron Wildavsky analysed political culture on the basis of the grid-group approach and developed a typology of cultures. These types were based on social relations and the values they exemplified. The most recent works that update the field are those of Ronald Inglehart and Robert Putnam.

### 2.4.2 Postmodernism

Postmodernism as a movement is a little difficult to define. However, it does seem to encompass two basic facets of philosophy—first, all truth is relative and it is essentially, whatever you make of it and second, it is a strong focus on relationship, both to people and to the world and nature.

Postmodernism is a tendency in contemporary culture, which is characterized by the problem of objective truth and inherent suspicion towards global cultural narrative or meta-narrative. It involves the belief that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place. It emphasizes on the role of language, power relations, and motivations.

In particular, it attacks the use of sharp classifications such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial. It holds realities to be plural and relative, and dependent on who the interested parties are and in what their interests lie. It attempts to problematize modernist overconfidence, by highlighting the differences between how confident speakers are of their positions versus how confident they need to be to serve their supposed purposes. Postmodernism has influenced many cultural fields, including literary criticism, sociology, linguistics, architecture, visual arts, and music.

The major characteristics of postmodernism can be listed as given below:

- Complex cluster concept
- Rejects grand narratives

- Anti-transcendental

- Anti-universal

- Rejects the sovereignty of reason

- Questions binary oppositions and closed explanatory models

- Raises questions based on gender, history and ethnocentrism

- Suspicious of the autonomous, rational subject

- Incredulous of the role of the Enlightenment project

Postmodernist analysis of culture and society expanded the importance of critical theory and has been the point of departure for works of art, literature and design, as well as interpreting law, culture and society.

Postmodernism sees the sovereign State as a meta narrative that is part of the totalizing discourse of modernity. French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) has argued that power is exercised not only at the level of the State but also at the micro-levels where it is constantly being redefined and experienced.

Therefore, resistance to power has to happen not just at the spectacular levels but also at these micro levels. Since such an approach is questioning the existence of a centralized system of power, there is no basis within this approach for either the use or the undermining of State power. Postmodernism rejects the modernist ideals of rationality, virility, artistic genius, and individualism, in favor of being anti-capitalist, contemptuous of traditional morality, and committed to radical egalitarianism.

The most recent feature of postmodernism is the rise of political correctness. Postmodernism is the unifying philosophy of the academic left, which has replaced discredited Marxism. It might also be claimed that Marxism has transformed into postmodernism.

### 2.4.3  Postmodernism and its Effects in India

The emergence of a post-modern worldview has thrown into critical relief the notion of rational, objective and value-free science or for that matter any knowledge pursuit. In recent years in India, there has arisen a phenomenon described variously as the 'new social movements', 'anti-globalization movement' or (self described as) 'people's movements'. There are many groups in this category, many of them raucous, with disagreements among themselves. However, they do have a substantial shared ideology. Following are some shared characteristics:

- They claim to represent the 'people', the downtrodden Indian masses, without, however, subjecting this claim to the test of democratic elections.

- They are against globalization, which, it is claimed, is bad for the 'people', though apparently not for the anti-globalizers themselves, who nurture elaborate multinational networks of activists and supporters.

- They claim to be fighting for oppressed groups, however, the movement does not actually include any oppressed.

- They oppose the state as well as large corporations and large funding agencies such as the World Bank. They also oppose large-scale projects. These are seen as fundamentally exploitative of the 'people'.

- They claim to be fighting for the protection of the environment, which, in their view means minimizing any kind of substantial new technological intervention in nature. Thus, they denounce nuclear power plants even though these produce far less greenhouse gases than thermal power plants. Similarly, they denounce genetically modified crops even though these have the potential to reduce the need for irrigation and the need for chemical pesticides.

- They criticize the mainstream industrialized, corporate West, though many of the movements' leaders themselves maintain strong ties with the West.

- They reject Enlightenment ideas of the universalism of science and reason as Western hegemonic impositions. Rather, they claim to be in favor of diverse local or indigenous traditional knowledge and belief systems and ways of organizing society.

- They reject universal indices of measuring development and progress such as GDP, life expectancy, child mortality, and literacy rate. Rather, they argue in favor of subjective and local yardsticks, such as 'happiness', 'preserving the link between people and the Earth/river/forest/God', and 'preserving the wholeness of the community'.

**Ideological Basis of the New Social Movements**

Sometime in the 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment ushered in new ways of thinking in Europe and America. Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine and Voltaire sought to discard irrationality, superstition, and inherited dogmas with reason, science and rationality, and believed that systematic thinking should be applied to all spheres of human activity.

Since then, many important intellectuals (like Karl Marx) have accepted the basic values of the Enlightenment. These values represent 'modernity' and form the basis of the rationalist scientific-technological outlook and the each-citizen-is-equal principle that lie at the foundation of the Western democracies. Enlightenment ideas entered the Indian consciousness around the latter half of the 19th century. The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, lies very much in the Enlightenment tradition.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

7. What is political culture?

8. Name the two basic facets of philosophy encompassed in postmodernism.

---

## 2.5 MEDIA AND POLITICS

Mass media influences our relationship with institutions. For example, our information about the government is based on news reports. Our understanding of politics is

influenced by how media connects and represents politics. Today, instead of attending a live political event, we read or watch reports on the political event and also listen or read analysis or comments on the same.

As witnessed in the recent Lokpal bill agitation led by Anna Hazare, many of us chose to send our views through SMS rather than participating in it physically. The government relies heavily on the media to popularize its plans, schemes and positive developments.

Politicians depend on the media significantly, especially during election campaigns. Take the example of the last Lok Sabha elections in India. Mostly daily newspapers and television news channels were profiling the political contestants on an everyday basis. The local dailies customized this profiling to the local candidates fielded by political parties from respective constituencies.

There are numerous examples of active public relation campaigns done by political parties where all media including print, radio, television, and internet were used both separately and in-combination to publicize their election manifestoes. The media has a tremendous effect on politics and the politicians. We tend to believe the media because research is done by them and they are a main source of information.

Media institutionalizes many other aspects. Televised sport is another such example. Looking at cricket in India, one would tend to agree that cricket viewing has moved from the stadium to the living room. To explain this point further, today, a majority of revenue earned from cricket comes from telecast rights and television advertising between matches.

Hence, there is a strong focus on providing viewers with a great televised experience of the sport. Day-night games, more camera angles, replays, commentators, comprehensive on-screen statistics and other techniques have been employed to enrich the experience of the television audiences.

These television audiences have further become participants in the process of the media telecast of this game. From organized viewing, sending their queries to cricket experts in television studios, participating in televised discussions through phone-ins/messages to participating in online debates, the viewers' experience metamorphosed into social interaction in the context of televised cricket in India.

Similar dynamics are observed with religious-spiritual preachers on television, which has also transformed this interaction into a mediated aspect. In subtle ways, media has become a part of our daily routine and gets well-integrated in the socio-cultural framework.

## 2.5.1 New Election Tools in New Age India

India is on the move. India is young. India's literacy rate is rapidly increasing and so is the usage of latest gadgets like the Internet, smart phones, digital media and the social media. All these breath-taking changes are reflected in the ongoing general elections in India, the humongous dance of democracy in the biggest democratic power on earth involving 814 million voters.

Forget advertisement campaigns through television and print media. Forget car rallies, public meetings, hoardings, banners, corner meetings, 'padyatras' (on-foot marches) and door-to-door campaigns. All these are so conventional and anachronistic to young Indian voters— and thus boring.

This is a new age India. This is the new age general election. Indian Elections 2014 was not only fought on tarred roads and dusty streets across the length and breadth of the country. Even more interesting battle of the ballot was being waged in cyber space and through an increasingly powerful social media.

The Anna Hazare-Arvind Kejriwal combo had demonstrated to the country and the world the power of social media. The Hazare-led pressure group had effectively milked the social media cow to expand their outreach in their numerous agitations in 2011-12. Virtually all major political parties took the cue and used the Internet, mobile phones and social media in a big way for the first time in the ongoing elections for the 16th Lok Sabha.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube are being used by political parties, candidates and their campaign managers to woo the young Indian voters like never before. This is the smart way to reach out to the upwardly mobile Indian youth. And why not, especially when India is a young nation, with 66 per cent of the population under 35 and almost 72 million Indians are in the age bracket of 18 to 23? Needless to say, a large percentage of Indian youth is educated and tech-savvy. As many as 93 million Indians are on the Facebook and 33 million are on Twitter.

They use these social media tools not once or twice a day but practically on second-to-second basis using their mobile phones. Increasing number of young Indians are graduating to smart phones and making full of 3G and 4G technologies. No, this trend is not limited only to youngsters anymore. Even old people in rural India are increasingly being seen flaunting their personal mobile phones. After all, India is a country where the number of mobile phone owners exceeds the total number of voters (814 million).

Over 100 million Indians are avid users of social media. These numbers are growing rapidly. According to GSM Association figures of October 2013, of the nearly 900 million mobile connections in India, there are only 350 million subscribers. Of these, nearly 31 million were 3G subscribers. The number of 4G subscribers was 0.4 million in 2012. Projections are that as of now there would be at least 100 million 3G and 4G subscribers. Besides, India added 69 million Internet users during 2008-2011 pushing the total number of Internet users by 2011 end to 121 million, with a population penetration rate of almost ten per cent. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Indian politicians, cutting across the party lines and ideologies, are increasingly taking to the powerful social media to reach out to the voters. They are relying more and more on Facebook feeds, tweets and YouTube videos to woo the voters.

Consider the Twitter craze among the Indian politicians. For example, Bharatiya Janata Party's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi has the maximum number of followers on Twitter (3.77 million), followed by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal (1.65 million) and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (1.18 million). There are others in the million followers club, like Shashi Tharoor of the Congress

who has 2.15 million followers. Indian politicians have taken to the Facebook also in a big way. For example, Narendra Modi has 13 million 'Likes' (Facebook terminology for fans), followed by Arvind Kejriwal (5.2 million). Main issues being discussed and debated through various social media platforms pertain to communalism versus secularism, corruption, transparency, development, accountability of political leaders, jobs and economy. With slightly more than 100 million social media users, it is too early a stage where social media can be a real game-changer in Indian politics. But it can definitely be a major swing factor in at least 160 Lok Sabha constituencies out of a total of 543 as these are the seats where winning margin has been less than five per cent. Also, it is a little known fact that in a large number of Lok Sabha constituencies, a candidate who has polled just about 30 per cent of the valid votes polled emerges as the winner. There are dozens of Lok Sabha constituencies where the winning margin is less than 5000 votes, often in three digits and sometimes even in double digits.

---

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

9. Why does the government rely on media?
10. How do political parties make use of media?

---

## 2.6 GENDER AND POLITICS: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

In Pandit Nehru's words: 'You can tell the status of a nation by looking at the status of its women.'

The status of women in India has undergone many ups and downs. The 20th century has brought about many changes in the economic, social, and political arena. We have made remarkable progress in all aspects of living of which the most exemplary one would be in the social sphere. Women have been endowed with equal opportunities to compete with men and one another.

In the previous century and in the early 20th century, women were mostly confined to the home, household work and taking care of the family. The 20th century witnessed a great deal of independence and autonomy for many countries. Women have been equal fighters for freedom. They have demanded for and received equality in education and there lies the secret of their success.

Education and the awareness that comes with it have enabled this gender to fight for their cause. They have taken positions along with men in becoming supplementary breadwinners. This has led to more work—for now, they are 'managers' of their home and family as well as part of the workforce. They have penetrated almost all spheres of activity and figure prominently in all walks of life, be it education, health, politics, science, social work, or law.

The status of women in India is contradictory and complex. The ancient Indian texts of the Rig Veda and Upanishads tell stories of venerable women sages

and seers like Gargi and Maitrei. We have had some great women such as Rani Laxmi Bai, Meerabai, Mumtaz Mahal, Indira Gandhi, who have been acknowledged as leaders and thinkers of our society. In spite of these great women, larger parts of the female species were not accorded their basic rights.

It was only the pioneering effects of Mahatma Gandhi that led to the emancipation of Indian women. Modern history of India speaks of powerful women such as Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Nehru Pandit, the first woman to preside over the United Nations General Assembly (1953) and Shrimati Indira Gandhi, who became the first female Prime Minister of India in 1966.

Throughout history, women have generally been restricted to the role of a home-maker, of a mother and a wife. Despite major changes that have occurred in the status of women in some parts of the world, in recent decades, norms that restrict women to their homes are still powerful in India, defining activities that are deemed appropriate for women. They are, by and large, excluded from political life, which by its very nature takes place in a public forum.

In spite of India's reputation for respecting women, including treating them like Goddesses, history tells us that women were also ill-treated. There was no equality between men and women. This is true of ancient, medieval and early modern times barring some revolutionary movements such as that of Basaweshwara, the 12th century philosopher in Karnataka, who advocated equality, casteless society, status for women, and betterment of the downtrodden. Reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries led by great social reformers provided boost to women's legal status in India.

## 2.6.1 Women's Position in India: A Historical Perspective

It is very important to study the status of women in India through a historical perspective. It is not easy to find answers to questions like when did women start losing their status or who was responsible for this situation. The position that women occupied in the medieval and in the colonial period is of utmost importance. Women were never put on a high pedestal in the Shastras.

### Ancient India

It cannot be clearly stated whether equal rights between men and women prevailed or not during the Vedic period. But available sources show that women in India reached one of their glorious stages during this time (Sharma, 1981). Liberal attitudes and practices pertaining to women did exist. Although the father held supreme sway in the affairs of the family, the mother also enjoyed a high position, and she exercised considerable authority in the household affairs (Apte, 1964). The Aryans sought cooperation of their women in almost every walk of life and they were given full freedom for their development. Their women enjoyed the property rights and had access to the property of their fathers and husbands. They discussed political and social problems freely with men. They composed and chanted Vedic hymns at the holy sacrifices. Women were actively involved in religious and social matters. They had some freedom to choose their partners in marriage. Widow re-marriage was in

existence. They also had the privilege of adoption (Kapadia, 1968). The law did not discriminate between men and women.

As India started taking steps towards civilization, social discrimination increased. Jainism and Buddhism emerged as potent religious reform movements. According to Buddha, women's spiritual capacities were equal to those of men. 'Buddhism began as a religion that treated women as equal to men in their capacity for personal spiritual development.' 'The universal prejudices against women, who are said to be weak minded, fickle, treacherous and impure are shared by the Jains and expressed in several passages of the canon and in the form of maxims.'

The high status that women enjoyed during the early Vedic period gradually started deteriorating in the late Vedic period. Lineage began to be traced in the male line and sons were the sole heirs to family property. Women became entirely dependent on men, and were subjected to the authority of their fathers, husbands, and sons in the different periods of their life as daughters, wives, and mothers. Their education, religious rights and privileges were curbed. Due to social, economic and political changes, women lost their position in the society. Subsequently, unnecessary and unwarranted customs such as *purdah*, *sati*, child marriage, polygamy and enforced widowhood crept in (Sharma, 1966; Desai, 1957). As the economic and social status of sons began to rise, the position of women saw a steep decline. Women subjugation was predominant in the patriarchal society. All the decisions were taken by men and they did not bother to share their decisions with their wives. Rather they did everything according to their own will and pleasure (Boserup, 1970).

The position of women reached an all-time low during the period of the *Dharmashastras*. It is during this age that codes of conduct prescribing behaviour norms for women were evolved. This period saw the exclusion of women from both economic and religious spheres. During the period of *Dharmashastra*, child marriage was encouraged and widow marriage was looked down upon. The birth of a girl child was considered as an ill omen and many parents went to the extent of killing the female infants. The practice of *sati* became quite widespread because of the ill treatment meted out to widows.

### Medieval India

The system of *purdah* which was prevalent among royal families, nobles and merchant prince classes, prior to the advent of Muslims, spread to other classes also. During the medieval period, practices such as polygamy, *sati*, child marriage, ill treatment of widows already prevalent during the *Dharmashastra* age gained further momentum. The priestly class misinterpreted the sacred texts and created an impression that all these evil practices had religious sanction.

### Modern India

With the advent of the British, the status of women saw many changes. The East India Company (EIC) was mainly a trading company involved in trade in India. To expand their trade network, they started acquiring territories. As they were a trading company, the question of law and order in the acquired territories posed a great challenge before EIC. Therefore, the company acquired the rights to make laws

related to the criminal area. For dealing with civil matters, most importantly, dealing with matters which involved the personal laws, the EIC consulted Moulavis and Pundits. At that time, the customs were devised and sustained by male members. Women were not even consulted. Women's wrongs formed the theoretical basis for men's rights or more properly male duties towards moderating women's lust.

Women were not given equal matrimonial rights to property, rights to widows to remarriage, adoption and divorce rights. This situation was severely criticized by the colonial authorities. In return, Indian cultural nationalism argued in favour of Indian tradition. Therefore, the 19th century is often termed as the century of social reform.

The criticism outraged the people of India and caused a serious threat to the longevity of colonial rule in India. Hence, the Queen's Proclamation of 1859 declared that British authorities will not interfere in religious matters of the people.

To bring reforms smoothly in India, legislations transforming the family structure were introduced in Princely States without much opposition. Baroda was the first to introduce the divorce provision. The Princely state of Mysore enacted the Infant Marriage Prevention Act of 1894. Keeping pace with these princely states, Malabar part of Madras Presidency and Travancore introduced reforms. But the major drawback was that the Princely States could not stop violation of these laws across their borders.

### (i) Sati

The first serious challenge for the reformers was the problem of 'widow immolation' or *sati*, where Hindu widows climbed the funeral pyres of their husbands; an ancient tradition, prevalent in Bengal, Rajasthan, and the South Indian kingdom of Vijayanagar. *Sati* was never a religious obligation, but it was believed that by burning herself on the funeral pyre, a widow sanctified her ancestors and removed the sins of her husband. She was believed to ascend to the heaven on committing such an action. Strong social pressures on the widow and the status of widows among the Hindus were also factors that promoted the growth of this custom. *Sati* was first abolished in Calcutta in 1798; a territory that fell under the British jurisdiction. Raja Ram Mohan Roy fought bravely for the abolition of *sati* with assistance from Lord William Bentinck, and a ban on sati was imposed in 1829 in the British territories in India.

### (ii) Widow remarriage

The status of widows in India was deplorable in that they were not allowed participate in any religious and social functions. Their lives were worse than death, one of the reasons as to why many widows opted for *sati*. The upper-caste widows were most affected by the customs prevailing at that time. Prohibition against remarriage of widows was strictly observed only among upper-caste Hindus. Attempts to make laws to facilitate remarriage of widows by the British were vehemently opposed by the conservative Hindus, who held that remarriage of widows 'involved guilt and disgrace on earth and exclusion from heaven'. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who wrote *Marriage of Hindu Widows* relying heavily on the *Shastras*, fought for widow remarriage. Reformers like Mahadev Govind Ranade and Dayananda

Saraswati also actively participated in the reform movement, resulting in the enactment of the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act XV of 1856. The major drawback of the Act was that it was only applicable to the Hindus. Also, people showed little enthusiasm to implement the provisions of the Act. In Maharashtra, social reformers like Pandit Vishnu Shastri, Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Agarkar, D. K. Karve have made significant contributions in this regard.

### (iii) Right to property

There was a lot of ambiguity on the question of the rights of a widow to property which made it difficult for a widow to remarry. Before the 'Hindu Women's Right to Property Act XVIII of 1937' and the 'Hindu Succession Act XXX of 1956' came into effect, the *Dayabhaga* and *Mitakshara* Laws laid down that a widow could become a successor to her husband's estate in the absence of a son, son's son, son's son's son of the deceased, and the estate which she took by succession to her husband was an estate which she held only during her lifetime. At her death, the estate reverted to the nearest living heir of her dead husband.

### (iv) Child marriage

Another serious problem that women faced was that of child marriage. Small kids and in some cases even infants in the cradle were married off. Early marriage affected the growth and development of the children. Fixing the minimum age of marriage of men and women by law was voiced as early as the mid-19th century by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Keshab Chandra Sen. Vidyasagar argued that early marriage was detrimental to the health of women. Their efforts, coupled with those of Mahatma Gandhi, resulted in passing of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929.

### (v) Female infanticide

A girl is considered a burden by parents. Since a girl child would be going to her husband's place upon marriage, the parents did not want to waste their resources on her upbringing. Again the demand for large dowry and the huge wedding expenses caused a lot of hardship to the parents. So, the parents preferred a male child as they would be able to bring in large dowry. These considerations led to the practice of killing the girl child once she was born.

The practice of female infanticide was common among certain castes and tribes in India, especially in the north and north-western states. The custom of infanticide was particularly prominent among communities which found it difficult to find suitable husbands for their daughters and an unmarried daughter was considered a disgrace to the family. The difficulty was exacerbated by the extravagant expenditure which conventions demanded on the occasion of a daughter's marriage.

The earliest efforts to stop female infanticide were made in Kathiawar and Kutch. In 1795, infanticide was declared to be murder by Bengal Regulation XXI. The evil of female infanticide was ended by propaganda and the forceful action on the part of the British Government. Through the efforts of Keshab Chandra Sen, the Native Marriage Act of 1872 was passed, which abolished early marriages, made

polygamy an offence, sanctioned widow remarriages and inter-caste marriages. In 1901, the Government of Baroda passed the Infant Marriage Prevention Act. This Act fixed the minimum age for marriage for girls at 12 and for boys at 16. In 1930, the Sarda Act was passed to prevent the solemnization of marriages between boys under the age of 18 years and girls under the age of 14 years. However, even today, the Act remains merely on paper on account of several factors.

### (vi) Women and political participation

Indians wanted a nation state after independence in which women had a right to vote. Unlike the British and American women, Indian women did not face great difficulty in securing franchise. Gandhi stressed on the need for active participation of masses during the freedom movement, including women. He encouraged total participation of women resulting in the emergence of a large number of women freedom fighters. The *Swadeshi* movement, the non-Cooperation (1920–22) movement, the Civil Disobedience movement (1930–34), and the Quit India (1942) movement drew large number of women. There were millions of women from all parts of Indian society, many of whom volunteered, campaigned, protested, fasted and made donations for the freedom struggle. They were an integral part of Gandhi's non-violence movement in India's struggle for independence. Such participation helped women to voice the need for women's participation in the legislation process. Annie Besant, Madame Cama and Sarojini Naidu formed the Women's Indian Association. But, women still constitute a mere 10 per cent of the legislators in the Parliament and State Assemblies. According to the 1955 International Parliamentary Union Survey, women hold just 11.7 per cent of all seats in Parliament around the world. Success at the Panchayat level based on reservations for women convinced women's organizations that it is the correct time to extend these reservations to the higher levels. It is a different matter that even at the Panchayat level women members face a lot of opposition in as much as the male members of the Panchayat do not consider them as equals. Women face opposition from the family members, often resulting in their resigning their membership. Karnataka and West Bengal are good examples where women have exceeded the reserved 33 per cent with 42 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively. These examples show that given a chance women can excel in any field. Women just need the necessary support and encouragement.

## 2.6.2 Women's Position in India: The Contemporary Scenario

Independence of India heralded the introduction of laws relating to women. The Constitution provided equality to men and women and also gave special protection to women to realise their interests effectively. Special laws were enacted to prevent indecent representation of women in the media and sexual harassment in workplaces. The Hindu Code Bill gave the women the right to share the property of their parents. Many other social evils were removed. Widow remarriage was encouraged and child marriages were prohibited.

The right to divorce was also given to women (Jain, 1988). The law also gives women equal rights in the matter of adoption, maternity benefits, equal pay, good working conditions, etc.

However, many of these rights were more on papers than in actual practice. The traditional customs were so strongly rooted in the minds of people that they did not easily take these new reforms. When we start drawing a comparison between their role and status of women in Modern India and in the other countries of the world, particularly in the matter of emancipation of women, we cannot but be stuck with certain unexpected contrasts. Although the statuses of Indian women have changed, it does not prove satisfactory (Desai, 1957). Indian society has all along been a male-dominated society, where women's roles are confined to their homes. Their role was limited to procreation and upbringing of children and catering to the needs of men folk. In fact, in all the ages, women did not have an independent existence of their own.

They existed for men and always played a second fiddle to them.

## CEDAW

At the international level, the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sought to guarantee better legal status to women. However, certain contentious issues like the Jammu and Kashmir Permanent Resident (Disqualification) Bill 2004 (which deprived a woman of the status of permanent residency of the State if she married an outsider) and the Supreme Court judgment in Christian Community Welfare Council of India (in an appeal over the Judgment of the High Court, Mumbai), the latter has permitted, under certain circumstances, the arrest of a woman even in the absence of lady police and at any time in the day or night. These instances have once again brought to the forefront the traditional male domination.

In the 1991 World Bank Report on Gender and Poverty in India, Lynn Bennett announces: 'Now, researchers, women's activities, and government departments are reaching a new consensus: women must be seen as economic actors–actors with a particularly important role to play in efforts to reduce poverty.' But, the *Shramshakti* report on self-employed women and women in the informal sector published in 1988 deplored women's extremely vulnerable working conditions across diverse occupations under high levels of discrimination, as well as the range of health hazards women are exposed to on an everyday basis.

If the World Bank report concluded that poor women are clearly more efficient economic actors, with greater managerial and entrepreneurial skills than men, the *Shramshakti* report recommended that women require greater access to resources, especially credit and social services. Wider disparities exist among various women's groups culturally and socially. As a result, one can perceive as difference in the cognitive, connotative and consumption patterns of women residing in various spheres of social and economic layers. The victims of exploitation and oppression have been largely women of the third-world countries in general and lower sections among them in particular.

**Culturally**

- Gender-specific specialization (work)
- Cultural definition of appropriate sex roles
- Expectation of role within relationship
- Belief in the inherent superiority of males
- Customs of marriage (Bride price/Dowry)
- Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control
- Value that give proprietary right over women and girls

**Economically**

- Limited access to cash and credit
- Limited access to employment in formal and informal sector
- Limited access to education

As a result of the cultural and economic factors, women face discrimination right from childhood. It is held that both in childhood and in adulthood males are fed first and better. According to one estimate, even as adults women consume approximately 1000 calories less per day than men. The sex ratio in India stood at 933 females per 1000 males at the 2001 census and out of the total population, 120 million women lived in abject poverty. Lack of healthcare facilities and poverty has been resulting in India accounting for 27 per cent of all maternal deaths worldwide. Death of young girls in India exceeds that of young boys by over 3,00,000 each year and every 6th infant death is especially due to gender discrimination.

**India's Female Population**

At the 2001 census, India had a female population of 496 million. India accounts 15 per cent of World's women characterized by vast regional differences and a variety of cultures. However, social discrimination and economic deprivation on the basis of gender is common to all, irrespective of religion, cast, community, and state.

Empowerment of women, gender discrimination, and violence against women, which have become serious subjects of sociological research in contemporary times, was hitherto neglected. While contemporary social changes have exposed women to unprotected socio-economic, cultural and political environment, there are no corresponding protective social systems and institutions of social justice to safeguard their interests. There are many who are sceptical about women's ability to exercise equal rights with men and about their capacity to play an equal role with men. But such apprehensions are ill-founded in the context of the broader opportunities available for women following mechanization of industry and agriculture, enabling women to compete with men successfully.

Innovations in science and technology have removed the disparity between men and women attributed to physical strength alone. Women are able to handle modern appliances that require intelligence and training and not merely physical strength. Thus, India has now several women working as pilots, driving locomotives,

buses, tractors and machinery in workshops. Sex as a maternal factor in the area of legal rights has practically disappeared. It is not therefore fair to relegate women as a group to an inferior position in society. The Constitution does not regard sex as a permitted classification and prohibits sex as a basis of differential treatment in all areas of legal rights.

Modernity has resulted in a growing flexibility and changes in the gender roles of men and women. The earlier conception that man was the provider of basic necessities for family and women the child bearer and care taker of home is no longer valid in the changing social structure and economic compulsions.

In spite of the progress made, rural women and those belonging to the Dalit, Tribal and nomadic communities remain unaffected. So is the case with Muslim women among the minorities. The latter are far from realizing their basic rights. For instance, the low level of political participation of Muslim women in India is not only a consequence of the lack of resources but also the result of the status of Muslim women in the community. Since women in India have little place in the public arena they also express less faith in the political process. In spite of the UN Charter of Human Rights and the provisions of the Indian Constitution, women continue to be victims of exploitation. The view that the future generation of a family is carried on and preserved by boys only has degraded the position of women in society. Similarly, it is noticed that majority of the women are lacking in the spirit of rebellion. If careful attention is not paid and major steps are not taken, the situation will become extremely critical.

Therefore, any attempt to assess the status and problem of women in a society should start from the social framework. Social structure, cultural norms, and value systems are crucial determinants of women's role and their position in society. With respect to the status there is a gap between the theoretical possibilities and their actual realization.

## Gender Discrimination in India

Gender is a term used widely and gender discrimination is meant only for women, because they are the only targets of gender discrimination. From times immemorial, women have been considered inferior. They consider men to be superior. This is the prevailing mind-set. Some people do not prefer the girl child. They do not educate the girl child and consider her a burden. The UN human rights chief has said on the occasion of International Women's Day (7 March 2012) that deeply rooted discrimination against women in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres weakens society as a whole.

Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but it is determined by socially and the discrimination can be changed by the proper and perpetuate efforts. We have to make women equal to men in all fields. We have to educate the people and create awareness. The youth has to modernize thinking, so that the women are given equal rights and privileges.

Sociologically, the word gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, and the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles.

The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy. For ages it was believed that the different characteristics, roles, and status accorded to women and men in society are determined by sex, and that they are natural and therefore not changeable.

Many television channels are now shifting toward issue-based programming like *Balika Vadhu* to highlight the gender discrimination in India. Newspapers are life with stories on dowry deaths, domestic violence and honour killings.

Women face discrimination in various forms as presented subsequently:

- **Foeticide:** Female foeticide is the act of destroying or aborting the growth of a female foetus. This problem has been specific to the Indian context ever since one can remember. Sex selective abortion or foetal sex discrimination by medical professionals has grown to become a booming underground industry in India. Female foeticide is another way of discriminating between the two sexes, which has led to the abortion of an estimated number of over ten million female foetuses. The process began simultaneously with the growing use and popularity of ultrasound techniques. While the ultrasound was designed to check the health of the foetus, it inadvertently became the instrument through which female foetuses were detected and aborted. Initially, the government in a desperate attempt to curb India's growing population supported this. However, in 1994, the government passed the Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) which declared sex-selective abortion illegal. It was modified almost a decade later in 2003 holding medical professionals legally responsible.

- **Eve-teasing:** It is the most common manifestation of sexual aggression directed at women. It is the making of inappropriate remarks or gestures by a man or several men to a woman or several women in a public place. It is form of aggression that ranges in severity from sexually suggestive remarks to brushing in public places. By and large, it is a problem related to delinquency in youth but in no way is it restricted to it. Eve-teasing, unfortunately is encountered in almost every place and is perhaps the most widespread form of sexual harassment.

- **Sexual harassment:** Deemed as a form of minor rape, sexual harassment is the very difficult to prove in the court of law. Offenders usually disguise harassment in ways that are not easy to detect or prove. However, the law sees this as a punishable offence and describes it as teasing, varying in degree and nature. Often strangers are the perpetrators of teasing and harassment. They prowl public places and remain discreet in their intentions. The criminal objective in this case is to leverage the nuanced anonymity of the crowd in order to fulfill their motives. The fact that harassment takes place in public places is the most important factor that helps offenders to escape punishment.

- **Rape:** This is the most violent form of sexual aggression directed at women. Rape is the abduction of a woman for the purpose of having sexual intercourse with her against her will. In recent years a few Indian metropolitan cities have rapidly shown increased cases of rape as compared to other nations.

The law sees this as a gruesome act of violation which negates the fundamental concept of equality and right to liberty as stated in the Constitution. Several sociologists and psychologists have stressed the devastating consequences of rape.

- **Adverse ratio of a girl child:** Nowadays, child sex ratio is declining as a result of female foeticide with the help of scanning. In comparison with the census data of 2001, the child sex ratio in districts of Gujarat, such as Kutch, Banaskantha, Porbandar, Amreli, Panchmahal, Dahod, Narmada, Bharuch, Dangs, Valsad, Surat and Tapi, has seen a dip in 2011. Most of these districts have sizeable tribal population. The sex differentials in infants in tribal areas suggest that there is a strong preference for the male childlike civil societies.

  This is being practised in developed states of the country. Even cosmopolitan cities like Pune did not fare well with regard to the child sex ratio as it declined by 29 points as against 902 girls per 1,000 boys in the 2001 census. As health officials decide and organize campaigns to arrest the decline. In the wake of this, 16 cases have been filed against doctors flouting the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC-PNDT) Act, says Milind Salunkhe, advocate with the Pune Municipal Corporation's PC-PNDT Cell.

  Bringing in legislation and banning sonography would not solve the problem of female foeticide. Our society needs to be sensitized about gender equality.

- Foeticide (by giving liquid extract from cactus/opuntia, giving raw paddy to a new-born female baby, suffocation by a pillow or by breaking the baby's neck)

- **Not giving enough and nutritious food:** Kalyani Menon Sen and A. K. Shivakumar (2001) found that girls in India faced prejudice in many ways—lesser amount of breastfed milk, less of nurturing and play, minimal care or medical facilities in case of sickness, minimal provision of 'special' food, and minimal parental attention. Consequently, girls are much more vulnerable to ailments and infections as compared to boys, resulting in poor health and a shorter life span. It is this life-long injustice in bringing up and care that is the actual reason for death of girls—less obvious and understated, but as equally fatal as female foeticide and infanticide.

- **Not allowed to attend school** (Denial of education): In downtrodden families girls are not allowed to attend school. There are two reasons underlying this. One, if they go to school, there is no one to take care of their siblings. They are the working hands of their family. The other, they do not have adequate resources to educate their girl child. Instead of spending the money on their education, they prefer accumulating it for the daughter's marriage.

- **Not giving appropriate healthcare while in ill health:** GOI Planning Commission (2008) indicated that discrimination against women and girls impinges upon their right to health and manifests itself in the form of worsening health and nutrition indices. Thus, India continues to grapple with unacceptably high MMR, IMB, and increasing rates of anaemia, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS among women.

- **Early marriage:** Marriage is one of the basic institutions of Indian social life. A strong normative structure has developed around the institution which governs the various practices and behaviours associated with it. Early marriage is defined as a marriage in which the bride is below 18 years of age and the groom is below 21 years of age. Girls who bear children before their adolescent growth is complete remain physically under-developed and have greater risk of complications of pregnancy and maternal death. To reduce the incidence of child marriage, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 was passed and amended in 1979, 2006, and 2008.

  A premature marriage denies all her rights of freedom and individuality. The law of age of consent, which was passed almost a century ago, abolishing marriage below 12 years, is being violated in a large number of marriages in rural society even today.

  Once a woman is married, her freedom seems to be confiscated and her position as a wife and daughter-in-law is one of total subordination. Dube (1955) refers to this situation and writes that according to the traditional norms of the society a husband is expected to be an authoritarian figure whose will always dominate the domestic scene. The husband is superior, the wife is his subordinator. Although the perspective in position has undergone some change, the situation continues to be problematic. The society is not providing congenial condition as yet for women's emancipation.

- **Eve teasing, rape, and sexual harassment**: These are the kinds of violence against women which affects women's physical and mental health.

- **Dowry**: Dowry deaths (wherein a woman is killed due to insufficient gifts/money given by her parents at the time of her wedding) are illegal in India but are still widely prevalent. Nearly 5000 women have been known to suffer dowry deaths by burns or bodily injury (Johnson, 1996). The actual number of deaths is thought to be larger, given that many deaths occur due to reasons of insufficient dowry but are not reported as such. Rates of dowry deaths are higher among the poor and the lower castes (Rao and Bloch, 1993).

Divorce and destitution on baseless grounds or without any reason. As soon as a child is born, families and society begin the process of gendering. The birth of a son is celebrated, the birth of a daughter is associated with remorse; sons are showered with love, respect, better food, and proper health care. Boys are encouraged to be tough and outgoing, and girls are taught to be homebound and shy. All these differences are gender differences created by the society.

Gender inequality is therefore a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities and stems from pre-existing gendered social norms and social perceptions. Gender inequity has an adverse impact on development goals as it reduces economic growth. It hampers the overall well-being because blocking women from participation in social, political and economic activities can adversely affect the entire society. Many developing countries including India have displayed gender inequality in education, employment, and health. It is common

to find girls and women suffering from high mortality rates and vast differences in the level of education.

India has witnessed gender inequality from its early history due to its socio-economic and religious practices resulting in a wide disparity between the position of men and women in the society.

## Causes of Gender Discrimination

The causes of gender discrimination are:

- **Educational backwardness:** Sonalde Desai (1994) observed that parents' reluctance to educate daughters has its roots in the situation of women. Parents have several incentives for not educating their daughters. Foremost is the view that education of girls brings no returns to parents and that their future roles, being mainly reproductive and perhaps including agricultural labour, require no formal education.

- **Caste system:** Caste system is an age-old system that no longer has relevance. Invisibility of caste is a fallacy. The caste system is very much a part of modern Indian society and politics. Its interactions with gender, religion, and other variables make it a defining factor in many social and economic processes and its effect on these processes. There is a crucial relationship between caste and gender in the perpetuation of the caste system. Gender and caste are both linked and shape each other. According to Claude Levi Strauss, true endogamy (marriage within the caste) is merely the refusal to recognize the possibility of marriage beyond the limits of human community. Even remarriage of the upper-caste women was banned at one end and sometimes enforced cohabitation of the lower-caste women on the contrary. The larger rationale of the caste system as a system of labour appropriation has shaped the codes of gender to further the ends of the other upper castes.

   Dalit communities, schedule castes (15 per cent of the population) and schedule tribes (7 per cent) are the largest and most well-known lower-caste groups in India today. Historically discriminated against, studies show that poverty rates among these groups are still markedly higher than those among other groups. However, the position of women within these groups is worth noting. *Dalit* communities have only marginally lower Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) for girls than the national population, and there is only a negligible gap between GERs for boys and girls, unlike other sections of the population where this gap is pronounced. Women within these groups also have higher labour force participation rates, and are thus less likely to be involved exclusively in domestic duties, though their employment is concentrated in casual labour. The higher economic productivity of women in these communities must be further researched to fully understand its implications on their status within the community, especially to see if it results in furthering their decision-making ability within the family and the community. Studies of intra-community and household processes in these communities are also lacking, making it hard to quantify any assessment of their economic and social status.

- **Religious beliefs:** Indians are 81.3 per cent Hindu, 12 per cent Muslim, 2.5 per cent Christian and 1.9 per cent Sikh. Religion is an important part of Indian society and has recently become an increasing part of Indian politics. Women are particularly affected by religion. Seen as the bearers of religious tradition, there are often restrictions on their public and private roles in the name of religion. Women are often discouraged from getting an education or being economically productive, marriage pressures are high from a very young age (especially in rural areas), and biases within religions towards men are some examples of how religion can affect women's development. Understanding women's role in their religious communities is vital to both understand the causal agents of their social and economic status and to design intervention programs to address their needs.

Anna-Maria Lind (2006) stated that India's population still leads traditional lives in rural areas. Religious laws and traditions still determine the lives of many people, particularly women. Even if women are formerly entitled to own land and resources social and religious factors make many women refrain from this right in order not to cause distortions within the family. The preference for having sons permeates all social classes in India, which sets the standard for girls throughout their entire lives.

o Culture
o On the name of family history
o Customs and beliefs
o Races
o Low income
o Unemployment
o Society
o Family situation and attitudes

Like men, or even above them, women play an important role in the family and national development. But her contribution is not recognized by the male-dominant society.

### 2.6.3 Empowerment of Women

Women empowerment is the most vital system to strengthen the future of women in India. It is a systematic approach which needs to develop more seriously in India. Empowerment of women is the most successful in actually changing systems of bias against women, and thus, will effect long-term changes. The Government of India came up in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men'.

Ex-President Pratibha Patil said that gender equality and empowerment of women are the most critical points and gender equality is not an agenda of women versus men—rather, men should be partners in the empowerment of women.

Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action and control work in an autonomous way and take control of

one's own destiny. It includes control over both resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) and ideology (belief, values and attitudes). Empowerment implies expansion of assets and capabilities of people to influence control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives (World Bank Resource Book).

Empowerment can be viewed as a means of creating a social environment in which one can take decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. It strengthens one's innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge power and experience. One of the definitions of empowerment terms it a process of awareness and conscientization, of capacity development unfolding increased contribution, effectual authority to take decisions and execute the power and control leading to transformative action.

This involves the ability to get what one wants and to influence others on our concerns. The connection between women and power is influenced by various factors at multiple levels: family, community, market and the state. Significantly, at the psychological level, it involves women's ability to assert themselves and this is constructed by the gender roles assigned to her specially in a culture which resists change.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives, communities, and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important.

Empowerment occurs within sociological, psychological, economic spheres and at various levels, individual, group, and community and challenges our assumptions about status quo, asymmetrical power relationship in decision-making, personal and social rights, access to resources and entitlement, and social dynamics. Empowering women focuses the spotlight on education and employment that are essential to sustainable development.

Women empowerment generally has five components: first, women's sense of self-worth; second, their right to have the power of control their own lives, third, women's rights within the home; fourth, women's rights outside the home; and lastly, their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just social and economic order nationally, internationally, and universally.

Doubts pertaining to women's empowerment and the state and position of women have now become crucial for human rights-based approaches to development. The Cairo conference in 1994 held by UN on Population and Development emphasized more focus towards women's empowerment as the core issue and UNDP developed Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM) which were directed at the three variables that are indicators of women's role in society—political power or decision-making, literacy and health.

This process has been further accelerated with some sections of women becoming increasingly self-conscious of their discrimination in several areas of family and public life. They are also in a position to mobilize themselves on issues that can affect their overall position. Empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and can take rational decisions. A woman needs to be physically healthy so that she is able to take challenges of equality.

Empowering women means control making them economically independent, controlling resources like land and property and reduction of burden of work. A society or programme which aims at women's empowerment needs to create and strengthen sisterhood and to promote overall nurturing, caring, and gentleness. PACS emphasis on women SHGs as a collective is one such effort. Beijing conference 1995 had identified certain quantitative and qualitative indicators of women empowerment.

Beijing conference 1995 qualitative and quantitative indicators of women empowerment are present as given below:

Qualitative Indicators:

1. Increase in self-esteem, individual, and collective confidence
2. Increase in articulation, knowledge, and awareness on health, nutrition reproductive rights, law and literacy
3. Increase or decrease in personal leisure time and time for child care
4. Increase or decrease of workloads in new programmes
5. Change in roles and responsibility in family and community
6. Visible increase on decrease in violence on women and girls
7. Responses to, changes in social customs like child marriage, dowry, discrimination against widows
8. Visible changes in women's participation level attending meeting, participating, and demanding participation
9. Increase in bargaining and negotiating power at home, in community and the collective
10. Increase access to and ability to gather information
11. Formation of women collectives
12. Positive changes in social attitudes
13. Awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the household
14. Women's decision-making over her work and income

Quantitative indicators are explained as below:

1. Demographic trends, which include:
   (i) Maternal mortality rate
   (ii) Fertility rate
   (iii) Sex ratio
   (iv) Life expectancy at birth
   (v) Average age of marriage
2. Number of women participating in different development programmers
3. Greater access and control over community resources/government schemes- crèche, credit cooperative, non-formal education

4. Visible change in physical health status and nutritional level

5. Change in literacy and enrollment levels

6. Participation levels of women in political process. Monitorable targets for the Tenth Plan and beyond had certain key issues related to gender.

   (i) All children in school by 2003; all children to complete five years of schooling by 2007

   (ii) Reduction of gender gaps in literacy and wage rates by at least fifty per cent by 2007

   (iii) Reduction of IMR to forty-five per 1000 live births by 2007 and twenty-eight by 2012

   (iv) Reduction of maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to two per 1000 live births by 2007

India's declining sex ratio caused through foeticide, infanticide, and systematic neglect requires urgent and comprehensive action. It is well evidenced that low literacy, endemic under-nutrition, and social inequality are closely related to gender inequality that is a crucial antecedent to endemic under-nutrition.

**Women Empowerment through Education**

Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. Women empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women political rights are at the forefront of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide.

The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the International Women Conference at Nairobi in 1985. Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, confront their traditional role, and change their life.

Literacy rate in India has risen sharply from 18.3 per cent in 1951 to 64.8 per cent in 2001 in which enrollment of women in education has also risen sharply from seven per cent to 54.16 per cent. Despite the importance of women's education unfortunately only thirty-nine per cent of women are literate among sixty-four per cent of men.

Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plan, and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in difference spheres. From the fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1978) onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women.

The National Commission of Women was established by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the right and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level.

Women's education is extremely important intrinsically as it is their human right and required for the flourishing of many of their capacities. Other than educational

and economic empowerment, changes in women's mobility and social interaction and changes in intra-household decision-making are necessary.

It is, however, noticed that most programmes for education of girls and women in India have reinforced gender roles specially motherhood in curriculum as well as impact on evaluation.

The study of nearly ninety-four per cent of India's population done by Drez and others looks at female literacy and its negative and statistically significant impact on child mortality.

## Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment of women is one of the most vital conditions for the upliftment of women's social status. Unless women become economically independent or make nearly equal economic contribution to the family for its sustenance, they cannot be equal to men in the decision-making process. The problem of gender-based discrimination or subordination of women is very much rooted in the economic dependence of men.

The economic empowerment of women is a vital element of strong economic growth in any country. Empowering women enhances their ability to influence changes and to create a better society. They are equal to men in all aspects. Women are more perfect in the power to create, nurture and transform. Today, women are emerging as leaders in growing range of fields be it aeronautics, medicine, space, engineering, law, politics, education, business, all that is needed in today's world, in their empowerment. In India, the empowerment process has already begun. We are now witnessing a steady improvement in the enrollment of women in schools, colleges, and even in professional institutes.

Due to the impact of increasing globalization and information-technology, women broke new paths, i.e., of entrepreneurship. The progress is more visible among upper-class families in urban cities for they move in a new direction.

## Property Rights of Women

Traditionally, property right is availed to men in our patriarchal society. Inheritance law remains strongly biased against women in our society. When the distribution of inherited wealth is highly unequal, the effect of this disparity on economic inequality is great.

However, women in our society find huge obstacles in inheriting land. Their ability to inherit land is highly restricted due to prevailing traditions and customs. Several constraints that women have to face for their legal rights to property lead to inequalities in social and economic spheres. Our legislation, which is women friendly, has attempted to provide the property right to women as well. It is necessary to their welfare, empowerment, and equality in society.

The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 has legislated that though the son and daughter have equal rights to property of their father's own property, they have partial participation or right on the joint property. Legally, 'right to property,' is provided to the son as well as daughter. However, these legislation are not practiced fairly in

society. There are some obstacles which were highlighted by Bina Agarwal in 2001 as follows:

- Girls will go to another place after marriage.
- In future, parents of the girl hesitate to take any financial assistance by the daughter due to some traditional customs and practices.
- Some women leave their property right to their brothers.
- If the woman uses this property right, it will negatively affect her relationship with her brothers.

Bina Agarwal focused on two further aspects of gender inequality. These are:

- First, that there is a gender gap in command over property and productive assets
- Second, gender-biased social perceptions and norms

Some forms of persisting economic inequality between men and women are given below:

**Inequality in command over property:** Inequality in command over property is the single most important form of persisting economic inequality between women and men. Command over property implies not just rights in law but also effective rights in practice. Command implies control, whether or not you own the property. Hence, command over property relates not just to private property but also to public property.

**Social perceptions and norms:** Gender ideology embedded in social perceptions and social norms can affect economic outcomes for women in every sphere, be it property rights, employment, or household allocation. In the labour market, gender often defines perceptions about abilities and can lead to discriminatory hiring and pay practices.

Twenty-six laws have been enacted so far to protect women from various crimes. The recent law on the 'protection of women against domestic violence' satisfies the long-pending demand of the women activists. In the political field, the reservation for women is a significant step forward towards their political empowerment.

### Political Empowerment

Women's political participation has been considered a major measure of women's empowerment. The Indian Constitution has been committed to introduce socio-economic and political transformation. The initiatives of empowering women and the marginalized sections are the reflection of its democratic spirit that can be noticed from a number of amendments in these fields.

Especially the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts provide for an opportunity for women's entry into political spheres. These Amendment Acts provide for a thirty-three per cent reservation of seats for women in the governance of local bodies (rural and urban) with an aspiration of good governance and fair representation in the development process at the grassroot level.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India were termed the 'silent revolution'. These Amendments paved the way for women's entry into local governance by reserving thirty-three per cent of seats for them in the Panchayats at all the levels, including that of the chairperson's seat. In most states, reservation of seats has met with success, with female representation exceeding the thirty-three per cent quota in states such as Karnataka, Kerala, and Manipur.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is an important landmark in the history of Indian women's participation in the formation of democratic institutions at the grassroot level. Not only do they have one-third membership, but they also head, as chairpersons, one-third of the Panchayats.

According to the estimates, three would be a total of 7.95 lakh women in leadership roles in three tiers of the Panchayati Raj alone. In fact, in Karnataka, 43.88 per cent of seats were won by women in the 1994 and 1996 elections, much beyond the stipulated 33.3 per cent in the Constitution. The new government system in India has shown that given an opportunity, women, too, can perform very well in the public sphere.

The most significant aspect is that the gender representation in the decision-making process has been taken into account. Although, the Acts have enabled women to participate in the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) system as members, sarpanch, block and Zilla Panchayat Adhyakshas throughout the country for over five years, an urgent need is felt to strengthen them.

The reservation in Panchayats have provided for the erosion of the traditional gender, caste, class roles, and hierarchy, but it is a long and difficult process. Women not only have to fight for their right to be more than proxy members but also to break the barriers of gender division of labour, illiteracy, low level of mobility, seclusion, lack of training and information, which still continue to exist without enough support from the power structure.

Women's low self-esteem at the household level and their new role in local politics where they are now expected to function as leader creates a contradiction between women's role at home and in local government.

It has only been four years for Bangladesh and about a decade for India since the enactment of these constitutional changes. This, however, is too short a period to modify the dominant patriarchal structure of society that has continued to exist for last many millennia via the historical processes and social formations.

Over the last decade, experience has shown that women who have gained access to the Panchayats and municipalities have performed well. Some of them have already established excellent records of service and have even won distinguished awards for their performance. Being mostly illiterate, a large number of them have placed a high priority on acquiring literacy to be able to perform better at their jobs. Substantial numbers of teachers, lawyers, and other functionaries at the grassroot level have been able to win elections and become members of the Panchayats.

The process of empowerment in the local government institutions will enable women to re-examine their lives, recognize the source and structure of power and

of their own subordination, and initiate action to challenge the existing ideology as well as structures and institutions.

By contesting and getting elected to local government, women have shattered the myth of their own passivity that they are not willing to enter politics. However, women's representation in the decision-making positions with monitoring power is still negligible. The present rules of the game and decision-making procedure do not allow a greater participation of women and in the absence of women, there is no effort to recognize or change the game. The very absence of women at these levels thus leads to preservation and reinforcement of male-oriented and male-benefiting types of decisions.

Women are changing the governance in India. They are being elected to local councils in an unprecedented number as a result of amendments to the constitution that mandate the reservation of seats for women in local governments. In India, we call this new system the PRI. The women whom PRI has brought into politics are now governing, be it in one village, or a larger area such as 100 villages or a district.

This process of restructuring the national political and administrative system started as recently as January 1994, and thus, it is too early to assess the impact of women's entry into formal structures of the government. The sheer number of women that PRI has brought into the political system has made a difference. The percentages of women at various levels of political activity have shifted dramatically as a result of the constitutional change, from four-five per cent to twenty five-forty per cent. The difference is also qualitative, because these women are bringing their experience in the governance of civic society. In this way, they are making the state sensitive to the issues of poverty, inequality and gender injustice.

Palanithuri (1997), in a case study 'New Panchayati Raj System at Work: An Evaluation of Tamil Nadu', reported that they were not informed or invited to the meetings in the male-headed gram panchayat. Women members have always projected the issues relating to women. It is common that the husbands of the members used to accompany them (women) when they come to attend the meetings.

Pai (1998), according to his field notes in Meerut District 'Pradhanis in New Panchayats', revealed that many of the Pradhanis were illiterate and only able to put their signatures on official papers. Regarding their roles, the study revealed that they were almost insignificant in the functioning of *Gram* and Block Panchayat bodies.

As they belonged to better-off families in the villages, they do not work outside their homes. They agreed to stand for elections due to family pressure and also the decision of their community. The reservations provided by the Government had forced them to contest elections; provision of reservation has not led them to participate indecision-making in local bodies.

Nambiar (2001), in her study of 'Making the Gram Sabha Work', noted the difference utilities in organizing the gram sabha. Majority of women reported that they were not informed or invited to the meetings while others were hesitant in participating in meetings in the presence of a large number of elder members.

However, they have to forego their day's wages or household duties just to identify beneficiaries as to convey what the gram panchayat would do in future.

In this context, further study and research need to be undertaken; the present study was undertaken to know the Leadership Qualities. It served the following purpose:

  (i) To know the obstacles for women in panchayat and role performance in the panchayat

 (ii) To highlight the factors which overtly or covertly tend to promote or prevent women members from performing their roles

(iii) To know the nature and extent of participation and role performance in decision making

However, in 2006, Amendment took a historic decision to give fifty per cent reservation to women in PRI's under Nitish government. Bihar is the first state to do so. The most significant gain produced by election to the Panchayats is the emergence of women power in rural Bihar. Some other states like Chhattisgarh, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh also have fifty per cent reservation for women in local bodies.

In November 2009, Government of India introduced a constitutional amendment bill (112th Amendment) seeking fifty per cent reservation for women in urban local bodies.

Introducing the bill in Parliament in 2009, the then Urban Development Minister S. Jaipal Reddy said the following:

> Enhancement of reservation for women in urban local bodies will not only ensure their increased representation and participation... but also mainstream gender concerns in governance and decision making process, particularly, those related to women's issues such as water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, health and education.

In July 2011, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal for enhancing reservation for women in Panchayats from the present thirty-three per cent to fifty per cent with the provision being applicable to all seats filled through direct election, office of chairpersons and of offices reserved for SC/ST.

The Cabinet approved the proposal for moving an official amendment to the Constitution (110 Amendment) Bill 2009 for enhancing reservation for women in Panchayats at all tiers from one-third to at least fifty per cent. The government envisages that enhancement of reservation for women in Panchayats will facilitate more women to enter the public sphere and this will lead to further empowerment of women and also make Panchayats more inclusive institutions, thereby improving governance and public service delivery. Bihar and some states have already made suitable amendments to increase reservation for women in Panchayats from thirty-three to fifty per cent.

At present, out of the elected representatives of Panchayats numbering approximately 28.18 lakh, 36.87 per cent are women. With the proposed Constitutional amendment, the number of elected women representatives is expected to rise to more than fourteen lakh.

Women, however few, have been articulating and trying to sensitize local and national leaders and decision makers of the need for women's participation in the political process. Efforts are underway to take political scene more democratic, participatory, accountable, and transparent so as to ensure a just, humane, and equitable society. The urgency for political empowerment of women has therefore, increased manifold.

There is a need to enable women to be more effective members of local government bodies. Two aspects of effectiveness need to be considered, i.e., effectiveness in participating in overall Union Parishad operations and their involvement in the development issues.

**Empowerment of Poor Women**

Women have been the vulnerable section of society and constitute a sizable segment of the poverty-struck population. Women face gender-specific barriers to access education, health, empowerment, etc. Micro-finance deals with women below the poverty line. Micro-loans are available solely and entirely to this target group of women.

There are several reasons for this. Among the poor, women are most disadvantaged as they are characterized by lack of education and access of resources, both of which are required to help them work their way out of poverty and for upward economic and social mobility. The problem is more acute for women in countries like India, despite the fact that women's labour makes a critical contribution to the economy. This is due to the low social status and lack of access to key sources. If loans are routed through women, benefits of loans are spread wider among the household.

Since women's empowerment is the key to socio-economic development of the community, bringing women into the mainstream of national development has been a major concern of government. The ministry of rural development has special components for women in its programmes. Funds are earmarked as 'women's component' to ensure flow of adequate resources for the same.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

11. What is meant by empowerment?
12. Name the five components of women's empowerment.
13. What was the impact of the 73rd and 74th Amendments in the Constitution of India?
14. Who formed the Women's Indian Association?
15. Give any one reason for gender discrimination.

---

## 2.7 SUMMARY

- Agents of socialization influence, in one degree or another, the individual's political opinions. Such agents are family, media, friends, teachers, religion, race, gender, age and geography.

- Political socialization is a concept concerning the 'study of the developmental processes by which children and adolescents acquire political cognition, attitudes and behaviours'.

- Most political opinions are formed during childhood. Many political ideas are passed down from parents to young adults.

- Glass (1986) recognizes family as a primary influence in the development of a child's political orientation, mainly due to constant relationship between parents and child.

- Religious tradition can have a strong effect on someone's political views; for example, Protestants tend to be more conservative at the political stage.

- The general level of participation in a society is the extent to which the people as a whole are active in politics—the number of active people multiplied by the amount of their action, to put it arithmetically.

- If one is merely consulted by a powerful person who wants one's views for information, or if one is mobilized or re-educated within the control of another, one has not participated in politics in any significant sense.

- Political participation not only refers to engagement with government and the State but also with civil society by developing social trust and a improving communal values and benefits.

- Genuine and effective political participation must also acknowledge the rights of non-participants to stand outside the political process, if the latter chooses to do so.

- In a country where the civil society is empowered, political participation may appear in a variety of formal and non-formal modes, where citizens and non-citizens (like refugees) could work towards social change.

- Lester Milbrath has suggested that members of the society can be divided into four categories in terms of their degree of political participation.

- Dahl suggests that individuals are not likely to have high levels of political participation if they believe that the outcome of events will be satisfactory without their involvement.

- In modern democracies, people govern themselves through their elected representatives. In a parliamentary system, the executive comes out of the legislature and remains part of it and responsible to it.

- As a representative parliamentary democracy, India has a well-established system of direct and indirect elections to man its institutions.

- As a representative parliamentary democracy, India has a well-established system of direct and indirect elections to man its institutions.

- A general election in India is a gigantic exercise. Statistically, the number of voters in India remains more than 600 million (60 crores).

- India has upwards of about 3.2 million (thirty-two lakhs) directly elected peoples' representatives spread over various tiers of governance.

- It is stated by those advocating this approach that the only way to conduct a meaningful electoral exercise in this country is to have direct elections only at local levels with the upper tiers filled by representatives indirectly elected by an electoral college consisting of the representatives manning the lower tiers.

- Direct elections should be held on the basis of adult franchise at the level of Panchayats and other local bodies.

- The current conditions of the women in India and their status is ironical. On one hand, the women in India have climbed the ladder of corporate success, and, on the other, they unconditionally undergo the violence that her own family members afflict on her.

- A positive development is that women's issues have been taken up by women's organizations as well as by the mainstream political parties and grassroots movements.

- Another important factor in improving gender justice is the provision of free primary health facilities at the grassroots level.

- According to Franklin: 'The field of political communication studies the interactions between media and political systems, locally, nationally, and internationally.'

- Therefore, the study of political communication is closely related to the study of political system. It is only the communication that gives strength to political system.

- Political culture does not refer to the formal or informal structures of political interaction, i.e., the study of governments, political parties, pressure groups or cliques.

- A political culture is the product of the collective history of the political system and the life histories of individuals who make up the system.

- The emergence of a post-modern worldview has thrown into critical relief the notion of rational, objective and value-free science or for that matter any knowledge pursuit.

- The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, lies very much in the Enlightenment tradition.

- Education and the awareness that comes with it have enabled this gender to fight for their cause. They have taken positions along with men in becoming supplementary breadwinners.

- Women empowerment is the most vital system to strengthen the future of women in India. It is a systematic approach which needs to develop more seriously in India.

- Empowerment can be viewed as a means of creating a social environment in which one can take decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation.

- Significantly, at the psychological level, it involves women's ability to assert themselves and this is constructed by the gender roles assigned to her specially in a culture which resists change.

- Empowering women means control making them economically independent, controlling resources like land and property and reduction of burden of work.

- Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women.

- Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, confront their traditional role, and change their life.

- Today, women are emerging as leaders in growing range of fields be it aeronautics, medicine, space, engineering, law, politics, education, business, all that is needed in today's world, in their empowerment.

- Women's political participation has been considered a major measure of women's empowerment.

- It has only been four years for Bangladesh and about a decade for India since the enactment of these constitutional changes.

- The process of empowerment in the local government institutions will enable women to re-examine their lives, recognize the source and structure of power and of their own subordination, and initiate action to challenge the existing ideology as well as structures and institutions.

- Women, however few, have been articulating and trying to sensitize local and national leaders and decision makers of the need for women's participation in the political process.

- Since women's empowerment is the key to socio-economic development of the community, bringing women into the mainstream of national development has been a major concern of government.

## 2.8 KEY TERMS

- **Deracination:** It means to remove or separate from a native environment or culture.

- **Anomalies:** It refers to something that deviates from what is standard, normal, or expected.

- **Vitiated:** It means to spoil or impair the quality or efficiency of something.

- **Defections:** It means the desertion of one's country or cause in favor of an opposing one.
- **Ethnocentrism:** It refers to the evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture.

## 2.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Agents of socialization influence, in one degree or another, the individual's political opinions. Such agents are family, media, friends, teachers, religion, race, gender, age and geography.

2. The agents of socialization that are crucial to a child's development are:
   - Family
   - Schools
   - Mass Media
   - Religion
   - Political parties
   - Workplace

3. Political participation is so fundamental to democracy that the latter would not exist without the widespread, regular and active participation of citizens.

4. Robert Dahl argues that an individual is unlikely to participate in politics, if he feels that the probability of his influencing the outcome of events is low.

5. A true democracy, as advocated by Gandhi, ensures that local, state and national representatives are accountable to the people for local, State and national matters respectively through effective transparency.

6. Political communication, according to Karl Deutsch, is the transmission of politically relevant information from one part of the political system to another, and between the social and political systems.

7. A political culture is the product of the collective history of the political system and the life histories of individuals who make up the system.

8. Postmodernism encompasses two basic facets of philosophy—first, all truth is relative and it is essentially, whatever you make of it and second, it is a strong focus on relationship, both to people and to the world and nature.

9. The government relies heavily on the media to popularize its plans, schemes and positive developments.

10. There are numerous examples of active public relation campaigns done by political parties where all media including print, radio, television, and internet were used both separately and in-combination to publicize their election manifestoes.

11. Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action and control work in an autonomous way and take control of one's own destiny.

12. Women empowerment generally has five components: firstly, women's sense of self-worth; secondly, their right to have the power of control their own lives, thirdly, women's rights within the home; fourthly**,** women's rights outside the home; and lastly, their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just social and economic order nationally, internationally, and universally.

13. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India paved the way for women's entry into local governance by reserving thirty-three per cent of seats for them in the Panchayats at all the levels, including that of the chairperson's seat.

14. Annie Besant, Madame Cama and Sarojini Naidu formed the Women's Indian Association.

15. Sonalde Desai (1994) observed that parents' reluctance to educate daughters has its roots in the situation of women. Parents have several incentives for not educating their daughters.

## 2.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

**Short-Answer Questions**

1. What does Milbrath's theory of political participation state?
2. What are the three categories of suggestions for electoral reforms in India?
3. What role does media play for political events?
4. Write a short note on new election tools in new age India.
5. What are the various forms wherein women face discrimination in India?

**Long-Answer Questions**

1. How were the feminist movements in India entangled with the communal groups?
2. What are the effective means of political participation? How is political participation determined through elections in India?
3. Describe the main problems faced during elections in India.
4. Explain the concept of postmodernism. What effect did it have in India?
5. How does education help in women empowerment? Briefly explain how women's political participation can be considered a measure of women empowerment?

## 2.11 FURTHER READING

Edward, Greenburg. 2009. *Political Socialization*. United States: Transaction Publishers.

Schrems, John J. 2007. *Understanding Principles of Politics and the State*. Maryland: University Press of America.

Mukherjee, Bharati. 1991. *Political Culture and Leadership in India: A Study of West Bengal*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

Fulga, Gheorghe. 2005. *Social Change and Political Culture*. Bucuresti: Economic Publishing House.

**NOTES**

# UNIT 3  SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

**Structure**

## 3.0  INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the idea of power has assumed particular significance in the realm of political sociology. The reason for this may be traced to the fact that the meaning of politics has now changed from one of being 'a study of state and government' to that of being 'a study of power'. According to Curtis, politics is an organized dispute about power and its use, involving choice among competing values, ideas, persons, interests and demands.

The study of politics is concerned with the description and analysis of the manner in which power is obtained, exercised, and controlled, and the purpose for which it is used, the manner in which decisions are made, the factors which influence the making of those decisions, and the context in which those decisions take place. Hence, political sociology is understood as the study of power. Machiavelli, Hobbes, Harrington, Pareto, Mosca, Michels, Dahl, Easton, Kaplan, Lasswell, Morgenthau and Parsons made notable contribution to this perspective. This unit discusses the definition, evolution and theories of elitism, as well as the concepts of bureaucracy and social ethics in the Indian society and economy.

## 3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Define elitism and trace its theories and evolution
- Analyse Marx, Weber and Merton's understanding and explanation of bureaucracy
- Explain social ethics and politics in India
- Describe the concept of secularism and fundamentalism

## 3.2 ELITISM: DEFINITION, EVOLUTION AND THEORIES

In simple terms, 'power' refers to the ability of a person to influence the behaviour of another person or a group of persons in accordance with his/her own wish. Power includes a relationship of subordination and super-ordination between people. Many social scientists, particularly political sociologists, are basically interested in the consequences of the play of power in social relationships.

The nature and limits of political power have been theorized by different ideologies. These are as follows:

- **Marxism:** According to Marxism, political power is concentrated in the hands of dominant economic class, e.g., the concepts of Marx, Engels and Lukes.
- **Elitism:** Similar to Marxism, elitism believes that a small group of people, i.e., elites, rule and control majority of people, e.g., the ideologies of Pareto, Mosca and Michels.
- **Pluralism:** It regards extensive dispersal of power among different groups in a liberal democratic society with no one in a position to monopolize. Usually, these groups interact to produce an overall consensus and conflict resolution is non-violent through forms of bargaining within procedural devices such as elections, e.g., Mills, Truman and Wilson.

Power always entails a social relationship between at least two actors. It cannot be an attribute of one person. An individual's power is meaningless unless it is stated over whom this power is exercised. The individual or group of individuals who hold power is/are able to get others to do what they want them to do. If those on whom power is exercised resist or refuse to obey those who are powerful, they are punished in one way or the other.

Power always gives rise to asymmetry in relationships. Those who have greater access to limited sources, e.g., control over finances, ownership or control over means of production/means of distribution, are more powerful than those who do not have the means or the opportunity to control such resources. The use of sanction in imposing one's will is an important constituent of power and it is on this count that power differs from influence.

### 3.2.1  Vilfredo Pareto's Theory of Circulation of Elite

In a general sense, the term 'elite' was employed to refer to commodities of particular quality. In the 17th century, the word elite was broadened to include social groups such as higher ranks of mobility and others that could be treated as 'better quality' to the rest of them. It was only in the later part of the 19th century that the term gained popularity in sociological writings in Europe. In 1930s, sociological theories of elite developed in Britain and America; particularly in the writings of Vilfredo Pareto.

Vilfredo Pareto explained the concept of elite in terms of a class of people with highest indices (referring to sign of capacity, e.g., a successful doctor has highest index). This class of people is referred to as the 'elite'. Therefore, according to Pareto, the elite class comprises all those who have succeeded and are considered by their peers and the public as the best. When he spoke of the elite consistently, Pareto meant not only those who have succeeded but those who exercise the political functions of administration or government and those who influence or determine the conduct of governing machinery though they are not officials or ministers.

There are two categories—the non-elite (who may or may not have a role to play in the government) and the elite. The elite category is divided into two sub-categories of governing elite and non-governing elite (the masses). In other words, Pareto discussed power as the universal aspect of social stratification. He talks of two strata in a population:

 (i)  Lower stratum or the non-elite

 (ii)  Higher stratum or the elite

Pareto significantly identified the element of mobility in the elite class. He did not claim that the elites were a static category, which was constituted once and for all. Pareto propounded the idea of 'circulation of elite'. The theory of circulation of elite may be explained through two approaches. These are as follows:

 (i)  Circulation of elite refers to the process in which individuals circulate between the elite and the non-elite groups.

 (ii)  Circulation of elite also refers to the process in which one elite group is replaced by another.

Pareto incorporated both the conceptions, but the former conception referring to the circulation of individuals between elite and non-elite groups predominates. In the context of decay and renewal of aristocracies, Pareto explains that 'the governing class is restored not only in numbers but—and it is that the more important thing—in quality, by families rising from lower classes'. He also mentioned that circulation of elites leads to the increase of degenerate elements in the classes which still hold power and increase in the elements of superior quality in the subject classes (i.e., non-elite class).

In such a situation, social equilibrium becomes unstable. Even a gentle blow may be sufficient to collapse it. Subsequently, a new elite comes to power and establishes a new equilibrium after a conquest or a revolution. Pareto also reiterated the occurrence of circulation of individuals between the elite and non-elite classes.

**NOTES**

He explained that the governing class constituting the elite might induct those people in the lower classes from whom they perceive threat or danger. When such people are included into the elite group, they change their character completely and adopt the attitude and interests of the established elite.

For Pareto, the elite can behave as either foxes or lions; in other words, the elite can choose the rule by manipulation or by force. Using the concepts of Machiavelli, Pareto distinguished two basic types of elite groups:

(i) 'Lion elites', who were capable of ruling by force (e.g., military dictatorships/regimes). 'Lions' gain power because of their ability to take direct and powerful actions to rule.

(ii) 'Fox elites', who ruled by diplomatic manipulation (e.g., liberal democratic regimes). 'Foxes' rule by cunningness.

It is thus evident that Pareto's opinion of political power was very much all-encompassing. He tried to solve the problem of political change. Pareto elaborated how effectively an all-powerful elite could be displaced by another elite. According to him, it could be done by reference to the idea that elites, after they gain power, have a comparatively limited lifespan.

The elites turn self-indulgent, decay, lose their force and, in turn, are replaced by other, more-powerful, elite groups. Within a party, different elite groups exist and rise to prominence, attained power within the party and, after some years, start to decay. In Pareto's words, 'powerful groups arise in society, take power, lose their political vitality over time and are eventually replaced'.

Vilfredo Pareto analysed the theory of circulation of elites with the help of notions of residues and derivations. According to Pareto, there are six basic human drives or instincts, which he terms 'residues'. The residues are manipulated by the elite through the use of four political strategies that Pareto terms as 'derivations'. The six residues are as follows:

(i) **Instinct of combination:** All people have an instinct to live together in groups.

(ii) **Persistence of aggregates or group persistence:** Once groups are established, people have an instinctual need to maintain them.

(iii) **Need of expressing sentiments by external acts (activity, self-expression):** People attempt to reinforce the bonds that hold groups together by forming rituals, such as those we find in religions.

(iv) **Residues connected with sociality:** People have a drive for uniformity and an instinctual hostility to outsiders.

(v) **Self-preservation (integrity of the individual and his/her appurtenances):** Individuals have an instinct to maintain their own security, property and social position.

(vi) **Sex residue (residues of sexuality):** Sexuality has a role to play in maintaining the social bonds of society.

The four derivations are as follows:

(i) **Simple assertion:** People in elite positions simply state that something is right, and this is accepted as a satisfactory justification.

(ii) **Authority:** The masses accept what they are told by the elite because they accept the latter's position as legitimate.

(iii) **Sentiments or principles:** The masses accept what they are told by the elite because they believe that the latter are conforming to public opinion.

(iv) **Verbal proofs:** The masses are persuaded to behave in a particular way, or to accept a belief, by the convincing arguments of the elite.

Pareto's theory of elite was perceived as a validation for fascism. Further, his analysis largely ignored economic factors. Pareto assumed that elite groups are by some means superior to all other groups in society. He provides just a little real idea about how and why they are purportedly superior.

Moreover, Pareto's clarification for the substitution of elites is very simplistic in nature insofar as he gives no substantial explanation as to why elites should essentially become decadent or decay. The difference between various types of elite is very simplistic and does not identify the fact that in democratic societies, the politically strong might rule through a mix of economic, military, political and ideological power.

To Pareto, there appears to be very little fundamental difference between democratic societies and totalitarian societies. The elite theory of Pareto is contained in his principal affirmation that 'history is a graveyard of aristocracies'.

### 3.2.2 C.W. Mills and Power Elite

One of the most influential elite theorists of the 20th century is C. Wright Mills. His book *The Power Elite* (1956) introduced a number of new dimensions, including economic dimension, into the classical elite theory of Pareto and Mosca. Mills proposed the concept of power elite in the context of power in America. He argued that at the national level, a single power elite rules modern America.

Mills explained the theory of power elite in terms of a unified power group composed of top government executives, military officials and corporation directors. According to him, the elites are comprised of those men who enter into 'every cranny of the social structure'. These command posts are situated at the 'summits' of the great 'hierarchies of state, corporation and army', which together form an encompassing 'triangle of power'.

With America as his focus, Mills argued that national power resides in three domains: (i) the economic (major business corporations), (ii) the political (federal government), and (iii) the military. Top decision-making is becoming more centralized and coordinated between these three domains.

These institutions hold fundamental positions in society. The ones who occupy command posts in these three basic institutions comprise the elite. The beholders of these command posts, though seemingly discernible from each other in terms of

their association with three major institutions, are adequately similar in their values, interests and ideals and even interconnected and interrelated to constitute a single ruling minority.

Mills christens this ruling minority as 'the power elite'. The overall result of the concurrence of economic, military and political power is power elite which is predominant in the American society and takes all decisions of national and international importance.

Mills proposed that pyramid of power may be conceived as formed of three layers. The apex is occupied by power elite and the second layer is occupied by middle levels of power. This level of power is constituted of diversified and balanced plurality of interest groups while the third layer is occupied by mass society. Mass society comprises the powerless mass of unorganized people who are controlled from upper strata, i.e., power elites at the apex and middle level.
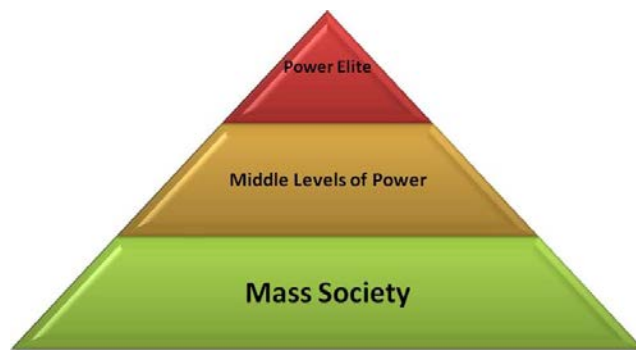


***Fig. 3.1*** *C. Wright Mills' Pyramid of Power*

Mills' analysis has basis in the idea that certain elite groups rose to control different institutions in society. As a few institutions were more powerful than others (an economic elite, for instance, was expected to be more powerful than an educational or religious elite), it followed that the elite groups controlling such institutions will hold the balance of power in the overall society.

This is to say that they would politically dominate on the structural level of power. As discussed earlier, Mills specified three key institutions (or 'power blocs') within the State which he took to be of key significance in terms of the potential for holding power in society:

(a) Major corporations

(b) Military

(c) Federal government

All these institutions comprised a power bloc in its own right since each of them possessed a set of particular interests. Each power bloc was dominated by internal elite, e.g., the leaders of the most powerful corporations, the upper strata of the armed forces, and the leaders of the political party in government.

Hence, it is observed that according to Mills, the governing elite in America draws its members from three domains:

(i) The highest political leaders comprising the president and a handful of key cabinet members and close advisors

(ii) Major corporate owners and directors

(iii) High-ranking military officers

These people constitute a close-knit group. For the major part, the elite has respect for the civil liberties, follows established constitutional principles and functions explicitly and calmly. It is not like dictatorship because it does not depend upon terror, secret police or midnight arrests to attain its objectives.

Further, its membership is not closed, although several members have enjoyed a head start in life because of their being born into well-known families. Nonetheless, those who work hard, enjoy good luck and show enthusiasm to take on elite values find it possible to get into higher circles from below. Essentially, the power of elite groups stems from control of the highest positions in the political and business hierarchy, and from shared belief and values.

The power elite comprise men and women whose positions entitle them to rise above the common environments of ordinary men and women. They are in positions to make decisions bearing major consequences. It is not that important whether they do or do not make such decisions. What is more important is the fact that they hold such pivotal positions.

Their inability to act and make decisions is itself an act which is usually of bigger consequence than the decisions made by them. The power elite command the major hierarchies and organizations of contemporary society. They run, rule or control big corporations. The power elite control the state machinery and claim its privileges. The military establishment is directed by them. They hold the tactical command posts of the social structure in which are now centered the effective means of power and wealth and the celebrity which they enjoy.

The power elite are not lonely rulers. Usually the consultants, advisors, spokesmen and opinion-makers are the skippers of their higher thought and decision. Directly below the elite are the professional politicians of the middle power levels, in the Congress and in the pressure groups, as well as among the new and old upper classes of town and city and region.

## Degree of Overlap and Cooperation between Power Blocs

Even though power elites were strong in their own right, still, in all societies there prevails an essential degree of cooperation and overlap between these power blocs. For instance, the military needs political cooperation regarding the classification of genuine enemies and economic cooperation as well. Big corporations need assistance from government and defense contracts. In the same vein, the federal government also requires the collaboration of the military, a vibrant corporate sphere, and so on.

Hence, Mills stated that the degree of required cooperation among elites within these power blocs in effect meant that they comprised a 'power elite' within the

**NOTES**

society. These overlapping common interests meant that while they might possess specific opposed interests, these are subjugated to the broader interest of sustaining elite power, status and rule. The following things have been noticed to strengthen the social cohesiveness of the power elite:

(a) The concentration and centralization of economic power among a tiny set of powerful groups/individuals

(b) The concentration and centralization of political power among a small unit of strong groups/individuals

(c) The common social backgrounds (and thus, 'values') of the members of each elite

For Mills, the members of various elites regularly interchanged, in a way that certain powerful individuals could be members of more than one elite at a time. For instance, military leaders may take-up political appointments, become directors of big corporations. Key business leaders may assume political appointments in government and politicians might join the boards of major corporations.

In this regard, political power turns more and more concentrated and gigantic political decisions (e.g., investment, war, civil rights and so on) were successfully taken by a small elite minority. Hence, politics degraded into a manipulation of debate. In fact, Mills characterized it as an essential exercise where political choice is restricted because the political parties who coveted power could only attain it on the basis of cooperation from economic and military elites.

For instance, in America, to finance an election campaign, aspiring politicians need money from businesses and the rich. Due to this requirement, they, in return, are encouraged to follow policies which are favourable to this power bloc. According to Mills, politics becomes meticulously permeated by a business/military ideology. There might be various parties and several politicians; however, they will follow the same fundamental policies since they are, in effect, tied into the military/industrial/business complex of power.

Another key factor in Mills' analysis is that the media has a significant role to play in transforming the population from a 'public' into a 'mass'. Mills definition of public comprises following attributes:

- Expressing opinions and receiving opinions
- Immediate and effective response to any opinion expressed
- Opinions formed by discussion
- Outlets by effective action
- Communities with a high degree of independence of authoritative institutions

The 'mass', on the other hand, has the following attributes:

- People receiving opinions and impressions from the media
- Little expression or sharing of opinions
- Few effective channels for people's response
- No independence of authoritative institutions

Mills explained that media propagates psychological illiteracy among individual people by breaking down local prejudices. He said individual people do not trust their own experiences unless the media confirms it. Therefore, Mills asserted that media is very important for the creation of individual's self image. He explained:

- Media provides people an identity
- Media presents people aspirations
- Media informs people how to fulfill those aspirations
- Media bestows people an escape from their feelings

Mills explained the theory of power elite and mass society in a very concise manner. For him, the top of modern American society is increasingly unified, and often seems willfully coordinated; at the top, there has emerged an elite of power. The middle levels are a drifting set of stalemated, balancing forces—the middle does not link the bottom with the top. The bottom of this society is politically fragmented and even as a passive fact, increasingly powerless—at the bottom there is emerging a mass society.

### 3.2.3 Gaetano Mosca's Theory of Power

Gaetano Mosca is well-known for his works on political theory that include *Theory of Governments and Parliamentary Government* (1884), *The Ruling Class* (1896) and *History of Political Doctrines* (1936). As an Italian political scientist, his most remarkable contribution happens to be his observation that almost all the primitive societies are ruled by a numerical minority, or elite, whom he addressed as the 'political class'.

According to Mosca, the modern elites can be defined in terms of their superior organizational skills, i.e., the skills that enable them in attaining political power in a modern bureaucratic society. He also advocated a mixed political system or government, which is partially autocratic and partially liberal in functioning. This mixed form of political rule, according to Mosca, is the one in which 'the aristocratic tendency is tempered by a gradual but continuous renewal of the ruling class' that is attained by increasing the strength (number) of those members in lower socio-economic classes who aspire and have the capability to rule.

Mosca was of the viewpoint that political philosophy of a society was not important, unless in the instance of deciding the kind of elite group that could have the authority to rule. The concepts like 'the will of God', 'the sovereign will of the state', 'the will of the people', or 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' were considered to be political myths by him.

His political theory was more liberal when compared to the elite theory of distribution of power as propounded by Vilfredo Pareto. Mosca was of the opinion that elites were not decided on the basis of inheritance, and even people belonging to any other class of society could theoretically turn into an elite group. Gaetano Mosca even adhered to the concept of 'the circulation of elites', i.e., a dialectical theory in which it is assumed that elites are in a continuous struggle with each other, leading to the replacement of one elite group by another.

Mosca was not an advocate of democratic political system. This was because he regarded 'the extension of the suffrage to the most uncultured strata of the population' which was a major threat to liberal political and social institutions. For him, the political formula propagated in any society is the 'myth of democracy', in which it is considered that the ruler and the ruled work together toward a common moral or legal goal offering democratic freedom.

Mosca held the viewpoint that two opposing social forces are always in action in any governmental situation—the desire to confine the power within the domain of some aristocratic group in particular who inherited it by virtue of their ancestors (i.e., ascribed status), and the desire to bring new leaders up from the majority class to renew the political process (generally called the circulation of elites). He was in favour of an equilibrium state for these two political courses.

When compared to Michels' analysis of the oligarchical tendencies in a society (discussed in the next sub-section), Mosca's strict dichotomy of an organized minority *versus* an unorganized majority is simplistic and non-operationalizable, and even rigid when dealing with modern societies. On the other hand, when compared to Pareto's more generalized conception of the elite, Mosca's conception of the ruling class appears narrower in approach, being more closely tied and applicable to the specific judicial and political sphere of late 19th century state of Italy.

### 3.2.4 R. Michels' Power Theory

Robert Michels held the viewpoint that any political system eventually evolves into an oligarchy i.e., a kind of power structure where the power rests with minority, generally distinguished by wealth, family relations, lineage, education, business, or military influence. Michels termed this as the 'iron law of oligarchy'.

According to him, most of contemporary democracies should be regarded as oligarchies. In such systems, actual differences between possible political rivals are few, and the oligarchic elite enforces strict restrictions on what makes a suitable and reputable political position, and that political careers depend, to a great extent, on economic and media elites that is not even elected.

In Michels' political theory, the crises of institutions and ideology of parliamentary democracy constitute the focal point. The major aim of his political theory was to demonstrate the practical impossibility of implementing democratic principles owing to the inherent characteristics of capitalist political organization and the 'oligarchical tendencies' in mass political organizations—parties, trade unions and other groups.

Michels' early works, which express his interest in petty-bourgeois anarchic socialism, contain principally ethical-social ideas and as such do not come under his political sociology. His criticism of parliamentary democracy expressed the views and moods of those sections of the petty bourgeoisie which comprised the initial mass basis for fascism. Michels' theoretical views on parliamentary democracy took shape within the parameters of two concepts—theoretical syndicalism (Hubert Lagardelle and Georges Sorel) and elitism (Vilfredo Pareto).

Michels attempted to establish the causal factors of power stratification in mass democratic organizations of a bourgeois society. He wrote:

> The complex of tendencies which stand in the way of an implementation of democracy only makes it difficult to unravel and catalogue. These tendencies lie (1) in the essence of human nature, (2) in the essence of the political struggle, and (3) in the essence of organization. Democracy leads to oligarchy. In putting forward this thesis, we are far from making a condemnation or moral judgment on any political parties or regimes. Like all sociological laws, the law expressing the aspiration of any human aggregate to form a hierarchy stands beyond good and evil.

> The formula of the need for a replacement of one ruling stratum by another and the law of oligarchy that follows from it as a necessary form of collective life in no way rejects and replaces the materialist understanding of history, it only supplements it. There is no contradiction between an idea by which history is a process of continuous class struggle and the idea that class struggle leads to the establishment of a fresh oligarchy.

He considered that the oligarchy phenomenon can be explained partly psychologically (psychology of the masses and psychology of organizations), and partly organically (laws of structures of organizations), with the major role belonging to the first group of factors.

Michels prefaced the sociological proper analysis of politics with the concept of political history based on the idea of preserving and modifying 'the aristocracy principle' in the process of replacing various kinds of 'ruling classes', irrespective of their origin and composition. He supposed that behaviour of the 'ruling class' in conditions of bourgeois democracy is determined by the impact of the 'masses' on the political process.

Michels depicted the bureaucratization process of mass political organizations in the imperialist era as an absolute law, evaluating it from the viewpoint of a petty bourgeois intellectual experiencing the demise of his democratic illusions and becoming a proponent of right-wing extremist political views.

He saw 'oligarchy' as the unavoidable fate of any democracy, irrespective of its historical forms and social class basis. According to Michels, the oligarchical structure of power arises as three groups of factors interact: (i) the technical qualities of a political organization, (ii) the psychological qualities of the organized masses, and (iii) the psychological characteristics of political leaders.

He credited primary significance to motivation for the advancement of political leaders both by the group and by individuals occupying positions of power. The hierarchical power structure that has taken shape develops further by its own inner laws, reproducing oligarchical tendencies on an extending scale.

The gradual transition from 'spontaneous leadership' to 'oligarchy' takes place in two stages: (i) professionalized, and (ii) stabilized leadership. This scheme has something in common with the 'routinization of charisma' of his close associate Max Weber. In both cases, we deal with their attempts to define the content of political power via psychological behavioural constructions. In his most well-known

work *The Sociology of Political Parties* (1911), Michels termed the whole set of tendencies leading to the emergence of an oligarchical power structure.

He singles out three autonomous elements in the structure of the 'dominant class'—political, economic and intellectual—whose interaction is conditioned by the requirements to enforce supremacy. Therefore, depending on the concrete historical situation, real power may be implemented by 'political-economic' (plutocratic), 'political-intellectual' or a 'willful political' class.

Pareto's 'circulation of elites' in a somewhat modified form that plays an important part in Michels' description of the political process. The downfall of the fundamental institutions of bourgeois democracy in European states of Italy and Germany was put down to the action of the law of 'circulation of elites' by these two political scientists.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. How is the study of politics related to power?
2. Name the two concepts that form the parameters of Michels' theoretical views on parliamentary democracy.
3. Name the three groups whose interaction leads to the oligarchical structure of power.

---

## 3.3 BUREAUCRACY: MARX, WEBER AND MERTON

This section provides details about Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Merton, and provides and overview of theories propounded by them.

### 3.3.1 Marx

Karl Marx brought into sharp focus issues concerning the nature of political power and its relationship with social or economic organization. The Marxist theory of economic determinism of political power laid the foundation for the 'sociology of politics'. Marx was, however, neither the first nor the only thinker to conceive of government as an organ of the dominant economic class.

The Arabian scholar Ibn Khaldun and several European predecessors of Marx had argued that ideology and power were superstructures of economy. The early origins of sociology are often traced to Auguste Comte's six volume work *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830-42). This work offered an encyclopedic treatment of sciences. It expounded positivism, and initiated the use of the term 'sociology' to signify a certain method of studying human societies.

Comte proposed a historical law of social development, and according to this scheme, human societies pass from an initial stage of interpreting phenomena theologically to an intermediate stage of metaphysical interpretation before arriving

at the final stage of positivist interpretation. This idea of a historical development of human societies obeying laws of nature was adopted by Karl Marx.

The works of Marx, which emphasized the role of capitalist mode of production and Marxism in general, were important stimuli for the development of sociology. The early Marxist contribution to sociology included the works of Karl Kautsky on the French Revolution; Mehring's analysis of art, literature and intellectual history; and Grunberg's early studies on agrarian history and labour movements. It is important to note that Marxist studies of society also developed independent of universities as it was intimately related to political movements and party organizations.

According to liberals, the State is concerned with rules that would enable individuals to pursue their own ideas of good life so long as freedom of others was not infringed upon. This view was challenged by Karl Marx and other Marxist thinkers.

Marx believed that it was an illusion to consider the State as a neutral arbiter which was capable of harmonizing the discordant elements in society. While he criticized the institution of the State as being responsible for the alienation of man, he viewed the State as the statement of man's ideal aims. In his *The German Ideology*, Marx traced the origin of the State. His views on the State are also found in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State*, and the *Communist Manifiesto*. In the last work, Marx viewed the executive of the modern State as a committee to manage the affairs of bourgeoisie. Thus, if class rule disappeared, the State would not exist in the sense that we understand the word 'State'.

Karl Marx believed that bureaucracy was the most essential part of the State apparatus. His views of bureaucracy appear in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State* (1843) and in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1851).

Marx traced the history of bureaucracy from medieval Europe to his own time. According to Marx, bureaucracy had its origin in the absolutist monarchies and was initially a progressive force because it curbed the autonomy of medieval guilds and built a centralized administrative structure.

However, with the passage of time, bureaucracy became a caste by itself where entry was determined on the basis of one's education. It interpreted the interests of the State and when challenged, it enclosed itself in mystery, hierarchy and authority. In some countries, like in the revolutionary France, bureaucracy was so powerful that it controlled the State and was able to resist the process of transforming the State.

The critique of Marx on the power of bureaucracy is so insightful that it remains valid to date.

The aims of the State are transformed into the aims of the bureau and the aims of the bureau into the aims of the State. Bureaucracy is a circle from which no one can escape. Its hierarchy is a hierarchy of knowledge.

[…] Bureaucracy constitutes an imaginary State beside the real State and is the spiritualism of the State. […] Bureaucracy holds in its possession the essence of the State, the spiritual essence of society, it is its private property. The general spirit of bureaucracy is secret, mystery, safeguarded inside itself by hierarchy and outside by its nature as a closed corporation. Thus public political spirit and also political mentality appear to bureaucracy as a betrayal of its secret. The principle of its knowledge is therefore authority, and its mentality is the idolatry of authority. But within bureaucracy, the spiritualism turns into crass materialism, the materialism of passive obedience, faith in authority, the mechanism of fixed and formal behaviour, fixed principles, attitudes, traditions. As far as the individual bureaucrat is concerned, the aim of the State becomes his private aim, in the form of a race for higher posts, of careerism.

As economic life became complex, bureaucratic administration turned out to be essential. About bureaucracy, Weber said that the administration was based on written documents, specialist training was presupposed and candidates were appointed according to qualification. Marx also insisted that officials were separated from ownership of the means of administration.

### 3.3.2 Weber

Max Weber's sociological interest in the structures of authority was motivated, at least in part, by his political interests. Weber was no political radical; in fact, he was often called the 'bourgeois Marx' to reflect the similarities in the intellectual interests of Marx and Weber as well as the very different political intellectual interests of Marx. Weber was almost as critical of modern capitalism as Marx though he did not advocate revolution. He wanted to change society gradually, not overthrow it.

Weber had little faith in the ability of the masses to accrete 'better' society. Nonetheless, Weber also saw little hope in the middle classes, which he felt were dominated by shortsighted and petty bureaucrats. For Weber, the hope lay with the great political leaders rather than with the masses or the bureaucrats. Along with his faith in political leaders went Weber's unswerving nationalism. He placed the nation above all else, 'the vital interests of the nation stand, of course, above democracy and parliamentarianism'.

Weber preferred democracy as a political form not because he believed in the masses, but because it offered maximum dynamism and the best milieu to generate political leaders. He noted that authority structures exist in every social institution, and his political views were related to his analysis of these structures in all settings. Of course, they were most relevant to Weber's views on the polity.

Weber began his analysis of authority structures in a way that was consistent with his assumptions about the nature of action. He defined domination as the 'probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons'. Domination interested Weber and these were the legitimate forms of domination, or what he called 'authority'.

What concerned Weber and what played a central role in much of this sociology were the three bases on which authority is made legitimate to followers, i.e., rational, traditional and charismatic bases. In defining these three bases, Weber

remained fairly close to his ideas on individual action, but he rapidly moved to the large-scale structures of authority.

Authority legitimized on rational grounds rests 'on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands'. Authority legitimized on traditional grounds is based on 'an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them'.

Lastly, authority legitimized by charisma is supported on the devotion of followers to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of leaders as well as on the normative order sanctioned by them. All these means of legitimizing authority plainly imply individual actors, through processes (beliefs), and actions.

Weber termed 'power' as the chance that a person in a social relationship may achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others. It is a very extensive definition and comprises a very big range of the types of power. To make this definition more useful for studying history and society, Weber gives domination as an alternative, or more carefully defined concept.

Weber defines domination 'as the probability that certain specific command (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons'. Features associated with domination are obedience, interest, belief and regularity. Weber states that 'every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, i.e., an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience'. Dominance may comprise parent-child relationships, employer-employee relationships, teacher-student issues, domination within the family, political rule that is generally accepted and obeyed, or the relation between a priest and a church member.

A power relation which is one of dominance comprises the following:

- There is voluntary compliance or obedience. Individuals are not compelled to obey, rather they do it voluntarily.

- The ones who obey do it because they have an interest in doing this, or at least believe that they have such an interest.

- There is a belief in the legitimacy of actions of the dominant individual or group (although it is defined by Weber as authority).

- Compliance or obedience is not random or associated with a short-term social relationship. It is a sustained relationship of dominance and subordination so that regular patterns of inequality are set up.

When dominance works for a significant period of time, it becomes a structured phenomenon. The forms of dominance become the social structures of society. Usually, temporary or transient types of power are not taken to be dominance. This definition of domination further does away with those types of power which are based on sheer force, because force may not result in the acceptance of the dominant group or voluntary compliance with its orders.

The circumstances of open conflict and force are also comparatively unusual. For instance, Weber takes the explicit forms of class conflict and class struggle to

be uncommon. While his definition of domination may be constricted, it is a helpful means of studying relationships which become structured. While employer-employee or other types of relationships characterized by domination and subordination usually comprise conflict, the use of force is not always, or is not normally, an aspect of these and subordinates do obey and unreservedly accept this subordination.

Where people develop homogeneous types of conduct, Weber terms this as 'usage'. Long-established usages become customs. These may materialize within a group or society due to continued interaction, and need little or no enforcement by any particular group. Convention is a stronger degree of conformity. Here, the compliance is not merely voluntary or customary; rather, some kind of sanctions may persist for those who do not comply with convention. These may be informal sanctions, resulting in mild disapproval, or they may be severe sanctions associated with discipline or ostracism.

For instance, different forms of dress associated with the workplace may become convention, or even be enforced as rules. Usage and custom usually become the basis for rules, and their violation may eventually have some sanctions applied.

If convention is taken up by an individual or a group which has the legitimate capacity and duty to enforce sanctions, the convention may become law. It may begin to generate a legal order where a group takes up the task of applying sanctions to punish transgressions, for instance, a clan, priesthood or elders.

In case it can be applied over a territorial unit with order preserved by the threat of physical force, then it may create a political order employing threat and application of physical force by an administrative staff with legal, administrative, military or police functions.

### 3.3.3 Merton

Robert K. Merton is conceived of as a functional analyst concerned with sociological understanding produced by research of objective, latent patterns inherent in social life. Merton, being a central figure in the theoretical development of American sociology, was influenced both by Parsons and Sorokin, though Parson's impact was more pronounced in his works.

However, while Merton held a broadly functional perspective, his path began to diverge from that of Parsons as he refined the method of functional analysis. He rejected Parsons' ideology of developing an inclusive kind of theory and embraced the middle path of analysing a limited set of practical phenomena. He argued that, in view of the general status of sociological knowledge and theory, Parsons' enterprises was over ambitious.

For Merton, such grand theoretical schemes are premature, since the theoretical and empirical groundwork necessary for their completion have not been performed. He emphasized on the need to examine dysfunctional social systems along with functional ones, thereby negating the rigid outlook of former functional theories.

In relation to this, Merton propounded new paradigms and a protocol for introducing a fresh approach to traditional functional theories. He also debated Malinowski's theory that a social function was required for all social phenomena. According to Merton, sociology, in the present state of its development, required theories of middle range. Such theories should be grounded in empirical data, and at the same time should use concepts which are clearly defined and practical.

**Theory of Social Structure and Paradigm of Functional Analysis**

Merton identifies the central orientation of functionalism as the practice of interpreting data by establishing their consequences for larger structures in which they are implicated. Functional analysis involves the search for functions. His functional orientation is a shift from a static towards a dynamic image of society.

Merton's functionalism is very different from the classical functionalism of Comte and Spencer's sociology, Brown's cultural anthropology, and from Parson's functional structuralism. Merton saw functional theorizing as embracing three basic postulates which are:

  (i) **Functional unity of society:** The assumption in this postulate is that an entire social and cultural system uses a typical social activity. However, this holds true only when we take a uniform, homogeneous system with perfectly integrated elements. The practical entity of integration varies with different types of systems and even within the same systems it keeps changing from time to time.

  So, it is questionable that all human societies must have some degree of integration. Merton, however, views that the degree of integration is an issue to be empirically determined; the degree to which functional unity exists in the social system is a matter subject to empirical investigation.

 (ii) **Universal functionalism:** This postulate holds that all social and cultural items fulfill sociological functions. This assumption implies an image of society in which there are no dispensable or irrelevant elements. For Merton, if examination of an actually existing system is undertaken, it would be clear that there is a wide range of empirical possibilities.

(iii) **Functional indispensability:** Merton focuses on the alleged indispensability of particular cultural or social forms for fulfilling a particular function in a social system. According to Merton, all parts are functional, i.e., the existence of all parts is essential for the survival of the social system. Hence, all parts are functionally indispensable.

  Merton contends that such conclusions which have been taken for granted by various functionalists are not required as can be seen from practical evidence. He proposes an alternative assumption which he considers a basic theorem of functional analysis. According to him, just as the same item may have multiple functions, similarly, the same function can be diversely fulfilled by alternative items. So, Merton postulated the importance of functional analysis as a concern with various types of functional alternatives or functional equivalents within the social system.

## Middle-Range Theory

Merton developed the notion of middle-range theory as the theoretical goal suitable for the contemporary epoch of sociology. He conceives of sociological theory as logically interconnected sets of propositions from which empirical uniformities can be derived.

According to Merton:

> Theories that lie between the minor but necessary working hypotheses that evolve in abundance during day-to-day research and all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop a unified theory that will explain all the observed uniformities of social behaviour, social organization and social change.

These are used primarily to guide empirical inquiry. Examples of middle-range theories are theory of reference groups, theory of relative deprivation, and Merton's theory of role-set. These theories are different from those all-embracing total systems of sociological theory. Merton rallies to his cause an impressive array of figures in the history of thought, including Plato, Bacon and Mill, and such sociologists as Hankins, Ginsberg, Mannheim and Sorokin who favoured the theories of middle-range.

However, in middle-range theory, there is summary and retrospect, an attempt to codify sociological theory, questioning of literary style in sociological writing, and a treatment of the function of paradigms in the development of science.

## Manifest and latent functions

Like Parsons, Merton replaced structural functionalism with functional analysis, brought functional analysis to the fore and raised it to the level of theoretical orthodoxy. At the same time, he helped to bring about the demise of its canonical form, introducing a radically new and modified formula of functional analysis. Merton maintains that the assumptions of functional theory holds that social activities are common for an entire social system; that these social and cultural functions complete all sociological function; and that these functions cannot be done away with.

While considering the first postulate, Merton faults Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moose for overestimating the integrative function of religion in society. He also criticized them for ignoring the divisive effects that religion has had in the actual history of human societies. This error is attributed to the practice of carrying over, without modification, theories and conceptions derived from the study of non-literate societies.

Thirdly, Merton suggests that the notion of functional indispensability of items be avoided in view of the number of functional alternatives that can be discerned in societies. According to Merton, sociologists often confuse conscious motivations and objective consequences of behaviour. In this context, he brings out the distinctions between manifest and latent functions.

Every specified unit, like a person, sub-group, social or cultural systems have a few objective consequences. These consequences help in the unit's adjustment or adaptation to their immediate environment. These consequences are known as

manifest functions. On the other hand, latent functions are the unrecognized and unintended consequences. Merton contends that all sociologists know this difference but have not taken this up for a serious investigation.

## Theory of Anomie

From a functionalist position, Merton, in his article 'Social Structure and Anomie', considered not only conformity but also deviance as a part of social structure. Instead of setting the individual in opposition to a social structure that constrains him in either a Durkheimian or in a Freudian sense, Merton wants to show that structure is an active factor, that it produces motivations that cannot be predicted from knowledge of native impulses or drives.

It is not wayward personalities but ordinary social structure that motivates behaviour that is then labeled 'deviant'. In this respect, Merton extends the theory of functional analysis from the study of social structure, where it involves questions of order and maintenance, then to the study of order and maintenance, and ultimately, to the study of social change.

However, Merton states his primary aim as the following:

> ... to discover how some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in non-conforming rather than conforming conduct.

In this regard, he distinguished between cultural goals in a society and institutional norms that arise to regulate their pursuit. There is a difference between 'technically effective' means of achieving goals and 'culturally legitimate' means of achieving them. When the two coincide, the society tends to be stable. When they draw apart, or when technical efficiency is emphasized over cultural legitimacy, then the society becomes unstable and approaches a state of anomie, or a place with no norms.

Functionalist position of value, in the functional sociological theory, holds that all members of a society have the same value. However, since the positions of the actors in a social system are different, and actors positioned in different classes would differ in class positions. These actors positioned differently will definitely not have the chance to realize their values in a similar manner.

He uses America as a basis for his study and maintains that though every American shares the same value, their achievements are varied. Success in this society is mostly measured with the achievement of material possessions. America has accepted talent, hard work, drive, determination and success, coming through educational qualifications as standard means of achieving success.

However, this is an unbalanced society and unlike other societies, there are no value-based means of achieving cultural goals. The people tend to bend the rules and attempt to achieve their goals. When people do not abide by rules, a state of 'anomie' flourishes. There are five ways in which Americans respond to anomie. In this regard, Merton provides his famous 'Typology of Modes of Individual Adaptation'.

| Modes of adaptation | Culture goals | Institutionalized means |
|---|---|---|
| Conformity | + | + |
| Innovation | + | – |
| Ritualism | – | + |
| Retreatism | – | – |
| Rebellion | + | + |

Categories refer to behaviour and not personality. The same person may use different modes of adaptation in different circumstances. 'Conformity' is the most widely diffused and the most common type of adaptation; otherwise, society would be unstable. They strive for success by means of accepted channels. Secondly, 'innovation' rejects normative means of achieving success and turn to deviant means, in particular, crime.

Merton argues that members of the lower social strata are most likely to select this route to success. They are least likely to succeed through conventional channels, and thus, there is greater pressure upon them to deviate. Merton uses the term 'ritualism' to describe the third response. To him, ritualism occurs when an individual drops out of 'rat race' that monetary success requires but continues to go through the motions required by the norms of the society. Merton suggests that it is the lower-middle class that exhibits a relatively high incidence of ritualism.

The ritualist is a deviant because he has rejected the success goals held by most members of society. Merton terms the fourth and least common response as 'retreatism'. This involves rejection of both goals and norms. The 'people who fit into this category are the true aliens'—psychotics, pariahs, outcasts, vagrants, vagabonds, tramps, drunkards and drug addicts.

Merton does not relate retreatism to any social class position. Rebellion is a rejection of both the goals and the norms of the old structure and accept and actively work for the goals and norm of the new. People who wish to create a new society would take this alternative. The guerrilla in Western Europe take up the deviant path of terrorism to achieve their goals.

Merton maintains that only the lower classes take to deviant paths and the upper class that has legal means to achieve their aims and goals refrain from doing it. The rising class organizes the dejected population to bring about a revolution in order to wipe away the old order and usher in the new.

Thus, Merton shows how culture and structure of society generate deviance. The overemphasis upon cultural goals in the American society at the expense of institutionalized means creates a tendency towards anomie. This tendency exerts pressure for deviance; a pressure which varies depending on a person's position in the class structure. Merton thus explains deviance in terms of nature of society rather than nature of an individual.

**NOTES**

## 3.4 SOCIAL ETHICS AND POLITICS

Ethics and morality have been the hallmark of public life in India since ancient times. Rulers were expected to observe stricter ethical values and an unethical king was shown no mercy. Ethics and politics, in other words, were inseparable. This ethical and moral legacy was inherited by its national leaders, who demonstrated a high degree of probity and honesty in public life during the freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi, who himself was an embodiment of this tradition. He not only preached morality in public life but also practiced it. He believed that politics without morality is a thing to be avoided.

However, in recent years there is a general feeling that all is not well with the Indian political system which is functioning under great strain. Concerns are being expressed over the general decline of values in public life. Recent trends in politics, however, appear to have created an impression as if, the capacity of our democratic system to ensure probity in public life is increasingly going down. Such a situation does not augur well for the future of democracy and needs to be arrested immediately.

### Role of People's Representatives

That there has been general erosion of moral values in all walks of life cannot be denied. Role of people's representatives, who are largely responsible for guiding the system in such a situation, therefore, becomes very critical. Members of Parliament, as people's representatives, are looked at by the people as their role models and the ones who are guiding their destiny, have, therefore, to be beyond the realm of any kind of suspicion.

By and large, the ideological base and the spirit of service which should activate most of them is getting eroded and the kind of elements that are trying to influence the political parties and the political system at large make everybody think as to how probity in the entire system could be ensured. There may be many ways for ensuring probity in public life, but a self-disciplining mechanism appears to be the best in an institution like Parliament.

### Birth of Ethics Committee

Rajya Sabha, the Second Chamber of the Indian Parliament, also was seized of the matter for quite some time. In 1996, the Business Advisory Committee of Rajya Sabha had decided that this matter should be considered by leaders of parties and groups in the House.

With the initiative of Shri I. K. Gujral, the former Prime Minister of India who then was the External Affairs Minister, a meeting was held in 1996, with the leaders of parties and groups in Rajya Sabha to discuss the issue. Thereafter, the matter was placed before the General Purposes Committee of Rajya Sabha in 1997. The Committee, after considering the matter carefully, decided to have an internal mechanism of the House itself which would work as a self-regulatory body for the members of Rajya Sabha.

The Committee authorized the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha to constitute an Ethics Committee with a mandate to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of its members. Thus, the Ethics Committee, Rajya Sabha, the first such Committee by any legislature in India was constituted by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha on 4 March 1997 to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the Members and to examine the cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of Members.

It was provided that, in all respects of procedure and other matters, the rules applicable to the Committee of Privileges shall apply to the Ethics Committee with such variations and modifications as the Chairman, Rajya Sabha may, from time to time, make. On 30 May 1997, the committee was inaugurated by the then Vice-President of India and the Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Shri K. R. Narayanan. Setting up of an institution like Ethics Committee was, in fact, a significant event in the history of Indian parliamentary democracy.

Such committees are functioning only in a few countries of the world and with the setting up of this committee here, India also has joined the group of these select countries. Ethics Committee, Rajya Sabha, consists of ten members, including its Chairman, who are nominated by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha.

Chairman of the Committee is from the largest party in the House. Other members normally are the Leaders, Deputy Leaders/Chief Whips of their parties/ groups in Rajya Sabha. Commenting on the fact that leaders of parties/group are made members of the Ethics Committee, Shri K. R. Narayanan while inaugurating the Committee on the 30 May 1997 said that by choosing the leaders of parties as Members, we have tried to invest the Committee with prestige and influence.

In this way, we have also sought to forge a link, though indirectly and informally, with the political parties all of whom are intensely interested in maintaining the highest ethical standards in our parliamentary life.

### 3.4.1  Social  Discrimination

A lot of sociologists state that India is a hierarchical society. They explain this statement by saying that whether in north India or south India, urban or village, Hindu or Muslim, almost all social groups and people are ranked according to some traits.

India is a democratic country, its people are not able to enjoy complete equality. It is because societal hierarchy can be seen among all caste groups, people and kinship groups. Usually, people associate castes with Hinduism; yet, caste-like groups

are present in other religious communities as well. For instance, there are two kinds of groups in Muslim community, namely, Shia and Sunni. Within communities, people are made aware of the ranking of each group. Consequently, their behaviour is shaped by this awareness.

Along with the caste system, wealth and power are also the bases of societal hierarchy in India. Wealthy and powerful people are ranked higher on the social hierarchy. The poor squatting in front of wealthy people is a common sight in villages. In these cases, poor people presume that they do not deserve to sit equal to wealthy people. It is because they are made aware of their ranking in the society right from childhood.

Hierarchy can also be seen in kinship group. Men are considered superior to women and old relatives to young relatives. In Indian societies, young family members show their respect for old members by touching their feet. For instance, in north India, young siblings do not call old siblings by their name but by using terms like *didi* and *bhaiya*. Another example is that of a daughter-in-law showing respect by touching her father-in-law's and mother-in-law's feet.

According to Louis Dumont, hierarchy implies ranking based on the notion of purity and impurity. Pure and impure imply exclusion and inclusion in regard to caste hierarchy. Dumont believes that hierarchy is the basis of caste system in India. It refers to the relationship of the encompassing and the encompassed. The 'pure' encompasses the 'less pure', and so on. This applies to all sections and aspects of the society.

Dumont also explains the difference between power and status. He states that hierarchy refers to 'religious ranking' and classifies 'beings' based on their dignity rather than on power and authority. For instance, in Hindu society, priests are ranked above kings. Therefore, hierarchy is a comprehensive concept and it encompasses *varna* divisions as well as caste system.

Dumont's structuralist stance, in regard to inter-caste, intra-caste and intra-familial ranking can also be studied here. It is because the principle of hierarchy not only applies to caste but also to principles of values, occupations, food and clothes, bride-givers and bride-takers. Dumont looks for cultural meaning of resemblance and blood relations.

Hierarchy pervades all aspects of the Hindu society. Everything is seen in terms of pure and impure, and hierarchy is seen through the superiority of the pure over the impure. Dumont observes that there has been change in the society and not of the society.

Dipankar Gupta refers to Dumont's notion of caste and writes:

> Any notion of hierarchy is arbitrary and is valid from the perspective of certain individual castes. To state that the pure hierarchy is one that is universally believed in, or one which legitimizes the position of those who participate in the caste system is misleading.

Distinction related to pollution and purity does not systemically affect caste status.

## Caste

The main features of caste model are as follows:

(a) This model is based on the ideas expressed by certain sections of society and not on the observed or recorded behaviour of people.

(b) It attaches universal significance to caste as it has been conceived in the classical texts.

(c) The entire system is being governed by explicitly formulated principles.

(d) It is assumed that different castes, which are the basic units in the system, are fulfilling their complementary functions.

The historicity of Indian society has been the hallmark of caste model. Everything is reduced to the all-pervasive principle of caste hierarchy. However, this was not the situation in ancient, medieval and British India. Migration, mobility and defiance have been reported in historical researches. These researches have been ignored by anthropologists and sociologists perhaps due to British colonialism.

British ethnographers have defined caste in terms of its assumed or real functionality to Indian society and culture. The salient features given by these ethnographers as well as some Indian sociologists are that castes have common names, common descent and same hereditary calling and communitarian living.

S. V. Ketkar (1909) mentions hereditary membership and endogamy as the most striking features of the caste system in India. M. Senart (1930) writes, 'a caste system is one whereby a society is divided up into a number of self-contained and completely segregated units (castes), the mutual relations between which are ritually determined in a graded scale'. The uniqueness of the system is predominantly emphasized in the above definition of the caste system.

Many sociologists observed that the caste system is functional for society. Ghurye (1950) refers to six features of the caste system and upholds endogamy as its essence. H. J. S. Maine (1890) referred to caste as an example of a non-contractual 'status-society'. Senart, Hocart, and Dumont have emphasized ritual criteria and pollution-purity as the bases of Hindu society. Weber considered caste as a system of 'status groups' based on the other worldly doctrines of Hinduism. Srinivas's work on religion and society among the Coorgs of South India in 1952 is also an attempt towards caste ranking based on the criterion of pollution and purity.

David Bailey (1963) refers to three types of definitions of caste. These are:

(a) The rigidity type

(b) The cultural type

(c) The structural type

The first type of definition is found inapplicable in the context of Indian caste system as it refers to status immobility. The second type of definition is found useful as it refers to religious ideas such as opposition based on purity and pollution and hierarchy. Caste as a system based on beliefs and ideas becomes a closed unique system of social stratification. The third type of definition refers to exclusiveness

and ranking as the structural criteria of Indian caste system. According to Bailey, caste is a unique system as far as its cultural criterion is concerned.

McKim Marriott (1959) used interactional and attributional approaches to the study of caste system. The study of relations between higher and lower castes is the basis of interactional approach. On the other hand, attributional approach is based on 'order' rather than 'relation'. The organization of elements constituting a system of hierarchy is the essence of attributional approach.

For instance, some of the attributes used in this approach are income, occupation, education and positions of power. These attributes are measurable and they facilitate construction of categories such as upper, middle and lower.

Thus, an attempt is made to work out the indicators of status. After this, variations are measured on different types of scales and the composite status of individuals is worked out. D'Souza and Bhatt clearly advocate the application of an attributional approach. Caste as a cultural phenomenon is seen as a system of values and ideas.

Caste as a structural phenomenon is considered as a part of the general theory of social stratification. Fredrik Barth (1960) writes 'if the concept of caste is to be useful in sociological analysis, its definition must be based on structural criteria, and not on particular features of Hindu philosophical scheme'. Barth considers caste in general as a system of social stratification. The principle of status summation seems to be the structural feature of caste stratification. In opposition, segmentation and hierarchy are universal.

Every caste has a caste panchayat in order to deal with transgressions related to the caste system. Some of the punishments given by these panchayats are imposing fines and outcasting a person temporarily and permanently. In the past, Dalits were ill-treated by people of upper castes. They were considered 'untouchables'. It was believed that their touch and even their shadow would pollute upper castes. They were not allowed to take water from the wells from where the upper castes drew water. There were strict punishments for Dalits who heard or read sacred texts.

This kind of discrimination was made illegal under legislation passed during British rule and later under the Constitution of India. However, there are still many places in India where Dalits are ill-treated.

## Contemporary trends in caste system

The disorganization of the caste system leads some to infer that in the future the caste system will cease to exist. But many scholars have dissolved this doubt. According to G. S. Ghurye, there is no sign of extinction of the caste system in the near future due to the following reasons:

(i) **Election:** Due to the establishment of a democracy in India, the administrative machinery is operated by representatives elected by the people. The method of election has done much to encourage the caste system because the candidates want to achieve their end by drumming the cause of casteism among the voters. This is how people are asked to vote for their caste

candidate, and this casteism is maintained by the elected leaders after the elections are over. Political parties also sponsor only that candidate for election in a particular area whose caste population is the highest in that area.

(ii) **Protection of backward classes:** The Constitution of India has provided for the protection of the backward and scheduled castes. Some posts are reserved for them in government services. Some seats are also reserved in legislative assemblies for backward classes. They are given all types of facilities and special scholarships for education. All such special rights have encouraged casteism very much in the backward castes since the castes is proving very beneficial to them because of these prerogatives.

## State of class consciousness in India

On one hand, the caste is becoming weaker due to the influence of factors like industrialization, urbanization, technology enhancement, better transportation and means of communication, popularity of English education, political and social awakening, democratic government and laws abolishing untouchability, and so on. But on the other hand, new organizations such as labour unions on the basis of occupation, post, capacity etc., are being established. Due to an increase in the desire for money caused by the influence of Western education, the sense of superiority or inferiority is now based on wealth and social power rather than on caste. Nowadays, the class consciousness based on occupations etc., is replacing the caste consciousness.

For people who are specially gifted in a particular occupation, other occupations are very limited in India and the paths to those that are available are closed. Children of those parents who have a small income or who have no wealth look out only for service. In reality, in India casteism is being transformed into classism.

It is not an easy task to predict the future of the caste system. It is certainly true that the restrictions on marriage, diet, lifestyle, and so on, based on the caste system are breaking down. But, as explained earlier, casteism is increasing and caste system is being encouraged by the method of election and the government protection of backward classes for political motives. Actually, it seems more or less definite that there is no possibility of the caste system being eliminated from the Indian society in the near future.

The roots of the caste system goes deep in Hindu society and at its base are the important and beneficial principles of division of labour, specialization, etc. Foreign invaders made their best efforts to wipe out the Hindu caste. In spite of all efforts of Muslims and Christians, not much has changed in the caste system. It has definitely been affected somewhat by the influence of Western education and Western culture, and its form has undergone a vast change.

There is no room for doubting that this form of the caste system will change further in future, it may even change beyond recognition. It may also be influenced by the development of the sense of democracy and nationalism, industrial progress and by new political and economic movement.

**Untouchability**

Caste and untouchability have always been the important areas for sociological investigation. Sociologists and anthropologists have been engaged in understanding the various aspects of caste and untouchability. Untouchabilty had been a social malaise responsible for differentiation of Indian society. Though there has been a significant change in caste system in post-Independence phase due to modernization, the practice has not disappeared completely from Indian social context. According to G. S. Ghurye, the idea of pollution and purity, whether occupational or economic, are found to have been a factor which gave birth to the practice of untouch ability.

According to D. N. Majumdar, the untouchable castes are those who suffer from various social and political disabilities, many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by the higher castes.

Mahatma Gandhi first used the term 'Harijan' (children of God) for those sections of people who suffered from various social, religious, economic and political disabilities. 'Untouchability is the product, not of caste system, but the distinction of high and low that has crept into Hinduism and is corroding it'.

It can be said that untouchability has been a social practice in India of treating some people unjustly because of their low ascribed status. A traditional belief prevalent in India that a person's birth decides his destiny and such castes were believed to be 'impure' and their shadow would defile a person of higher caste. The untouchables known by several names like *Chandalas, Panchamas, Avarnas, Harijans* and were not allowed to pursue education, draw water from village wells, enter temples, and public roads.

The definitions of untouchabilty, most often given in India has two different senses. First, untouchability is a stigma attached to some people because of pollution they convey. It is a stigma by caste, from birth, not from deeds performed, lasts throughout life and is something that cannot be ritually eliminated.

The concept of ritual pollution by caste pervades the whole traditional caste structure, and untouchability, in this sense of the term, is conceptually no different in kind. It is different only in degree and is used for that pollution-by-caste which is so great that the rest of the society segregates its members of these castes and protects itself against them.

Second, untouchability refers to the set of practices engaged in by the rest of the society to protect itself from the pollution conveyed by the untouchables and to symbolize their inferior status. This is the most common use of the term. Untouchability is rarely defined in a sentence; it is usually described in terms of civil, social and religious disabilities.

However, a considerable amount of regional variation exists in the manner in which social relations among different groups of castes have historically evolved. As is widely known, there are different sets of castes in different regions, and the pre-occupation with purity and pollution was not equally marked in every part of the country. Many sociological studies on villages focus on the changes in attitudes among various castes.

Though some may argue that untouchability is still alive today, over the last century or so, the system of caste hierarchy, its forms and manifestations, have indeed undergone considerable changes. Even I. P. Desai, while studying the untouchables in Gujarat in 1970s, observed that in rural areas, there has been the emergence of a new 'public sphere' of social interaction with modernization and economic development.

Such a development has lessened the practice of untouchability. The norm of caste and untouchability had begun to be violated in the economic or occupational sphere as well. This included seating arrangements in schools, traveling in buses and postal services. However, when it came to the traditional relations that included the domestic and religious life of the people, untouchability was highly practiced.

On the basis of these observations, it can argued that though untouchability is now treated as a serious offense after the formulation of Untouchability Offences Act of 1955, it still persists in some regions. The atrocities on the untouchables have become a thing of the past, but there are subsequent regional variations. So, though the practice of untouchability has declined, the spirit of untouchability still survives.

## Class

According to Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset, 'a social class in Marx's terms is any aggregate of persons who perform the same function in the organization of production'. Bendix and Lipset have identified the following five variables that determine a class in the Marxian sense. These are:

(i) Conflicts over the distribution of economic rewards between various classes

(ii) Easy communication between the individuals in the same class positions so that ideas and action programmes are readily disseminated

(iii) Growth of class consciousness in the sense that the members of the class have a feeling of solidarity and understanding of their historical role

(iv) Profound dissatisfaction of the lower class over its inability to control the economic structure of which it feels itself to be the exploited victim

(v) Establishment of a political organization resulting from economic structure, historical situation and maturation of class consciousness

A social class, according to Karl Marx, is that which occupies a fixed place in the process of production. Marx distinguished three classes, related to the three sources of income:

- **Salaried workers:** Owners of simple labour power
- **Capitalists:** Owners of capital
- **Landowners:** Whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground rent

Karl Marx pointed out that there has always been class conflict among different classes. He writes:

> The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. Freemen and slaves, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and

journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

Class consciousness emerged in India during the British Rule with the introduction of modern education, civil services, legal system, and means of transportation in India. These new instrumentalities changed the mindset of the people and they started looking beyond caste.

Post-Independence, the Government's developmental initiatives accelerated the process of decline of the caste system. With industrialization around the country, intermingling among people grew and they aspired to achieve a higher social status. The class system of social stratification allowed people to have vertical mobility and the lower caste people, by sheer dint of their hard work and competence, could manage to climb up the class ladder.

In today's era, though caste is still a strong factor in the society, class has been accepted as an alternative system of social stratification in India. Let us briefly discuss the evolution of the class system in India.

In the rural areas of the country, agrarian class structure has strong roots. It has been studied in detail by sociologists like Andre Beteille. The agrarian class structure was the creation of the British period, but there was an agrarian hierarchy in the pre-British period. In this hierarchy, the high caste people were the large landowners while the lower caste people were landless labourers. In between were the members of certain castes who did the actual cultivation on these lands. Thus, it was a three-tier structure. Andre Beteille has observed that wherever the agrarian hierarchy is elaborate, the caste hierarchy is also elaborate.

The agrarian class structure in post-independent India is seen to possess the following four classes:

- Landowners
- Tenants
- Labourers
- Non-agriculturists

D. N. Dhanagare has suggested an alternative agrarian class structure which has the following five classes:

- Landlords
- Rich peasants
- Middle peasants
- Poor peasants
- Landless labourers

Apart from the traditional agrarian class structure, modern rural India also has a non-agrarian class structure. It can broadly be classified as follows:

- Political functionaries and government officials
- Civil work contractors
- Village teachers and doctors

- Priests and astrologers
- NGO workers

Though pre-independent India had trade centres and port cities like Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai), urban India is mainly a post-Independence phenomenon. In the last six decades, large numbers of people from rural India have migrated to old and new urban centres in search of better education, employment and living standards. This has weakened the hold of the caste system and has given rise to a class system in urban India which is different from the agrarian class structure.

The modern urban class structure can be classified as follows:

(i) Political personalities like ministers, members of Parliament, and civil servants

(ii) Technocrats (software engineers, chief executive officers), professionals (doctors, lawyers, sportsmen, media persons, etc.) and industrialists/ entrepreneurs

(iii) Educationists and academicians

(iv) People in the organized sector other than the above categories (servicemen and traders)

(v) People in the unorganized sector (hawkers and daily labourers)

**Stratification on the Basis of Gender**

Many sociological theories prove that women have been given a relegated position in the society. This is established from the examples, ranging from Aristotle's exclusion of all women from political activity (along with slaves of both sex) to Rousseau's arguments for women to be educated differently from men and excluded from citizenship to Nietzsche's claim that equal rights for women are evidence of a society in decline. Therefore, feminists have been arguing for the significance and importance of the political rights for women in the society.

Feminism is an ideology that has always been highly controversial. It asks such question: Do women have too much or too little power? In the first phase of the development of feminist movement in the 19th century, feminist leaders sought, above all, to gain a voice for women in political process. In the second phase, women's movement sought to extend the gains they had achieved in fighting for economic as well as political equality for women.

Feminist movement became more and more advanced with the passage of time. In academic discipline, it has emerged as a special stream today. As to India, feminist movement falls under the period of post-colonial feminism. It mainly focuses on the colonial relations of domination and subordination. Chandra Mohanty suggests that women's subordination must be addressed within their own cultural context, rather than through some universal understanding of women's need. She criticizes

the Western feminism portrayal of the Third World women as poor, undereducated, victimized and lacking in agency.

According to her, the Western and Indian women are different varieties that seem to have little in common. However, one thing is common regarding the different variants of feminism that their views revolve very much around the concept of gender. Therefore, let us understand the concept of gender.

The first feminist thesis is the idea that society is deeply divided on the basis of gender. Until today, gender is still one of the most important social cleavages that divide society. The second feminist thesis claims that gender is not neutral in its effects, but casts women as inferior.

First thesis explains gender as one of the most significant features of an individual's identity, defining who she is and how she understands herself. It is a key feature that decides the resources distribution and determines or strongly influences a person's relative wealth or poverty. It also affects the fundamental status or respect that one receives from others.

Second thesis explains gender in terms of hierarchy. It creates such a social system where men are at the top and women stay at the bottom. This is defined in terms of patriarchy. The word 'patriarchy' literally means 'rule of the father', but, according to feminism, its most common meaning is simply a society that advantages men and disadvantages women, regardless of who are the formal leaders. It is, therefore, possible to describe a society as patriarchal even if it has a woman leader.

All feminists argue that social structures based on gender are disadvantageous for women. The third thesis of feminism distinguishes feminists from those who believe that a gender hierarchy exists, but who do not criticize that fact. Such people may advocate gender hierarchy for reasons of religion, tradition or apparent biological necessity.

Again, feminists differ in their views regarding the changes that led to the establishment of the anti-discrimination legislation. For others, a change in social norms is needed so that women are no longer seen as destined for motherhood and domestic work. For still other feminists, even deeper change is needed, because patriarchy is rooted deeply in the society's attitudes and preferences.

The period of post-feminism signifies resistance to the themes of second wave feminism. Feminists such as Camille Pagila, Katie Roiphe, Pat Califia and Natasha Walter are associated with post-feminism. Key themes of the post-feminism are as follows:

- Women must see themselves as agents, not as victims
- A focus on violence undermines women's agency
- Sexuality should be thought of as liberating
- All consensual sex should be celebrated
- Feminism should focus on women's material equality rather than on symbolic aspects of gender and femininity
- Participation in beauty practices and gendered dress is compatible with equality

Finally, all feminists argue that patriarchy is unjust and needs reform. Feminism is thus an essentially normative and reforming, or revolutionary, movement. However, all feminists share the goal of gender equality. They want women and men to have an equal status and enjoy equal respect. For most feminists, an important part of gender equality is equality of opportunity and others advocate for the need of a greater equality of resources among men and women.

## Differences between sex and gender

Often sex and gender are considered as a single entity. However, this is not the case. A feminist technique for dealing with this problem has always been to argue that there is a crucial distinction between biological sex difference and social gender difference. On this account, 'sex' refers to those differences that are an inevitable part of biology. These are primarily the differences in the physical size and shape of men and women, with the most significant differences concerning the organs and functions of reproduction. On the other hand, 'gender' refers to those differences that are imposed only by social norms; such as, there is a norm that baby girls should wear pink and baby boys should wear blue; or women should be kind and emotional, whereas men should be tough and rational.

Gender denotes the biological sex of individuals. However, feminists define it as a set of socially and culturally constructed characteristics that vary across time and place. When you think of characteristics such as power, autonomy, rationality and public, you associate them with masculinity, or what is regarded as a 'real man'. Opposite characteristics, such as weakness, dependence on men or others and emotional feeling are associated with femininity.

Post-modern feminism criticizes the basic distinction between 'sex' and 'gender', which earlier feminist theories found useful in thinking about the roles/lives of men and women in world politics and in analysing the gendered concepts of world politics itself. This distinction was useful because it allowed feminists to argue that the position of women and men in the world was not natural, but highly contingent and dependent upon the meaning given to biological differences.

So far, while extremely useful, the acceptance of the sex-gender distinction retained the binary opposition of male-female and presumed that while gender was constructed, sex was wholly natural. However, as a number of scholars demonstrated, what was understood by sex, i.e., biological difference was heavily influenced by the understanding of gender. The following are the key points regarding the differences between sex and gender:

- According to feminists, gender is distinct from sex. The former is a set of socially constructed characteristics, which determine what is understood by masculinity and femininity, as it is likely for women to exhibit masculine characteristics and vice-versa.
- Gender is an arrangement of social hierarchy in which masculine characteristics acquire better value than feminine ones.
- Gender is a system, which highlights unequal power relationship between women and men.

## Origin of gender

The traces of origins of the modern gendered division of labour can be found in the 17th century Europe. That period witnessed the polarization of the definitions of male and female in manners, which were suited to the developing division between work and home, a demand presented by the early capitalism. Industrial revolution and the increase in number of waged labour, largely men, shifted the focus on work from home to factory.

The gender dimensions were reinforced by the terms such as 'housewife'. These terms were coined and came to be used to depict women's work in the private domestic sphere and symbolized the split. Another such gendered construct was 'breadwinner'. This along with the term 'housewife' has been at the middle of the modern Western definitions that determined the traits such as masculinity, femininity and capitalism. Although, for wages, women carry out work outside their homes, the linkages of women with domestic roles, for example, housewife and caregiver have turn out to be institutionalized and even accepted. This means that it is seen as natural for women to do the domestic work.

Putting the burden of household labour on women decreases their autonomy and economic security. Due to these role expectations, when women decide to enter the workforce, they are unduly represented in such services, which can be performed with light machinery. Few services, such as nursing, social services and primary education, or in light industry are generally considered the areas reserved for women. Women choose these occupations not only because of market rationality and profit maximization, but also because of values and expectations about mothers and caregivers that are emphasized in the socialization of young girls.

Occupations that are disproportionately populated by women tend to be the most poorly paid. Assumptions about appropriate gender roles mean that women are often characterized as supplemental wage earners to the male head of household. However, estimates suggest that one-third of all households worldwide are headed by women, a fact frequently obscured by role expectations that derive that the notion of male head winners and female housewives.

Even when women do enter the workforce, they continue to suffer from a double burden. This means that they take up the responsibility of household labour. Everyone is accustomed to think that women are not 'working' when they engage in household labour. Actually, such tasks are crucial for reproducing and caring for those who perform waged work. However, these tasks often constrain women's opportunities for paid work and the narrow definition of work, as described in the waged economy, tends to render many of the contributions women do make to the global economy, invisible.

The Gender Development Index (GDI) measures a state's development using the Human Development Index (HDI) indicators such as literacy, life expectancy, school environment and income disaggregated by gender, to illustrate the state's development, adjusted for degrees of gender inequality. One of the central assumptions of this index is that the larger the degree of gender inequality, the bigger is its negative

effect on states' quality of development. The GDI also shows that states high on the HDI may have high degrees of gender inequality.

In the 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action, which was ratified by all UN member states, established gender mainstreaming as a global strategy for attaining gender equality. The UN, the European Union, the Organization of American States and a number of other governmental and inter-governmental organizations have adopted it as their official policy. Gender mainstreaming prescribes the review and revision of policy processes in all sectors of the government, with an eye towards eliminating gender-based disparities in policy formulation and implementation.

## Status of women in India

Based on the Indian Constitution, even women are legal citizens of the country. They too enjoy equal rights as compared with men. Due to the lack of recognition from society that is male dominant, Indian women have to suffer a lot. Their primary duty is to give birth to children. They are mostly undernourished and are in poor health. Even if they work overtime in the agricultural field, they still have to complete all the domestic work.

Most of the Indian women are illiterate. Irrespective of the fact that the country's Constitution gives equal rights to men and women, women do not have any power and ill-treated within and even outside their home.

Based on 2001 Census, there are about 495.4 million females out of the total population of 1,028 million Indians. Hence, in the present population of 1.03 billion, there should be at least 528 million women. But there are only 496 million women. It means that about 32 million women are 'missing' in India. Some of these are killed before birth; rest die as they do not get the opportunity to survive.

The sex ratio, i.e., the number of female per 1,000 male, is an important sign of women's status in the society. It is a fluctuating component of the Census. The sex ratio was 972 over 1000 males in 1901, while it went down to 930 over 1000 males by 1971. In 1981, there was a small increase in the sex ratio as it went up to 934.

But in 1991 Census, there were only 927 females per 1,000 males. The 2001 Census points towards the increasing sex ratio, as the number of females per 1,000 males was 933, the only exception being Kerala where this number was 1,058. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the World Population 2005, Punjab with 793, Haryana with 820, Delhi with 865, Gujarat with 878, and Himachal Pradesh with 897 females over 1000 males had worst child sex ratio (CSR). Scheduled tribes had a good CSR of 973, but for scheduled castes it falls at 938.

The CSR is 917 for the non-SC/ST population. The rural India has 934 females per 1000 males, and the urban India has 908 females per 1000 males. In most of the states, the least literate districts show superior CSR as compared to their most literate counterparts. An important reason for an adverse juvenile sex ratio is the augmented reluctance to have female children. In case of women, the literacy rate

is 54.16 per cent; yet, 245 million Indian women are uneducated. It accounts to the biggest number of illiterate women in world. National averages in the field of literacy have huge disparities. While an Indian male spends 3.5 years in school, an average Indian female has schooling for only 1.2 years. About 50 per cent of girls withdraw by the time they are in middle school.

In the same manner, life expectancy increases for both males and females. Based on the UN Statistic Division (2000), it had increased up to 64.9 years for women and 63 years for men. The working women's population has gone high from 13 per cent in 1987 to 25 per cent in 2001. The UNFPA State of World Population 2005 report says that about 70 per cent of graduate Indian women still remain unemployed. They constitute of the 90 per cent of the total marginal workers of the country. Rural women who work in the agriculture form 78 per cent of all women in regular work. They constitute of one-third of all workers in the country. The customary gender division of labour assures that, on an average, these women get 30 per cent lesser wages than their male equivalents.

The total employment of women in the organized sector is just 4 per cent. Even though the industrial production rose in the 1980s, non-household jobs, or jobs in factories and establishments, stagnated at 8 per cent of the workforce. More and more companies tend to rely on the outsourcing or on using cheap labour.

Indian women suffer another social barrier that generally women of other world do not have to deal with. It is caste exclusion or separation, i.e., the rules that govern marriage and contact that maintain distinctions of caste. In India, mostly the family fixes the marriages. The marriage scenario in Indian villages is quite bad. The girl is never asked her opinion and is married to a person who is selected by her family. They have to put up with the wishes and the fancies of their husbands. If they do not follow or fulfil the wishes of their husbands, they are said to commit a sin. In the marriage, a husband has the upper hand for the eternity. The groom and his family act as if they are helping the girl by marrying her and in response, they ask for heavy dowry. One more social barrier is hierarchy, i.e., the rule of order and rank, which is based on the social status. Women are still thought of as a curse by some particular section of the society and their birth is thought of as a burden.

Generally, in Indian families, women are the ones who eat the last and the least. They eat the leftovers once men have eaten. Thus, many times, their food intake does not have any nutritional value that is required for maintaining a healthy body. In villages, because of the poverty, women do not get to eat a complete meal. The UNICEF report (1996) shows that South Asian women do not get proper care and it leads to high levels of malnutrition.

This nutritional deficiency has two major effects, which are as follows:

 (i) Women become anaemic.

 (ii) Women never attain full growth and that results in a never ending cycle of undergrowth, as a malnourished women can never give birth to a healthy baby.

Indian women work more than their male equivalents, but, their work does not get recognized, as they usually do the unskilled work. Their household chores do not come under the category of work. Further, if a woman works in a field and helps her husband, it also is not considered as work on her behalf. In India, a lot of women are powerless. They cannot take decisions on their own; not even those decisions that are related with their own lives. They need to take the permission of the family's male members for every issue.

### 3.4.2 Poverty and Hunger

The Indian economy has been developing since 1950. The country has witnessed sustainable economic growth in the last six decades. The various sectors of the Indian economy have made modest to good progress. Out of these, there were also some noteworthy structural changes.

A gradual shift was noticed and the Indian economy scaled from being an underdeveloped to a developing economy. It made a significant headway from poverty to prosperity. However, despite such remarkable economic developments, certain concerns continue to plague the Indian economy. One such feature happens to be the low per capita income. Per capita income in India is one of the lowest in the world. This indicates low economic welfare of the people and the prevalence of poverty in the country.

Humankind has been plagued by poverty for centuries. However, with the passage of time, numerous measures were implemented to alleviate poverty. One of the greatest achievements of the twentieth century has been the alleviation of poverty in many parts across the globe. Despite such economic success, some countries of Asia, Africa and South America are still poverty-stricken.

One-third of the population of these developing countries still remains in abject poverty. It is a misfortune that India falls under this category. The problem of poverty is considered to be the biggest challenge to development planning in India.

Poverty can be defined as 'a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials to enjoy a minimum standard of life and well-being that's considered acceptable in society'.

**Concept of Poverty**

Mollie Orshansky, the developer of poverty measurements that are in use by the United States government, says 'to be poor is to be deprived of those goods and services and pleasures which others around us take for granted'.

A socio-economic malady, poverty is one of the worst challenges facing India today. Poverty not only refers to an absence of necessities of material well-being but also the denial of opportunities for living a tolerable life and enjoying a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-respect and respect for others.

There are two types of poverty. One is income poverty and the other is human poverty. Income poverty refers to the lack of necessities of material well-being. Human poverty refers to the denial of opportunity for living a tolerable life.

The definition of poverty is varied for most countries. Poverty in India has been referred to as that situation in which a person is unable to earn adequate income to buy the minimal means of subsistence. These include a satisfactory level of nutritional diet, minimum required clothing, housing and minimum level of health facilities such as clean water and so on. Poverty can be classified into two categories—absolute poverty and relative poverty. These are explain below:

(i) **Absolute poverty:** Less prevalent in developed countries, absolute poverty is a state in which people do not have the minimum level of income deemed necessary for living in a civilized society. Absolute poverty refers to the percentage of populace living below the poverty line.

(ii) **Relative poverty:** Relative poverty refers to the phenomenon when the income for consumption expenditure of a section of the society is distinctively below the average income level of the society.

Relative poverty indicates that a group or class of people belonging to lower income group is poorer when compared to those belonging to higher income group. Since income is distributed unequally in almost all the countries, whether developed or undeveloped, relative poverty exists in every country.

## Meaning of Poverty Line

Poverty line is a level of personal income defining the state of poverty. This concept is very frequently used by economists to measure the extent of poverty in a country. In order to find out the extent of poverty and measure the number of poor people in the country, the economists use the concept of poverty line. Poverty line has been defined as a level of personal or family income below which one is classified as poor according to governmental standards. Poverty line can be identified through the following steps:

(i) Poverty line is identified in terms of a minimum nutritional level of food energy required for subsistence. This minimum nutritional level of food energy is expressed in terms of minimum daily intake of calories. The Planning Commission of India has defined the poverty line in terms of nutritional requirement of 2400 calories per person per day for rural areas and 2100 calories per person per day in the urban areas.

(ii) Poverty line is also identified in terms of per capita consumption expenditure required to get minimum calorie intake. Thus, poverty line is set at the level of consumption expenditure per person required for the minimum calorie intake.

The percentages of populace which falls below poverty line are identified as the underprivileged. Head Count Ratio calculates the extent of poverty in India. This method measures the number of poor as the proportion of people living below poverty line.

## Causes of Poverty

There are several factors responsible for poverty in India. Some of them are discussed as follows:

(i) **Growth of population:** One of the major problems of poverty in India is the high growth rate of population, especially among the poor. This is because of their strong belief in traditions, illiteracy and also their preference for the male child, which results in an increase in population. With limited income and numerous mouths to feed, people are unable to make ends meet.

(ii) **Low rate of economic development:** The low rate of economic development is another major cause of poverty. The rate of economic development in India has been below the required levels. This means that we have low per capita income that results into a low standard of living.

Population in India has recorded an increase of average rate of over two per cent during the plan period. The employment opportunities increase slowly because of low growth rate in the economy. This has kept the poor families in a state of constant poverty.

(iii) **Unemployment:** The unemployment rate in India was 9.9 per cent in 2012. With a large number of people being unemployed, India is facing the twin challenges of unemployment and underemployment. There are less job opportunities compared to the number of job seekers.

Though efforts have been made to promote small and cottage industries to generate employment, even these industries could not absorb sufficient workforce so as to reduce poverty. Thus, unemployment intensifies the problem of poverty to a massive degree.

(iv) **Lack of education:** The growth of population has long been associated with the lack of education. Since the poor have limited access to education, they usually end up with low-paid jobs. This in turn, results in low income. As a result, most underprivileged people are illiterate. The policy of 'more the number of members in the family, the more it will help them in acquiring wealth' is eventually followed in such families and households.

(v) **Inflationary pressure:** The constant rise in price has only made things more difficult for the poor people. Inflation has reduced the real income of fixed and low-income earners. As a result, there is a marked decline in the purchasing power of the poor. Thus, the poor cannot avoid a decline in their living standards.

(vi) **Socio-cultural factors:** The socio-cultural set-up of the country also contributes to poverty to a large extent. Usually, people belonging to lower castes and tribal groups comprise the poor. Illiteracy and limited chances of mobility perpetuate poverty. Factors such as the prevalence of casteism, existence of joint family system, communal hatred, and inheritance laws have proven to be an obstacle for economic development.

(vii) **Growth strategy:** The various strategies designed in the government plans have not been implemented properly. Some are yet to be developed. In fact, the growth strategy has kept the poor out of the development process. Professor Meghnad Desai points out: 'India's poverty creating programme is larger than its poverty removal programme.'

(viii) **Inequalities in income:** The inequality of income in rural and urban areas of the country is another cause of poverty. During the plan period, a large proportion of increased income has been cornered by the affluent ones. Due to inequalities in the distribution of income and assets, even a small rise in per capita income could not affect the poor. Hence, the problem of poverty has become acute.

(ix) **Inadequate anti-poverty measures:** In view of the large magnitude of the problem of poverty in the country, the anti-poverty measures taken by the government are far from adequate. Some of them have been inadequately implemented and the ones which have been implemented properly have benefited only selected sections of the populace. Despite the implementation of measures, success in alleviating poverty has been limited.

(x) **Capital deficiency:** Capital formation directly contributes to economic growth by reducing poverty. There is a dearth of capital in India which results in low productivity, low per capita income and the end result happens to be poverty.

As in all developing countries, the credit market in India does not function well. Those who can offer collateral go to formal markets, while those who cannot have to resort to informal credit markets where the interest rate on loan is quite high.

(xi) **Globalization:** Globalization has resulted in pushing many householders to reduced circumstances. In the wake of globalization, farmers began to utilize their lands for the production of export crops, thereby bringing down the production of important food crops. Liberalization has also forced small farmers to compete in a global market where the prices of agricultural goods are low.

(xii) **Political factors:** The political structure of the country is also one of the factors accounting for the continuation of poverty. Political power is concentrated in the hands of the upper strata of the society, both in the urban and rural areas. Economic policies are formulated to promote the interest of the richer section of the society. Poor people, particularly peasants, landless labourers, tribal people and slum dwellers suffer in the process.

(xiii) **Discrimination:** The poor are often discriminated against in social institutions. They cannot avail of education, health-care and other opportunities as freely as other social classes.

(xiv) **Prejudices:** The society is prejudiced against the poor. They are seen as unhygienic, and lacking integrity.

(xv) **Casteism:** Many poor people also belong to the historically oppressed castes. Thus, they are relegated to the fringes of the society, especially in areas and regions where casteism is prevalent.

(xvi) **Communalism:** Communal hatred and feelings can result in the oppression and victimization of the poor.

(xvii) **Parochialism:** Provincial attitudes hamper the growth, progress and development of the poor people.

### 3.4.3 Values of Secularism

Secularism implies the absence of religion or religious beliefs from the process of rule-making and governance. An organized institution like a national or local government is said to be secular when it keeps religion out of its functioning. Religion is not allowed to be one of the considerations while framing policies and making rules for orderly running of a government and society.

Does secularism then mean that religion is banned from the public domain? Certainly not. Religion is allowed to be followed and propagated and citizens are free to follow any religion. The State does not interfere in such religious beliefs. But the State itself does not have a religion or religious belief. It exists in a religion vacuum. A secular State does not have a religion and is neutral towards all religious beliefs. Many a times, secularism is defined as a situation in which politics and religion are kept apart.

Its origin can be traced to the Western world view. Therefore, it is important to understand its philosophical base to fully appreciate its connotation, its importance and its limitations. The word secular is derived from the Latin word *sacularis* which meant, among other things, 'that which belongs to this world, non-spiritual, temporal as opposed to spiritual or ecclesiastical thing'.

It is a form applied in general to the separation of state politics or administration from religious matters, and 'secular education' is a system of training from which religious teaching is definitely excluded. Philosophically, the term reveals the influence of positivism and utilitarianism.

The relation of secularism to religion was defined as 'mutually exclusive rather than hostile'. Neither theism nor atheism enters into the secularist scheme because neither can be proved by experience. The term secularism was coined in 1850 by G. J. Holyoake (an Owenite Socialist, an atheist and the last person to be imprisoned for blasphemy in Britian) who saw it as a movement, which provided an alternative to theism.

Historically, secularism intermingled with and was at its best with atheism. Atheists like Charles Bradlaugh, Charles Watts, and G. E. Forte were closely associated with the movement. Bradlaugh argued that secularism was bound to contest theistic belief and that material progress was impossible, so long as superstitions born out of religious beliefs and practices remained a powerful force in society.

The essential principle of secularism was to seek for human improvement by material means alone, these being considered as adequate to secure the desired end. Its principles could be sustained by intellect and were equally applicable to all humanity. Morality was seen as being based on reason and as seeking to establish the common welfare. Reason had to be freed from religious considerations.

Western liberal ideas such as nationalism, secularism and democracy had an impact on the Indian intelligentsia, which increasingly incorporated them in its debates, resolutions and strategies of struggle against British colonialism and later included them in the Constitution. Over the last sixty years or thereabouts, many questions,

both theoretical and procedural, have been raised. One of the questions much debated and contested in the 1980s, 1990s and the first decade of this century is the concept of secularism itself.

The tendency to privatize religion and compartmentalize life into the private and the public sphere was never very marked in India, and religion continued to sway the lives of the people. The British Government encouraged the tendency to perceive and calculate political interests in religious and communal terms.

In spite of establishing the concept of the rule of law and a common judicial system, the British Government based personal (family) laws on grounds of religious laws and differences. However, in spite of all these factors, it cannot be denied that secularism as a value had a tremendous influence on the leaders of the National Movement.

Secularism is an important aspect of the Indian way of life and governance. It has helped in promoting communal harmony and in keeping national integration at the forefront. N. R. Madhava Menon, in his paper 'Constitutionalism and Management of Diversity in Multi-cultural Societies', deals with the significance of Indian Constitution to manage various problems in a multi-cultural society.

He points out that secularism is a basic feature of the constitution which cannot be changed even by Parliament. There is no state religion and the state is prohibited against discrimination on the basis of religion. He believes that multiculturalism can survive and communal harmony can prevail only when we ensure equality of status among people and equal opportunity for everyone as conceived in the Constitution of India.

Donald E. Smith, Professor of Political Science in Pennsylvania University, provided what he regarded as a working definition of a secular state. This was in his book *India as a Secular State*. The secular State is a State which guarantees individuals 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 to promote or interfere with religion. The definition given by Smith reflects three aspects of secularism in the form of inter-related relations as follows:

- Religion and individual
- Individual and state
- State and religion

These relations are like the three sides of a triangle, touching each other at three points and creating their mutually related angles. These three sets of angular relationship contain the sum total of religious freedom available in a society.

The first of these three angles reflects the relationship between religion and individuals. This relation contains 'positive freedom of religion' which implies 'reasonable unrestrained liberty of believing and practicing one's religion'. In other words, every person should be free to follow any religion and to act upon its teachings and reject all others without any interference from the State. Religious freedom is the soul of the principle of liberty enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India.

The second angular relation reflects the relationship between the State and individuals. It contains 'negative freedom of religion'. By 'negative freedom of religion', he means 'absence of restraints, discriminations, liabilities and disabilities which a citizen might have been otherwise subjected to'.

The third angular relation emanates from the relationship between the State and its religion. It contains 'neutral freedom of religion'. It implies that the State has no religion of its own and has an attitude of indifference towards all the religions present and practiced in the State.

The term 'secular' denotes the threefold relationship among man, State and religion. The word Secular has not been defined or explained under the Constitution in 1950 or in 1976 when it was made part of the preamble. A secular State means a State that protects all religions equally and does not uphold any religion as the State religion.

Unlike England where the Queen is the Head of the Protestant Church, in India, there is no provision to make any religion the 'established Church' or the religion of the State. The State observes an attitude of neutrality and impartiality towards all religions. It is assumed that the secular state, howsoever constructed, will minimally have to contend with and respond to each of the demands of equality, liberty and neutrality.

The liberal claim rests on the impossibility of different religious communities in the same democratic polity to live together in harmony, without some model of secularism that embodies the normative force of liberty, equality and neutrality.

**Theories of Secularism**

Secularisation theory explains that as modern society advances, it will become increasingly secular, and religion will become increasingly hollow. Since the rise of science in the 17th century, sociological commentators have realized that religion may be in a permanent decline, and some have proposed that science and intelligence, both rooted in the Enlightenment, are anathema to religious faith.

Karl Marx (1818-1883), Emile Durkheim (1857-1917) and Max Weber (1864-1920), the founders of sociology, and William James (lectures from 1901-1902) are four eminent men who all noted this decline of religion.

Gandhi's secular theories took on a special significance in the particular context of the Indian national movement. Indian society has been traditionally plagued by the evils of caste and creed based discrimination. The caste oriented stratification of the Indian society has hindered all chances of national unification from the early days of Indian society.

The situation was complicated by the presence of various religious groups within the country, who were not ready to compromise on any ground to reach a platform of commonality. The traditional rhetoric of the religious and the self-styled spiritual preachers fuelled these divisions more often than not.

What particularly disturbed Gandhi was the realization that it would be impossible to organize any nation-wide movement against the common enemy—the

British oppressors—if society continues to remain divided on religious grounds. Secularism, for Gandhi, was an absolute necessity to bring about any form of constructive and all-encompassing political movement.

Gandhi preached his ideals of secularism and religious tolerance across the length and breadth of the country. He showed his understanding of the Muslim leaders through the support that the Congress extended to the Khilafat movement and wrote extensively on the need of secularism in India, and made speeches to the same effect all over the country.

The British were bent upon implementing the policy of divide and rule, and it took its worst form after the declaration of separate elections for the different communities in the Government of India Act in 1935. Indian National movement has always been plagued by communal tensions, and haunted it till the very end. Gandhi's monumental efforts at bringing together the various communities in India were not fully realized.

The British policy of 'divide and rule' had its effects, and the demand for a separate Muslim nation was fast gaining currency. Even at the time of intense riots on the eve of Indian independence, Gandhi, having realized his helplessness in the situation, was on the roads trying to unite the warring communal factions. In many ways, his death could be related to his life-long commitment to secular principles.

## Significance of Secularism

The importance of secularism to India, and in fact the world, can hardly be overemphasized. Religion possess the power to destroy any society if used as a political weapon. States must keep religion out of the political system to ensure peaceful co-existence. Most modern, liberal democracies have imbibed secularism as the defining characteristic of their political system.

There are many religions in the world and the questions that arise at this juncture are:

- Which religion should be followed by a person?
- Can a State compel its citizens to follow a particular religion?
- Can a State have its own religion?
- Can a State give preferential treatment to the followers of a particular religion?

The answer to all these questions is negative if the State has adopted the principle of secularism. A secular state is neither supposed to compel its citizens to adopt a particular religion nor can it give preferential treatment to the followers of a particular religion. Secularism eliminates God from the matters of the State. This is essential to keep religion in the private sphere.

Secularism ensures that religion does not determine State policy. It insulates public policy-making from the influence of religion and thereby eliminates any bias or discrimination that can creep into this process.

### 3.4.4 Fundamentalism

In recent decades, religion has had considerable impact upon politics in many regions of the world. The belief that societies would invariably secularize as they modernize has not been well founded. Technological development and other aspects of modernization have left many people with a feeling of loss rather than achievement.

By undermining 'traditional' value systems and allocating opportunities in highly unequal ways within and among nations, modernization can produce a deep sense of alienation and stimulate a search for an identity that will give life some purpose and meaning. In addition, the rise of a global consumerist culture can lead to an awareness of relative deprivation that people believe they can deal with more effectively if they present their claims as a group. One result of these developments has been a wave of popular religiosity, which has had far-reaching implications for social integration, political stability and international security.

It is also necessary to focus on the global perspective on the relation between religion, politics, conflict and identity. Using a wide range of cases from various parts of the world, the complex ways in which religious values, beliefs and norms stimulate and affect political developments and vice versa, the social conditions which give rise to religious movements, as well as how such movements are promoted and sustained over time, the relations between religious leaders and followers, the links between social mobilization and the pursuit of particular objectives can be examined.

The defining characteristic of the relationship of religion and politics in the 1990s was the increasing disaffection and dissatisfaction with established, hierarchical and institutionalized religious bodies. Contemporary religious movements seek to find God through personal searching rather than through the mediation of institutions. They also focus on the role of communities in generating positive changes to members' lives through the application of group effort. In this regard, religion's interaction with political issues carries an important message of societal resurgence and regeneration, which may challenge the authority of political leaders and economic elites.

Given the uneven impact of modernization in developing countries, the relationship between religion and politics has always been a close one. Political power is underpinned by religious beliefs and practices, while political concerns permeate to the heart of the religious sphere. Therefore, attempts in many countries to separate politics from religion have been largely unsuccessful, especially as economic crisis and global restructuring undermine previous arrangements for promoting social and political cohesion.

A typology of religious movements demonstrates the political significance of religion as a global phenomenon. Four types of movements are highlighted based on whether religion is used as a vehicle of opposition or as an ideology of community development. Groups which link religion to the pursuit of community development are categorized as community-oriented, while oppositional movements are classified as culturalist, fundamentalist, and syncretistic. Threats from powerful outsider groups or from unwelcome symptoms of modernization largely sustain the oppositional

movements; community movements on the other hand derive their *raison d'être* from state failures in social welfare development.

Culturalist movements emerge when a community, sharing both religious and ethnic affinities, perceives itself as a powerless and repressed minority within a state dominated by outsiders. Culture (of which religion is an important part) is mobilized as part of a wider strategy aimed at achieving self control, autonomy or self government. An examination of the cases of experiences of Sikhs in Hindu India, the struggles of the peoples of Southern Sudan against Arabization and Islamization, Tibetan Buddhist opposition to the Chinese state and the African-American movement of self-development, the Nation of Islam would further support this argument.

Syncretistic religious movements are said to be found predominantly among certain rural dwellers in parts of the Third World, especially in Africa. They involve a fusion or blending of religions and feature a number of elements found in more traditional forms of religious association, such as ancestor worship and healing practices. Sometimes, ethnic differentiation may form part of syncretism. Religious and social beliefs supply the basic elements for building group solidarity in the face of threats from outside forces, such as the state, big land-owners, transnational enterprises or foreign governments.

There are several African, Latin American and Caribbean cases where such threats have given rise to syncretistic religions, including the Napramas of north-eastern Mozambique, the Lakwena and Lenshina movements in Uganda and Zambia, the cult of Olivorismo in the Dominican Republic and Sendero Luminoso in Peru.

Religious fundamentalist movements aim to reform society by changing laws, morality, social norms and political configurations in accordance with religious tenets, with the goal of creating a more traditional society. There are two broad categories of fundamentalist groups—those based on the Abrahamic 'religions of the book' and nationalist-oriented derivatives of Hinduism and Buddhism. For the first type, scriptural revelations relating to political, moral and social issues form the corpus of fundamentalist demands.

Their political orientations vary considerably—some are deeply conservative (United States Protestant evangelicals), some are reformist or revolutionary (many Islamist groups), some are essentially moralistic (Protestant evangelicals in Latin America), and some are xenophobic or racist (such as the banned Kach and Kahane Chai groups in Israel). In the absence of any clear set of scriptural norms, Hindu and Buddhist fundamentalism are indistinguishable from movements with aspirations for national or cultural purity.

Community-oriented movements often emerge from attempts to improve community livelihood; these tend to be popularly driven and may have either conservative or reformist orientation, and are found typically but not exclusively in Latin America. Especially prominent in this regard are local community groups,

mostly Roman Catholic in inspiration, which have grown in importance over the last twenty-five years in Latin America, the Philippines and in parts of Africa.

Many derive their ideas from the tenets of radical liberation theology. In addition, there has been a strong growth in several Latin American and African countries of popular Protestant evangelical churches. What all these groups have in common is that local self-help groups are formed to improve qualitatively communities' lives at a time when central and local governments are unable to satisfy popular developmental needs.

## Religious Fundamentalism

The question of whether or not religious fundamentalism holds the capacity of emerging as a reaction to a certain brand of secularism remains prevalent. This question, or rather, the idea of fundamentalism being warped in closed secularism tends to emerge from an insecurity that leads to a hesitance when change is introduced in religious expressions. When the social structure of a religion inclines towards change, religious fundamentalism, as a result and regardless of its reasons and points of origin, stands isolated from distinct and alternative religions, and is separated from secular humanism and the values it professes.

Ultimately, a separate religious community is formed, one that is centered around its self-interest and remains based on self-righteousness. To quote Bharucha, one of the most basic enemies of Indian secularism is religious fundamentalism.

The word 'fundamentalism' first appeared associated alongside a Christian group in *Fundamentals*, a collection of twelve booklets published in 1920, which opposed the emerging modern approaches to the Bible centered around critical historical ideologies. According to them, it is imperative that such an approach is rejected for it tends to destroy the essence of suprarational and supernatural characteristics.

In India, the term is often associated with radical humanist V. M. Tarkunde, who said:

> Fundamentalism consists of uncritical adherence to ancient beliefs and practices. Communalism on the other hand consists of animosity of persons belonging to one religion toward persons of another religion. A fundamentalist need not be communalist at all ... On the other hand a communalist need not be a fundamentalist at all ... Fundamentalism requires to be opposed by all Humanists and Democrats, but that opposition should not be mixed up with fundamentalist bodies may be helpful to us in promoting communal amity in the country.

Tarkunde's distinction between fundamentalism and communalism, however, undermines the importance of fundamentalism in India, especially in Muslim and Hindu communalism. Other scholars such as Ashish Nandy, however, stand against an association between Fundamentalism and Communalisms, which, according to them, lacks genuine religious motivation.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

7. How does D. N. Majumdar define the untouchable caste in the Indian society?

8. How does society use untouchability to protect itself?

9. What are Marx's three classes related to sources of income?

10. What did the second phase of Feminism deal with?

11. What are the two types of poverty?

12. What is meant by the term 'secular State'?

---

## 3.5 SUMMARY

- In recent times, the idea of power has assumed particular significance in the realm of political sociology.

- Political sociology is understood as the study of power.

- In simple terms, 'power' refers to the ability of a person to influence the behaviour of another person or a group of persons in accordance with his/her own wish.

- In a general sense, the term 'elite' was employed to refer to commodities of particular quality.

- In a general sense, the term 'elite' was employed to refer to commodities of particular quality.

- There are two categories—the non-elite (who may or may not have a role to play in the government) and the elite.

- Pareto's theory of elite was perceived as a validation for fascism.

- For C. Wright Mills, the members of various elites regularly interchanged, in a way that certain powerful individuals could be members of more than one elite at a time.

- Mills explained that media propagates psychological illiteracy among individual people by breaking down local prejudices.

- Mosca was of the viewpoint that political philosophy of a society was not important, unless in the instance of deciding the kind of elite group that could have the authority to rule.

- Robert Michels held the viewpoint that any political system eventually evolves into an oligarchy i.e., a kind of power structure where the power rests with minority, generally distinguished by wealth, family relations, lineage, education, business, or military influence.

- Max Weber's sociological interest in the structures of authority was motivated, at least in part, by his political interests.

- A lot of sociologists state that India is a hierarchical society. They explain this statement by saying that whether in north India or south India, urban or village, Hindu or Muslim, almost all social groups and people are ranked according to some traits.

- According to Louis Dumont, hierarchy implies ranking based on the notion of purity and impurity.

- Dumont also explains the difference between power and status. He states that hierarchy refers to 'religious ranking' and classifies 'beings' based on their dignity rather than on power and authority.

- It can be said that untouchability has been a social practice in India of treating some people unjustly because of their low ascribed status.

- It can be said that untouchability has been a social practice in India of treating some people unjustly because of their low ascribed status.

- The relation of secularism to religion was defined as 'mutually exclusive rather than hostile'. Neither theism nor atheism enters into the secularist scheme because neither can be proved by experience.

- The essential principle of secularism was to seek for human improvement by material means alone, these being considered as adequate to secure the desired end. Its principles could be sustained by intellect and were equally applicable to all humanity.

- Gandhi's secular theories took on a special significance in the particular context of the Indian national movement. Indian society has been traditionally plagued by the evils of caste and creed based discrimination.

- Gandhi's secular theories took on a special significance in the particular context of the Indian national movement. Indian society has been traditionally plagued by the evils of caste and creed based discrimination.

- Secularism ensures that religion does not determine State policy. It insulates public policy-making from the influence of religion and thereby eliminates any bias or discrimination that can creep into this process.

## 3.6   KEY TERMS

- **Fascism:** It means an authoritarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organization.

- **Accrete:** It means to grow by accumulation or coalescence.

- **Tactical:** It is relating to or constituting actions carefully planned to gain a specific military end.

- *Varna:* It refers to each of the four Hindu castes, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra.

- **Industrialization:** It refers to the development of industries in a country or region on a wide scale.

- **Secularism:** It means the principle of separation of the state from religious institutions.

## 3.7   ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The study of politics is concerned with the description and analysis of the manner in which power is obtained, exercised, and controlled, and the purpose for which it is used.

2. Michels' theoretical views on parliamentary democracy took shape within the parameters of two concepts—theoretical syndicalism (Hubert Lagardelle and Georges Sorel) and elitism (Vilfredo Pareto).

3. According to Michels, the oligarchical structure of power arises as three groups of factors interact: (i) the technical qualities of a political organization, (ii) the psychological qualities of the organized masses, and (iii) the psychological characteristics of political leaders.

4. According to Marx, bureaucracy had its origin in the absolutist monarchies and was initially a progressive force because it curbed the autonomy of medieval guilds and built a centralized administrative structure.

5. Max Weber was often called the 'bourgeois Marx' to reflect the similarities in the intellectual interests of Marx and Weber as well as the very different political intellectual interests of Marx.

6. Weber preferred democracy as a political form not because he believed in the masses, but because it offered maximum dynamism and the best milieu to generate political leaders.

7. According to D. N. Majumdar, the untouchable castes are those who suffer from various social and political disabilities, many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by the higher castes.

8. Untouchability refers to the set of practices engaged in by the rest of the society to protect itself from the pollution conveyed by the untouchables and to symbolize their inferior status.

9. Marx distinguished three classes, related to the three sources of income:
   - Salaried workers
   - Capitalists
   - Landowners

10. In the second phase, women's movement sought to extend the gains they had achieved in fighting for economic as well as political equality for women.

11. There are two types of poverty. One is income poverty and the other is human poverty.

12. A secular State means a State that protects all religions equally and does not uphold any religion as the State religion.

## 3.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

**Short-Answer Questions**

1. Write a short note on Pareto's theory of 'circulation of elite'.
2. Evaluate the functioning of the three layers in C. Wright Mills' pyramid of power.
3. How does Mills distinguish between the mass and the public?
4. How does Max Weber define dominance?
5. What is Merton's middle range theory?
6. What are Bendix and Lipset's five variables that determine a class in the Marxian sense?
7. Name and define the two categories of poverty.
8. What is meant by poverty line?
9. Why did Gandhi consider secularism a necessity for the nation?

**Long-Answer Questions**

1. Explain the theory of anomie propunded by Merton.
2. How did untouchability operate as a social practice in India?
3. Trace the problem of poverty and hunger in the Indian economy.
4. Discuss the various causes of poverty.
5. Trace the origin and progress of secularism in line with the Western liberal ideas.
6. Name and explain Donald E. Smith's three aspects of secularism.
7. Describe fundamentalism with special reference to India.

## 3.9 FURTHER READING

Kersey, Timothy. 2016. *Constrained Elitism and Contemporary Democratic Theory*. New York and London: Routledge.

Walters, Kathie. 2001. *Elitism and the False Shepherding Spirit: Control, Manipulation, Spirit of Abortion, Grief and its Devastating Results*. United States: Good News Fellowship Ministries.

Hollinger, Robert. 1996. *The Dark Side of Liberalism: Elitism vs. Democracy*. London: Praeger Publications.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. 2013. *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*. Westminster: John Knox Press.

# UNIT 4 STATE AND SOCIETY IN INDIA

**Structure**

## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

Politics, nowadays, is part of a commoner's daily life. There is no area of a common man's personal or professional life that remains untouched or uninfluenced by the political conditions of the country he or she lives in. Day-to-day political affairs of a country are the gifts of the political philosophy or thoughts prevalent in that country. Political thoughts vary from country to country. Most of these political thoughts are highly influenced by age-old political systems. In India, there are different political issues, some national while others regional. It has many communities with diverse culture. This unit discusses the condition of society in India, and, focusing on the concepts of socialism and political sociology, reveals the contemporary trends and operations of the State in the country.

## 4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Evaluate state and society under capitalism, citizenship and welfare state
- Discuss state and society under socialism, as well as state control and institutional autonomy
- Assess the contemporary trends in political sociology in India

## 4.2 STATE AND SOCIETY UNDER CAPITALISM: CITIZENSHIP AND WELFARE STATE

Citizenship and welfare state are concepts of government in which the State plays a key role in the protection and promotion of economic and social well-being of its citizens. A welfare state is based on the principles of equality of opportunity and equitable distribution of wealth. It also focuses on the governmental responsibility for those who are unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions of a good life. Under this system, the welfare of its citizens is the responsibility of the State. The concepts of citizenship and welfare state are explained in this section.

### 4.2.1 Citizenship

The modern conception of citizen and citizenship may be traced to the works of the thinkers of the Enlightenment like 18th-century Genevan philosopher writer and composer Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He viewed liberty and the obedience of the individual to the law as essential to any body politic.

The citizen was conceived as an autonomous agent capable of laying down laws and obeying them to achieve public harmony and justice. Rousseau's conception of the citizen was juridical, which was in tune with the 17th and 18th century European political thought. But Rousseau did not contemplate for women a place in the political sphere that corresponded to the role of men. Chapter II. 'Of Suffrage', Book IV, 'Continuing Treats of Political Laws', of *The Social Contract* mentions:

> The citizen consents to all the laws, to those which are passed in spite of his opposition, […] The constant will of all the members of the State is the general will; it is by that they are citizens and free. At Genoa, we see inscribed over the gates of their prisons and on the chains affixed to their galley slaves the word '*libertas*'. This application of it is noble as well as just. In fact it is only bad people in every State that hinder the citizens from being free.

### Republican Citizenship and Liberalism

Today, many individuals view political participation as cumbersome and prefer to concentrate on their work and family. Between the choice of an active participation in public life and that of concentrating on one's private life, many prefer the latter. This conflict of choices arose due to the differences between the liberal and republican concepts of citizenship.

The liberal conception of citizenship is based on the idea that liberty of the individual citizen is secured when the State does not interfere in his private life. At the same time, liberals demand that the State must protect the citizens' rights and liberties.

A prominent 20th century liberal Isaiah Berlin identified two conceptions of liberty:

- Positive liberty, which is freedom as self-mastery
- Negative liberty, which is freedom as the absence of interference

Irish philosopher and political theorist Philip Pettit, however, pointed out that these two conceptions overlook another important dimension of freedom. Pettit identified this third conception as the republican conception of freedom, or liberty as non-domination. It signified that freedom is not the absence of mere interference of the State, rather, the absence of arbitrary interference.

To avoid arbitrariness, republican citizens must subject themselves to laws that they themselves legislate. The rule of law creates a level ground for intra-communal relations. For sustaining the freedom of the individual and the community as well as for maintaining the rule of law, the citizens must practice civic virtue. This means that citizens must actively take part in the governance of the community, if they were to be self-governing members of a self-governing community.

This idea was manifested in the dicta of former US presidents Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy. In 1863, Lincoln enunciated the maxim of 'government of the people, by the people and for the people', while approximately a century later, Kennedy insisted that 'every citizen holds office'. Nonetheless, according to American political philosopher Michael Sandel, contemporary American political life is dominated by liberalism, which elbowed out the rival political philosophy of republican citizenship.

The latter lost out because of the decline of civic strands of American political discourse from the time of former US president Thomas Jefferson. Sandel believes that republican citizenship is a better alternative despite its faults. He concedes that the republican tradition in America coexisted with slavery, hostility towards immigrants, exclusion of women from public life and the imposition of wealth as a condition for exercising suffrage.

Notwithstanding these blemishes, republican citizenship, unlike liberalism, does not merely lay emphasis on freedom. Instead, it requires that citizens must deliberate with one's fellows for shaping the destiny of the political community. For Michael Sandel, the republican tradition is a viable antidote against an impoverished American civic life.

In short, the merits of republicanism over liberalism are the following. Contemporary republicans challenge the primacy attributed to private life over that of the public. They argue that liberalism prioritizes individual rights while insufficiently fostering public virtues of citizenship. Republicanism believes in the intrinsic value of political participation as the highest form of human living. Republicans believe that good life is impossible without participating in public life.

### Differentiated Citizenship

Votaries of pluralism have argued that citizenship cannot be restrained to rights or duties. This is because the citizen of a State could simultaneously be a member of various other communities as well. This view, which is often labeled as 'differentiated citizenship', challenges the prevailing conception of universal citizenship that calls for equal rights for all citizens under the law.

The claim for group rights, or differentiated citizenship, not only demands a greater inclusion of marginalized groups into the mainstream of the political community,

but could also be a call to respect the sentiments of certain groups, who would govern themselves within their territories while celebrating their own history, language and customs.

### 4.2.2 Welfare State

Welfare is an ambiguous term. It is used to refer both to people's well-being and to systems which are designed to provide for needy people. At an individual level, well-being depends on a wide range of factors—negative and positive. The negative factors are those from which people should abstain; such as, murder, arbitrary actions, confinement, pollution of the environment, etc. The positive factors are those that should be present for people to experience well-being.

At the most basic level, these include the physical necessities such as air, water and food, and the goods and materials necessary for ordinary life, like clothing and fuel. But these include many social factors as well such as affection, interaction with other people and personal development. Thus, we can say that the concept of welfare state is mainly designed for the well-being of the citizens where the government and the State play an important role in promoting and protecting the socio-economic life of the citizens of the State.

### Origin of Welfare State

There are various factors which led to the development of welfare states. Some believe that the increase in poverty gave rise to the welfare state. According to others, inequality in wealth as well as urbanization and industrialization are the other main factors that led to the growth of welfare states.

Originally, the idea of a welfare state was introduced by German Chancellor Prince Bismarck. Bismarck wished to strengthen monarchical absolutism in Prussia and to make it the most powerful State in Germany. He was opposed both to liberalism and socialism. In fact, he sought to introduce 'State socialism' in an attempt to counter the appeal of socialism. His policy of 'State socialism' included a series of reforms, giving workers various forms of insurance which marked the beginning of the welfare state.

In England, the idea of a welfare state was introduced by Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith. However, fuller expression to the idea of the welfare state was given in the famous *Beveridge Report* or the *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services*. This report was prepared by William Henry Beveridge, British civil servant and social reformer.

The report made wide-ranging suggestions including the proposal for free national health services, family allowance, 'from the cradle to the grave'. This included unemployment, sickness and accident benefits, old age and widows' pensions, funeral grants and maternity benefits. The acceptance and implementation of most of the recommendations of the Beveridge report converted England into a model welfare state.

Eventually, the idea of a welfare state became popular in France, Italy, West Germany, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand, but it was hardly encouraged in the

United States which maintains its faith in the merit of an open, competitive system. For the developing countries, the policy of a welfare state became almost indispensable.

In the first place, they had to deal with the problem of widespread poverty; second, they had a long tradition of social support for the poor and the needy. With increasing urbanization, the traditional basis of social support for the poor was eroded. So, the State had to assume greater responsibility. However, due to extreme shortage of resources, they could set up a welfare state only on a subdued scale. To some extent, foreign assistance was also utilized for the purpose. But the functioning of the welfare state in these countries was adversely affected by bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption.

In short, welfare state stands for a state that provides for various types of social services for its citizens, for example social security (financial assistance in the case of loss of job or any other source of income, death of the breadwinner, prolonged illness or physical disability or any other calamity), free education, public health, food to the needy at subsidized rates.

For the provision of these services, the State resorts to the policy of progressive taxation, i.e., those who have higher income and wealth are required to pay higher rates of taxes. In effect, it is a method of redistribution of wealth in the society which seeks to compensate those who are rendered helpless in an open, competitive market system.

It is interesting to recall that before the emergence of the welfare state in England, the State was under the system of 'poor relief' where an individual had to compromise his self-respect to avail various services such as housing, proper standard of living, and education. But the concept of the welfare state removed this stigma. It was recognized as a system of mutual assistance and self-reliance where all citizens were provided a means of a respectable living by the nation as a whole. It included the needs, housing, employ adequate standard of living and opportunities for advancement in life.

## Features of the Welfare State

Following are the features of the welfare state:

- The State shares the responsibility of the welfare of the citizens.
- It offers extensive facilities to its citizens such as health facility, education facility, and social security.
- It provides its citizens with legal and fundamental rights.
- The State provides its citizens with social protection.
- Welfare states are socialist in nature. The State redistributes capital by heavily taxing the upper classes and the middle class in order to provide goods and services for those who really needs them.
- The State serves several economic functions to its citizens.

Nations that are considered as a welfare state are: Canada, Australia, Brazil, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Denmark, Austria, United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. Name the two concepts of liberty identified by Isaiah Berlin.
2. Why is it important for citizens to practice civic virtue?
3. What does republicanism propound?

## 4.3 STATE AND SOCIETY UNDER SOCIALISM: STATE CONTROL AND INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

The term 'socialism' is variously understood and defined by thinkers and schools of thought. English philosopher C. E. M. Joad, in his *Introduction to Modern Political Theory*, significantly observed:

> Socialism proves to be a different creed in the hands of its exponents, varying with the temperaments of its advocates and the nature of abuses which have prompted their advocacy ... Socialism, in short, is like a hat that has lost its shape because everybody wears its.

A large number of works on socialism have evaded the problem of defining it. However, a working definition of socialism is necessary in order to understand its various applications. *Oxford English Dictionary* define socialism as follows:

> A theory or policy that aims at or advocates the ownership or control of the means of production—capital, land, and property—by the community as a whole and their administration in the interests of all

This definition, though not very comprehensive, indicates the chief method and goal of socialism. A more elaborate definition of socialism is found in Joseph A. Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, where it is defined in the following words:

> That organization of society in which the means of production are controlled, and the decisions on how and what to produce and on who is to get what, are made by public authority instead of by privately-owned and privately-managed firms.

Thus, an ideology that supports State control of all private property and major instruments of social production is known as communism. It believes that economic restructuring is essential for promoting liberty and equality.

### 4.3.1 Nature of Socialist State

Some thinkers maintain that a socialist state generally looks out for the welfare of its citizens. It provides welfare funds like free health checkups, subsidized food and unemployment benefits for the weaker sections of the society.

Socialist states plan and manage national economy, protect interests of the working class and uphold socialist laws. They rely on the support of the working

class while enforcing measures that punish people violating these stringent rules and laws. The states endeavour to promote cultural consciousness of the working class, control and manage conditions for state education that would, in the long run, help to promote socialist principles in the society.

The states collaborate with similar states and protect the rights of the citizens. Some socialist states help revolutionary movements in foreign countries, provided they have similar ideologies as its own. In socialist states, people participate wholeheartedly in nation-building activities. Such state encourages people to use its new technologies and scientific systems to further their cause within and outside the state. It helps in managing systems of production, thereby facilitating improved social, economic and cultural conditions.

A socialist state can use its dedicated labour force to better agricultural and industrial productions, thereby improving the growth of consumer goods. People attain a higher standard of living and experience a holistic development in their lives with the help of sympathetic government policies. Modern socialist states concentrate primarily on improving education, literature, art and education, thereby promoting the material and intellectual lives of the people.

According to the level and quality of work, each member of the society may possess wealth. This is at par with the socialist philosophy, 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work'. People are trained for service towards the greater good of the society. The introduction of universal secondary education had been significant for the intellectual development of all working people. It is the concern of the socialist State that each individual should work in the field he is specialized in.

## 4.3.2 Marxist Perspective of Socialist State

According to the Marxist perspective, socialist state is a state where capitalism has been replaced by communism with an emphasis on economic and social development. Thus, the replacement of capitalism with communism is the aspect of socialist state, according to Marxists. In this respect, Frederick Engels argued that in socialism, the State is not a 'government of the people' but is the 'administration of things'.

Another contemporary vision of socialist state is based on the 'Paris Commune'. Paris Commune is a concept in which the entire control of the city vests in the hands of the poor and working class of the society. This government had ruled in Paris from 28 March to 28 May 1871. According to Karl Marx, in future the 'Paris Commune' is a prototype for a revolutionary government.

A few socialist states have been discussed in the succeeding paragraphs:

**Cuba**

Cuba is one of the most famous socialist states in the world. The state mostly has a state-run economy, education paid by the government at all levels, universal mental and health care services as well as a number of social programmes.

**North Korea**

This East Asian country is also a good example of socialist state. Here, just like Cuba, the entire political system is socialist in nature. North Korea, too, has a state-run economy, universal education, and several social programmes run by the State for citizens' welfare.

**Vietnam**

This Southeast nation is another example of a state which has socialist policy. Here, the government has full involvement in the economy of the nation.

**Venezuela**

Venezuela is another socialist nation where there is extensive involvement of government in all sectors of life; be it political, social or economic. Here, the foreign policy is left aligned.

**Sweden**

In Sweden, the private industry has more say but they are mostly funded by the government. In addition, the country has well-structured government policy for its citizens in social, economic, political and educational field.

**Syria**

The country has an economy that is run by the state, has proper health care facilities funded by the government and has socialist foreign policy which makes it a socialist state in the true sense.

**Belarus**

In Belarus, the entire economic structure is run by the government. Besides this, the country, too, has several social programmes that are funded by the government. The government provides universal education to all its citizen at all levels.

Besides the above mentioned list of the socialist nations, there are several other nations of the world which consist of socialist states, some of them being Loas, Zambia, Norway, Libya, Algeria, Namibia, and Turkmenistan.

---

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

4. How do sympathetic government policies benefit the public?
5. How does a socialist state make use of dedicated labour force?

---

## 4.4 CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

In the post-Independence era, the political parties came to be recognized as instruments of prime importance through which democracy could be operationalized,

as India adopted a parliamentary democratic system of governance. Ideologically, in the pre-Independence era, the colonial state was marked by the presence of the INC as a safety valve-cum-umbrella organization. The INC represented predominantly the voices of the upper and middle classes, and primarily waging the freedom struggle for achieving political independence in the country. The insistence was more on agitation politics and not on institutional politics.

After Independence, the role and importance of political parties have grown substantially and rather proportionately in accordance with the growing franchise. As political suffrage gradually became universal, parties became the means through which politicians are seeking to acquire mass electoral support. Political parties can be defined as organizational groups that seek control of the personnel and policies of the government. They mobilize and compete for popular support. In doing so, they tend to represent products of historical roots, civic traditions, cultural orientations and economy.

Presently, the kind of contemporary problems which India is facing are assorted and in abundance. A few of the problems are indigenous in nature while others come from external sources. Many problems pose extreme challenges. Presently, it is possible to resolve some of the problems and some are in the process of being resolved. Thus, the most prominent of these problems are communalism, regionalism, violence, criminalization and corruption. Discussed below are some specific features and problems prevalent in the Indian society and economy.

### 4.4.1 Ethnic Conflicts in India

The terms **ethnicity** and ethnic group are derived from the Greek term *ethnos*, which refers to a cultural or spiritual sense of belonging. According to *Encyclopaedia*, an ethnic group (or ethnicity) is 'a group of people whose members identify with each other, through a common heritage, often consisting of a common language, a common culture (often including a shared religion) and an ideology that stresses common ancestry or endogamy'. On the face of it, ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity or a feeling of belonging to a particular ethnic group.

George de Vos defines it as: 'Ethnicity is the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people...of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups'. According to Paul R. Brass, 'ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves, in addition to subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups. Ethnicity is to ethnic category what class consciousness is to class'.

**Formation of ethnic groups**

**Ethnic groups** are those groups that are composed of a distinctive and collective identity based on shared experiences and cultural traits. For the formation of an ethnic identity, a combination of factors, such as common descent, a socially relevant cultural/physical characteristics and a set of attitudes and behaviour patterns, is necessary.

Common descent, however, is the most significant factor. Apart from this, cultural attributes, such as religion, language, customs, social beliefs and practices, also play an important role. The members of an ethnic group must also share ideas, behaviour, patterns, feelings and meanings. Moreover, they should also perceive that they share a common destiny. Islamic movement in India, Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, Bangla nationalism in united Pakistan, etc. represent, for example, the formation of ethnic groups for attaining a common goal.

### Ethno-nationalism

Ethno-nationalism transcends the boundaries of state, religion, sect and class. It seeks to fragment established nationalities and communities and create new ones using ethnic indicators. The symbolic and cultural aspects of ethnicity are important in themselves and often get politicized for the promotion of collective interests. In India, you can easily find a number of such cases, such as undue pressure on the Centre by Tamil politicians to intervene in Sri Lankan ethnic disputes, emotional and financial support by Tamil Nadu for the Elam land in Sri Lanka, Pakistan's persistent interventions on the issue of minority, showcasing itself as a defender of Muslim minority in India; protest march against India in Pakistan on the name of atrocities on Muslims in India. These obsessions for own ethnic groups not only generate international discord within neighbouring states, but also ignite hostility within state boundaries.

### Ethnicity in India

As the representatives and the inheritors of the European Enlightenment, the British brought the idea of ethno-nationalism to India. It is, in fact, one of the ironies of British history that the British became political liberals at home and at the same time as they became imperialists abroad. British policy in India was forever haunted by this contradiction. While the British would not grant India full self-government until 1947, they were often concerned about being fair to different competing sections which, in their view, made up Indian society. They had identified sections of Indian society on the basis of religion and caste.

A census made of the population of Bombay in 1780, for instance, divided the population into 'socio-religious communities'. In the eighteenth century, British amateur historians often portrayed India as a society weakened by its internal religions and caste divisions. In later years, this perception was also shared by Indian nationalists themselves. If you see the modern trend in Indian politics, every issue is considered here on the basis of caste and religion. For example, the Corporate Affairs and Minority Ministers of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government at the Centre have already made a statement in favour of group representation system for the minorities. They have even advocated for separate minority reservation for the Muslims, which would be in addition to OBC reservation being already availed by 80 per cent of Indian Muslims.

Some states have already given separate reservation to Muslims on religious line, though the high courts have declared the decisions of the state governments void. However, seeing the political atmosphere of the country, almost all political

parties, barring the BJP and some of its allies (like Shiv Sena), are agreed to give the Muslims separate reservation on the basis of religion. The BJP and its allies are opposing it as they think it is unconstitutional and against the spirit of the Constituent Assembly.

Another issue which has become the central point of political debate in modern India is whether the Census of 2011 should include the caste count or not. It should be reminded here that caste and religion dominated the censuses undertaken by the British in India in the late 19th century and early 20th century to divide the Indian society on these lines so that they could rule forever. At every census, people were asked, in marked contrast to what the British did at home, to state their religion and caste.

Counting Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and untouchables became a critical political exercise, particularly in the 20th century, as the British began to include Indian representatives in the country's legislative bodies in very measured doses. What made the census operations critical was that, in trying to be fair referees, the British made the process of political representation 'communal'. Seats in the legislative assemblies were earmarked for different communities according to ideas of proportionality. By the 1890s, Hindu and Muslim leaders were quoting Census figures to prove whether or not they had received their legitimate share of benefits (such as employment and education) from British rule.

The rise of modern caste consciousness shows a similar concern for the measurement of 'progresses' in public life. The famous anti-Brahmin 'manifesto', produced in Madras in 1916 by the members of the non-Brahmin castes, of a new political party owed its rhetorical force to the statistics that the government had collected to demonstrate a Brahmin monopoly of the civil service.

If we try to interrelate the present-day Indian politics with that of the British politics, we do not find much difference. Every politician of Indian state is calculating his arithmetic on the religious lines and caste combinations. Developmental plank has taken a back seat and ethnic issues have become prominent. For example, the Mandal politics of the 1990s and the demand for reservation for OBCs were based on caste calculations made by the British in 1931. Sidelining Brahmin from Tamil politics and openly advocating for the removal of this caste from Tamil Nadu is another glaring example of ethnic cleavage in Indian politics.

### Approaches to Ethno-Nationalism

There are two main approaches to understand the new ethnic phenomenon. The first is primordial approach to ethnic identities and ethnicity, which considers descent as the more important factor. This is because primordial loyalties can be activated more easily than rational principles and organizations founded upon them. The second approach is known as situational, subjectivist or instrumental approach.

According to this approach, what actually matters is people's definition of themselves as culturally and physically different from others. Their shared descent, according to Cohen, is secondary and, if required may be manipulated and manufactured. Thus, ethnicity is flexible, adaptable and capable of taking different

form meanings depending on the situation and perception of advantage. These contending approaches are an aid to the explication of issues and to the understanding of contemporary reality.

Ethno-nationalism poses a big threat to a state without a common ethnicity or a shared identity and culture. Almost in all the *pluralistic* societies, the problem of ethno-nationalism is likely to pose a threat to the unity and integrity of the state.

### Sources of conflict

There have been numerous attempts to explain the causes of the ethnic wars. One theory focuses on the role of mass passion or ancient hatred in driving ethnic violence. A second theory suggests that inter-ethnic security dilemmas are necessary for ethnic war to result. In other words, the fear of ethnic groups that their interests are threatened may cause them to fiercely protect their interests. A third approach blames ethnic war on manipulation by belligerent leaders. However, scholars agree that all the three factors—hostile masses, belligerent leaders and inter-ethnic security dilemmas—are essential for an ethnic war to result.

In fact, these factors are mutually reinforcing; belligerent leaders stir up mass hostility, hostile masses prop up belligerent leaders and both together intimidate other groups creating a security dilemma (a fear of extinction) among them. This may lead to a conflict for survival or even domination among different ethnic groups.

It is important to note that any ethno-national conflict cannot be attributed to a single cause. Rather, there is a combination of factors which are responsible for rise of ethno-national conflicts. These can be ethnically defined grievances, demographic threats, histories of ethnic domination, reciprocal fears of group extinction, and political anarchy.

Almost all these factors are present in India's severe ethnic movements, such as the movement in Jammu and Kashmir at the time of Partition, demand for greater Nagaland, Assam agitation, and so on. Over the years, numerous ethnic movements have confronted with India's multicultural democracy. India thus provides a laboratory for the study of such movements.

The various sources of ethno-national conflicts are discussed below.

### Migration factor

The cause of ethno-national conflict can be understood as the factors threatening the sacredly preserved and maintained cultural identity of the certain ethnic groups. The demographic and cultural transition of Delhi provides the best case study.

The population of Delhi was significantly altered by the Partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947. This Partition entailed a massive transfer of population—with the Hindus and Sikhs of Western Punjab, Sind and North-West Frontier coming over to India, and the Muslims in East Punjab, Central India and elsewhere in the subcontinent migrating to Pakistan.

While the rest of India were celebrating with their midnight tryst with destiny, Punjab in the north-west and Bengal in the east were torn apart by communal bloodshed, pillage and violence.

A large number of refugees from West Punjab slowly found their way to Delhi. The population underwent a dramatic increase on account of the influx of refugees from Punjab. From 9,17,939 in 1941, the population of Delhi soared to 17,44,072 in 1951, an increase of about ninety per cent.

It needs to be noted that the Muslim population declined dramatically in Delhi during the same period. From 30,34,971 in 1941, the number of Muslims came down to 99,501 in 1951 (Census of India, 1951). Migration on a large scale strengthens the group identity and mobilizes the groups to promote their interests. Today, the politics of Delhi is marked with all these incidents.

### Economic factor

Economic condition is perhaps the most important source of ethno-national conflict. Uneven development of the regions of a state and the economic discrimination perpetuated by the state itself are the two main economic factors for occurrence of ethno-national conflicts. The uneven economic development may further lead to the following two situations:

- If an ethnic group becomes economically prosperous, it may regard other ethnic groups which are comparatively backward as 'liabilities', and hence may try to restrain or get rid of the latter.

- If a particular ethnic group's economic backwardness continues to exist, it may blame the other ethnic groups for its economic plight.

In both these cases, the hatred may develop into an ethnic conflict. Anti-'outsiders' violence in Maharashtra and Assam are the examples of ethno-national conflicts due to economic reasons.

### Demand for Separate Electoral System

The sense of a separate identity and grievances that result from imperial conquest and colonial rule can persist for many generations and provide the fuel for contemporary ethno-national movements.

In British India, Muslims were given countrywide separate electorates, in which only Muslims could be the electors and the elected. They were to be distinguished from general electorates, where others voted and fought for elective office. This institutional innovation, introduced by the British, was ostensibly aimed at answering the concerns of Muslim leaders, who had argued that, if a typical liberal polity were allowed to exist in India, the Muslim minority would be overwhelmed by the Hindu majority.

With franchise expansion after 1919, separate electorates became increasingly relevant to the polity, and instead of peace resulting from such institutional engineering, Hindu-Muslim riots continued to erupt. Riots, however, were not evenly spread. Some towns and regions continued to be the centre of violence, even though separate electorates were instituted all over British India. Even today, demand for a separate electorate for minorities is being made in India, provoking the sentiments of majority.

**Population Pressures**

It refers to ethnic location, territory and environment which shape inter-group perceptions, competition and conflict and is related to the following three factors:

  (i)  Settlement pattern of the groups

 (ii)  Groups' attachment to the land

(iii)  Relationship between ethnic groups and their physical settings, respectively

When the Shiv Sena, for example, calumniated the South Indians, particularly in the years 1966-69, the nation-state was not in focus. It was simply a dispute between natives and migrants. However, the theme of the nation-state was only a few steps away. The Shiv Sena defined its home ground as Bombay, though making it clear that such a definition was not antagonistic to its loyalty to the nation-state. In fact, the Shiv Sena argued that it was the patriotic duty of all Indians to protect Maharashtrians on the following two grounds:

 (a)  It was manifestly unfair that 'outsiders' from the south should undermine Maharashtrian 'natives' in Bombay the capital of their own province.

 (b)  Maharashtrians deserve all the help they can get on account of being exceptional Indians.

While one section of the Shiv Sena ideology was nativist as it identified the south Indians as 'outsiders' to Maharashtra, the other section was ethnic as it vigorously castigated these aliens in Bombay for lacking in patriotic sentiments towards India as a whole.

## Complex of the Ethnic Minorities

In a multi-ethnic state, the ethnic minorities suffer from a fear complex. Under this fear, the smaller ethnic groups consider the dominant or the largest ethnic group as ruler. It is interesting to note that the combined population of smaller ethnic groups may be more than the largest group. But the smaller groups consider themselves as minorities and may complain about their suppression by the largest group.

Sikh nationalism is a typical example. Punjab is one of India's most prosperous states—the home of the Green Revolution. Sikhs constitute about half of its population (the other half being Hindus). Sikh nationalism was a powerful political force in the state throughout the 1980s. It demanded a greater political and economic control within the Indian federation, secession from India and the creation of a sovereign state of Khalistan.

## Principle of Self-Determination

According to *Encyclopedia*, self-determination is the principle in international law that nations have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no external compulsion or external interference. Today, the principle of self-determination is being frequently propagated for acquiring a sovereign independent nation-state for an ethnic group.

We may define self-determination as a means to fragment an existing nation-state. It is interesting to know that the newly independent states created on the basis

of self-determination are not essentially democratic countries. There may not be equal rights to minority ethnic groups, which sow the seeds for ethnic clashes in future.

Take, for example, the case of Pakistan which separated from India on the basis of two-nation theory. According to this theory, the Hindu and Muslim population of pre-Independence India constituted two different nations and could not stay together. Pakistan, which was formed with the objective of establishing a homeland for Muslims in South Asia, today has comparatively fewer number of Muslims than India. In 1971, a large portion of Bengali Muslims had succeeded from Pakistan. Sometimes, the ethnic groups may just demand more autonomy within the boundaries of the state.

## Implications of Ethno-National Conflicts

We have already seen that the ethno-national conflicts may have dangerous repercussions on India's integration. The implications of ethno-national conflicts may be summarized as follows:

- **Disturbance to national peace and security:** Ethno-national conflicts disturb the national peace and security to a great extent. The ethnic groups normally opt for large-scale terrorism and war, causing deaths and destruction on a large scale. Separation demand in Kashmir, Kuki-Methi struggle in Manipur, killing of Biharis and Bengalis in Assam are some typical examples.

- **Destabilization to pluralistic societies:** Ethno-national conflicts can destabilize any pluralistic society, as it makes all other ethnic groups conscious of their ethnic identity and the need to get along for promoting their exclusive interests.

  Once an ethnic group consolidates itself, it aims to suppress other ethnic groups. Riots in different parts of the country or demand for Indianization of Indian minority in the post-Babri Masjid demolition period are some burning examples.

- **Threat to the sanctity of the nation-state system:** Ethno-national conflicts pose a grave threat to the sanctity of the nation-state system.

- **Large-scale refugee problem:** Ethno-national conflicts may lead to a large-scale refugee problem, as refugees fall prey to severe ethnic hatred and suppression and are left with no other option but flee to safer areas.

- **Halt to the development process:** Ethno-national conflicts not only halt the development process but even put it off track as much of the power and resources of state and international agencies are spent to curb these uprisings.

- **Disturbances in the regional power balance:** There is interference of external powers in almost all the major ethnic conflicts. This disturbs the regional power balance and also threatens the security of those countries which are the neighbours of the strife-torn state.

India's repeated encounters with ethnic violence of all kinds—religious, linguistic and caste—and its equally frequent returns to normalcy have a great deal

to do with the self-regulation that its largely integrated and cross-cutting civil society provides.

Local structures of resistance and recuperation as well as local knowledge about how to fix ethnic relations have ensured that even the worst moments, such as 1947-48 and 1992-93, have not been able to convert the country into ethnic warfare. India cannot become a Rwanda, Burundi or a Yugoslavia unless the state, in the event of a protracted external war, decides to smother all autonomous spaces of citizen activity and organization.

### 4.4.2  Social Inequality and Exclusion

The existence of certain dissimilarities between the two units, things, individuals or groups causes difference. It does not mean that one group or individual is superior to the other, that is, it does not imply ranking or inequality. For instance, potters are different from carpenters, but they depend on one another for their needs of the respective products.

### Social Difference

The differences among individuals on the basis of social characteristics and qualities are known as social differences. The concept of 'social stratification' is very broad and it is possible to include under its ambit all types of 'differences', such as age, health and religion.

However, social stratification based on gender or race is substantially different from social stratification based on age as the latter encompasses all people and creates spaces for everyone who occupy them at different stages of their lives. Social difference also involves assigning of tasks and responsibilities after taking into account the existence of differences.

### Social Inequality

The term 'social inequality' means unequal distribution of privileges and resources in the society whereby some people possess more wealth, power and privileges than the rest of the people in the society. In most of these societies, people live with pre-existing notions of unequal power, status and economic resources. Those who are privileged with more money, power and superior social status continue to have greater accessibility to resources. For example, going to school, getting a university degree, receiving technical and professional education that leads to better-paid jobs. Therefore, anyone who cannot afford this kind of education will be in a disadvantageous situation.

Social stratification is a particular form of inequality that refers to hierarchy. It means that the members of a society are assigned high and low ranks in various social groups; where weightage is given on the magnitude of power, prestige and wealth. Social inequality comprises both the vertical and horizontal division of a society; but social stratification only signifies the vertical division of a society.

The people belonging to a 'strata' form a group and they have common interest and a common identity. The people of a strata have some awareness of 'consciousness of kind'; and share a similar way of life which distinguishes them from the people of other strata.

Form and intensity may differ, but the perennial issue of 'social inequality' is a common feature of all world communities. We can say that the prevalence of 'inequality' is a part of human existence.

Ralf Dahrendorf distinguishes between inequalities of natural capabilities and those of social positions, between inequalities that do not involve evaluative rank-order and those that do. Of these two pairs of distinctions, Dahrendorf works out four types of inequalities:

   (i) Natural differences of kind

  (ii) Natural differences of rank

 (iii) Social differentiation of positions

 (iv) Social stratification based on reputation and wealth

In all four types, 'individual' is evidently the focal point of status evaluation. Such a conception of social inequality built on distribution of property, wealth, honour and power among individual members would imply a certain ideological basis and a structural arrangement of people based upon those inegalitarian and institutionalized norms. Social inequality is found in the division of labour, differentiation of roles, and even differential evaluation of different tasks and roles assigned to taken up by the members of a society.

It is to be remembered that social inequality is not monolithic, especially in the context of caste. Also, a continuous structuring and restructuring takes place in social inequality.

Inequality is a relational phenomenon, that is, it is not to be seen in an absolute sense. For instance, in a family, the members may be unequal on the basis of kinship-based statuses, but they are equal as members of an intimate primary primordial unit.

Also, a family structure differs from that of a formal organization. Even when there is unequal distribution of work or assignment of duties and responsibilities, members in a family are treated as equal. Thus, to evaluate social inequality in India on the basis of Western industrial society would be inappropriate, since this would undermine the role of social structure, culture, history and dialectics in India.

### 4.4.3  Political Participation

The concept of political participation has been popularized in political science by the behaviouralists. Of course arguments in favour of greater political participation had been advanced by republican and democratic theorists from Rousseau onwards and are still in use by contemporary political theorists.

The behaviouralist paradigm rides on a liberal view of politics. Classically, such a view draws a distinction between state and individual on the one hand and public and private on the other. It also tends to lean on the side of the latter categories. Accordingly, when participation is seen as an attitude, it is taken as an individual's favourable orientation to the state or government. That was the basis on which Americans were seen as having a 'participant political culture'.

The systematic use of culture and political culture as a social science concept dates only from 1950s. Here, the political culture is seen as a shorthand expression to denote the set of values within which a political system operates. It is something between the state of public opinion and an individual's personality characteristics.

According to Gabriel Almond, it is the 'particular pattern of orientations' to political objects in which a political system is embedded. Orientations are predisposition to political action and are determined by such factors as tradition, historical memories, motives, norms, emotions and symbols. The culture, therefore, represents a set of propensities.

These orientations may be broken down into cognitive orientations (knowledge and awareness of the political effects), affective orientations (emotions and feelings about the objects) and evaluative orientations (judgment about them). Almond (with Verba) later developed a typology of ideal political cultures or citizen types. Where most people are oriented to the input processes and see themselves as able to make demands and help to shape policies, the political culture is participant; the British, American and Scandinavian political systems best represent this ideal.

Similarly, government as the point of reference of individual's activity becomes the feature of political participation as an activity. Thus writes Birch:

> Political participation is participation in the process of government, and the case for political participation is essentially a case for substantial number of private citizens (as distinct from public officials or elected politicians) to play a part in the process by which leaders are chosen and /or government policies are shaped and implemented.

The communitarians find problem with this liberal concept of participation because of its 'individualism' and government as the locus of participation. They argue that more important than participation in the process of government through the 'politics of right' is participation at community level for 'politics of common good'.

It is further argued that more important than participation in the process of government is exercise of autonomy which can be developed and exercised in a certain kind of social environment, an autonomy-supporting community, not a government. Thus, political participation can be seen broadly as participation in the political life of the community or civil society with different agents and levels of participation, such as running a community health club by a religious group or participating in a NGO sponsored campaign for literacy.

Following the same logic political participation may be for serving political obligation of a democratic citizen to lead a participatory social life and just not for the civil obligation to the government on the question of law and order. Wider political participation must include some degree of democratic control either over or within large-scale economic enterprises, decentralization of government to smaller units, such as region or locality, and considerable use of referenda.

The concept of political participation accommodates the following main forms of political participation:

- Voting in local or national elections

- Voting in referendums

- Canvassing or otherwise campaigning in elections

- Active membership of a political party

- Active membership of a pressure group;taking part in political demonstrations, industrial strikes with political objectives, rent strikes in public housing, and similar activities aimed at changing public policy

- Various forms of civil disobedience, such as refusing to pay taxes or obey a conscription order

- Membership of government advisory committees

- Membership of consumers' councils for publicly owned industries

- Client involvement in the implementation of social policies

- Various forms of community action, such as those concerned with housing or environmental issues in the locality

If we take into account the broad concept of political participation, we can probably increase the list by adding such forms as:

- Performing social duties such as jury service and military duties

- Town/village meetings and public debate on controversial issues

- Various forms of co-determination, such as student-faculty committees in the universities and government advisory committees

- Shared project management involving full-scale partnership, delegation or empowerment such as benefit-sharing arrangements or developmental projects

- New social movements seeking and promoting personal and collective identity, such as

- Women's movement and movements for ethno-cultural identities

- Taking part in political demonstrations, industrial strikes with political objectives, rent strikes in public housing, and similar activities aimed at changing public policy

- Various forms of civil disobedience, such as refusing to pay taxes or obey a conscription order

On the whole there are several levels and forms at which and through which people may participate politically, as involved objects of a process of economic and political transformation set in motion by someone else, as expected beneficiaries of a programme with pre-set parameters, as politically co-opted legitimisers of a policy, or as people trying to determine their own choices and direction independent of the state.

**Political Participation, Democracy, and Political Party**

Howsoever the forms of political participation are conceived, political participation represents a political action and naturally involves many social agents that act within

definite structural parameters. The structures may be conceived as embedded structures, relational structures and institutional structures.

Political party is only one of so many social agents associated with or responsible for political participation. There are other agents such as voluntary organizations, institutional groups and socio-cultural communities. The roles of these agents for political participation are influenced by the nature of variations in the structural arrangements. The relative significance of political party as an agent in relation to other agents is also influenced by such structural arrangements, as is the nature of political participation through the agency of political party.

That historically embedded structures affect the form and nature of political participation is obvious. For instance, the emergence of such parties as Jan Sangh or the Muslim League in modern India could easily be linked with the concretisation of fuzzy communal consciousness during the British colonial rule, which, for the first time, introduced census and mapping in India.

As examples of the influence of relational structures on political parties, one may refer to the caste conflict in Indian society or agrarian relations, the former explaining rise of caste based parties like Justice party or B. S. P. and the other parties like the Lok Dal. From this angle, the political parties ensure participation of different structurally articulated interests and ideologies.

How the political parties ensure political participation also depends on the nature of the institutional structure. The nature of participation through political parties, for example, varies according to the nature of the political system. In a few modern dictatorships such as Hitler's Germany, mass membership in a ruling party was encouraged as a way of mobilizing support for government policies.

Again, the institutional arrangements such as the electoral systems in a democracy influence the participating role of political parties. The world of electoral systems has been divided into three main families—plurality-majority systems, proportional representation (PR) systems, and semi-PR systems.

First-past-the-post (FPTP) system under which candidates are chosen from single member districts, tends to handicap third parties, and by doing this it helps to produce two-party system. It tends to do this if the support of the winning party spreads evenly across the electoral districts. For example, a party with fifty-two per cent of votes may win sixty per cent of the seats.

Naturally, in such a situation, the political parties become limited agents of political participation. The usual outcome of PR is a multi-party system and therefore offers the voters greater freedom of choice but tends to make the government less effective as the majority coalitions, in the absence of amplified majority of FPTP become highly unstable.

However, it would be wrong to suppose that the nature of the party-system is rigidly determined by the nature of the electoral systems. The embedded structures and relational structures have significant effect on the institutional structure in general.

Take the case of India. Here we have had regular elections every five years both at national and state levels. If we want to judge the level and nature of political

participation in purely institutional terms, we would count number of parties, voters' turnout, election results, number of candidates and so on with the idea that more the number, greater is the participation.

However, we would miss out the massive level of political participation by party workers and non-voters to the extent we fail to recognize that elections in India is a political festival where participation is more a peaceful demonstration of public will than an exercise of individual's rational calculation that involves every stage of election: getting a ticket, the campaign, and marking the ballot.

Here, we have a FPTP system. But, there have been wide social and regional variations in India. When the support for the Indian National Congress evenly spread across the country, the Party got the benefit of amplified seats. But, whenever the social and regional variations were mobilized by new parties, inter-district variations in electoral support reduced that benefit and made way for a somewhat multi-party system.

The federal structure, with its system of state level elections, aided that process. We would discuss the significance of this change for political participation in subsequent section. But, before that it may be of interest to have some idea about the value of political participation in a democracy.

Any observer of Indian political scene would not miss the tremendous growth of political parties in power. This growth has taken place both at the national and state levels. This growth has been fueled by fragmentation of existing parties in terms of vote share, seat share and evolution of electoral alliances at both the national and state levels; the emergence of new political parties like BJP, BSP, and new coalitions of parties like the NDA.

A long range overview of the Congress Party reveals an increasingly narrowing scope of political participation at within-party level as well as widening political participation outside. Before the transfer of power, Congress was synonymous with the nationalist movement and represented a mass wave by including within its fold different political groups such as the communists and the socialists.

This ensured a truly broad based political participation by the Indian masses because the objective of the nationalist movement was an abstract one of Independence. Some restriction of the participatory role of the Congress party took place between 1946-1950 when the party changed from the earlier one that fought for independence. With the knowledge that after the Second World War, independence was forthcoming certain realignments started taking place within Congress.

Several secession took place from the congress involving the Communists, Muslim separatists, and the socialists as a result of which within-party participation got somewhat restricted. The most influential account of congress organization after independence was given by Rajni Kothari in his *Politics in India* (1970).

He presented it as a differentiated system in which the different levels of party organization were linked with the parallel structure of government, allowing for the dominance of a political centre as well as dissent from the peripheries, with opposition functioning as dissident congress groups. Kothari gave it the simple name 'Congress system'.

This ensured political participation, mainly through factional conflicts. On this, Brass writes: Factions contested for control of the important committees at each level through formal elections preceded by membership drives in which competing faction leaders attempted to enroll, even if only on paper, as many member-supporters as possible.

Although conflicts which developed often became intense and bitter and were accompanied by frequent charges of 'bogus enrollments', they also served to keep the party organization alive and to compel party leaders to build support in the districts and localities throughout the country. The 1967 elections marked the trend of political fragmentation sharply.

The Congress vote was dropped by almost five per cent. It had managed to win only fifty-four per cent of the seats. Earlier in the previous parliament it had seventy-four per cent of the seats. In many states it failed to win a majority. In as many as nine states—Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Madras and Kerala—there came non-Congress governments.

Within the party also conflict grew between the Syndicate and Indira Gandhi leading to a split in 1969. The newly formed Congress derived its identity from its leader in real terms. Elections within the party were stopped. Chief Ministers were appointed by the central high command.

The massive electoral victory of the party in 1971 further increased political centralization that culminated into the Emergency in 1975. The popular reaction against this was a landmark in terms of political participation. It brought for the first time a non-Congress coalition government, the Janata government, at the centre. The Congress took the opportunity of coming back to power in 1980 against a divided opposition.

The eighth general election took place in December 1984 in the shadow of Indira Gandhi's assassination and brought Rajiv Gandhi into power as the leader of the Congress (I). This did not alter the trend of political centralisation within the party. Growing political dissention in the country and controversies of Bofors kickback formed the background of 1989 general elections.

The Congress (I) was defeated, securing only 197 seats in the Lok Sabha. The National Front, though it could not win a majority, formed the government with V. P. Singh as Prime Minister with the outside support of the BJP and the Left parties. That government lasted only a year and paved the way for the Chandrasekhar government with Congress-I support that was quickly withdrawn and the ninth Lok Sabha was dissolved less than a year and a half after its formation.

Halfway through the general elections, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated and Congress (I) recovered its position somewhat due to sympathetic and favourable electoral support. Even then, it failed to win a majority and became the single largest party with 232 seats. P. V. Narasimha Rao, elected leader of the party, was appointed Prime Minister.

The Rao regime eventually secured majority by winning over the Ajit Singh faction of the Janata Dal. But, the party failed to regain its organizational strength

and was set in a path of steady decline which culminated in its removal from power after 1996 elections when BJP emerged as the single largest party but short of majority, and various regional parties like Telugu Desam Party, the DMK, the AGP and Janata Dal, the breakaway Congress group in Tamil Nadu, led by G. K. Moopanar and the Left parties came together to form a bloc—NFLF bloc, now known as the United Front.

However, with President S. D. Sharma deciding to invite A. B. Vajpayee of the BJP to form government despite Congress (I) support to the United Front, he formed the government but only for seven days. H. D. Deve Gowda of the Janata Dal next formed the United Front government with Congress(I) support where for the first time in history a left party—the CPI—joined a government at the centre.

In 1996, BJP forged alliances with the Shiv Sena. In 1998, it strengthened its alliances by a soft Hindutva image and became attractive as a partner for a regional or state based party opposed to the Congress or congress-allied regional rival (Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Haryana, Orissa) or to a Congress faction (Trinamool Congress) vs. major regional party (West Bengal). It managed to adopt a national agenda and win post election allies (Chautala's Haryana Lok Dal) and external supporters (TDP, NC) for coalition government at the centre.

The Congress failed to return to power as BJP managed to sustain and expand the same coalition, formally called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), adding the TDP, Goa's MGP, and the Patel faction of the Karnataka Janata Dal, switching partners in Tamil Nadu and Haryana. The above trends showing the decline of the Congress and rise of new contenders for power at the central level make it clear that a pattern of fragmentation of the party system has been taking place together with electoral alliances, adding to competitiveness of the party system and participation of increasing number of parties in power, towards a loose bipolarity at the national level.

The above trend has not been limited to the national level only, but has also affected the states for the general elections between 1967-1989. The phenomena of consolidation of non-Congress vote (Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh), Congress-led alliances of state based minor parties (Kerala, Tripura), a left-front coalition versus Congress (West Bengal) and so on could be seen.

The same could be seen for State Assembly elections. Here, position of the Congress party eroded even more than for parliamentary elections, and the consolidation of principal challenger parties or alliances at the state level was marked. The process of alliance formation has been complex and multidimensional at state level, but, it could be noted that they were driven less by ideological considerations or social divisions and more by the imperative to aggregate votes.

On the whole, it could be argued that as agents, political parties in India have not only multiplied, but also have also been participating more effectively in the sharing and management of power.

## Political Participation and the Indian Democracy

There has been an upsurge in political participation in India with increasing competitiveness of the political parties, increased voter turnout, emergence of new forms of participation such as new social movements, institutions of grassroots politics, local level democracy and political assertions of the historically disadvantaged castes and ethno-regional groups.

Apparently, this represents a healthy trend towards further deepening of Indian democracy. Do we have a participant culture now in India? Though higher political mobilization and higher electoral participation do not by themselves contribute to a participant culture, there has been a significant change of popular orientation from dependence on regular administration and traditional authority-symbols of society to people's representatives in everyday life, whether for certificates, aids or arbitration.

But this upsurge in participation needs to be understood in the complexity of the Indian process of democratization. It is doubtful as to how much space has been created for a rational individual who exercises his/her sovereign power of citizenship in the electoral arena. This doubt arises not from the non-fulfillment of basic requirements of procedural democracy like Universal Adult Franchise, rule of law and fundamental rights but from constraints on meaningful rational participation of the individual in democratic process.

First, with numerous small parties that are not properly institutionalized and under total control of charismatic leaders, and some big parties showing no interest in promoting institutionalization, the individuals participate with severe constraints because parties are still in the centre of Indian democratic process.

Second, several developments tend to constrain voters' right in recent years, such as the aborted attempt to make the qualifications and holdings of the election-candidates transparent, increasing use of electronic voting machines which make it impossible for a voter to 'waste' his or her vote and thereby express disapproval about the candidates.

Third, instead of social cleavages being neutralized by political cleavages, the latter tend to be grafted on the former in India due to unprincipled mobilization leading to a 'crisis of governance'. This type of mobilization and politicization of masses by parties may have made Indian democracy not more deepening but 'more inclusive'.

But, the trouble with this inclusiveness is that the terms of inclusion are not always inclusive or modern but often exclusive, promoting a step furthering the 'effective creolisation of the modern ideas, ideals and institutions of democratic politics in a non-European setting'.

Finally, the institutional space for non-electoral modes of efficacious political activity has not grown to a degree found in European settings. On the whole, however, political parties have proved to be the most effective agents of political participation in India. Indian democratic experience has witnessed new forms of political participation in recent years and a rise in the quantity of political participation, though the exact nature and significance of that for Indian democracy can be disputed.

## Increased Voter Turnout

Relevant to the study of political participation in India is the fact that voter turnout in India has been steadily rising. In the first general election it was 47.5 and in the 1999 elections the turnout was 59.5.

In a sense, the increasingly competitive party system is a product of the rise and assertion of regional and state based parties. However, to overstretch this point would mean an uncritical acceptance of the social cleavage theory of party systems. In a study on Congress, some alignments of party organizations were found to be associated with acute social divisions. Congress was found not to be a heterogeneous national party, but a coalition of state (and ultimately local) groups whose political rationale are the divisions and conflicts of the state and community in question.

However, equally important is the geographical specificity of inter group conflicts. The political significance of group conflicts varies from state to state, to the extent there is variation in the strength of the link between social groups and the parties. In different ways, the characterization of Indian democracy as 'consociational', and 'adversarial' admit that through political party competition, the social divisions of a deeply divided society get expressed.

A case to the point is the political assertion of the historically disadvantaged castes in the 1990's. Almost together with the acceptance of the Mandal Commission's recommendations, recent years have witnessed the emergence of the Dalit-Bahujan castes, often trying to encompass the Muslim minority in its fold. A phenomenal increase in caste based parties since the old Justice Party to the point that social pluralism in India gets increasingly reflected in the competitive party system which serves as the agent of political participation.

That is to say that a given political party, while acting as the agent of political participation, often shows internal pluralism in its organization. In a recent study of Dravidian parties, Narendra Subramanian demonstrates that the internal pluralism of parties, and not simply social pluralism, promotes greater representation and participation of emergent groups, the reconstruction of public culture and tolerance. This does not, of course, mean that in India all parties show equal amount of organizational or internal pluralism.

The social nature of the increased voter's turnout has not followed many clear patterns. The turnout among men has always been higher than women but the participation rate has improved faster among women than among men. Female turnout increased twenty percentage points, from 38.8 per cent in 1975 to 57.3 per cent in 1989.

However, its has been noted that the involvement of women in politics is still largely separate from men. Both the number of women contestants and of representatives show a declining trend in parliamentary and assembly elections, though at local level, due to reservations, women's participation has increased.

Since the 1980s, there has been a proliferation of autonomous women's groups in most parts of the country and this has added a new social dimension to political participation in India. Voter turnout in urban areas was higher than in rural areas.

The state-wise turnout figures broadly indicate that turnout tends to be higher in the southern states, in particular, Kerala and West Bengal.

Yadav, however, notes that one of the characteristics of the new democratic upsurge has been that practically everywhere rural constituencies report a higher turnout. While Muslim turnout in Muslim concentrated constituencies and turnout in reserved (SC) constituencies were not higher than the past, the reserved (ST) constituencies recorded higher than average turnout in Andhra, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Similarly, some backward regions like Vidarbha and Marathwada in Maharashtra, and East Delhi and Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh. If the theory of new social constituency participating in Indian elections is not fully borne out, at least there is hardly any doubt that such a constituency is now more intensively mobilized by political parties wherever possible.

---

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. What is the cause of ethno-national conflict?

7. Why is one section of the Shiv Sena ideology called nativist?

8. What is meant by self-determination?

9. What are the kinds of ethnic violence that occur in India?

10. What is the difference between social inequality and social stratification?

---

## 4.5 SUMMARY

- The citizen was conceived as an autonomous agent capable of laying down laws and obeying them to achieve public harmony and justice. Rousseau's conception of the citizen was juridical, which was in tune with the 17th and 18th century European political thought.

- The modern conception of citizen and citizenship may be traced to the works of the thinkers of the Enlightenment like 18th-century Genevan philosopher writer and composer Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

- The liberal conception of citizenship is based on the idea that liberty of the individual citizen is secured when the State does not interfere in his private life.

- Notwithstanding these blemishes, republican citizenship, unlike liberalism, does not merely lay emphasis on freedom.

- Contemporary republicans challenge the primacy attributed to private life over that of the public. They argue that liberalism prioritizes individual rights while insufficiently fostering public virtues of citizenship.

- Votaries of pluralism have argued that citizenship cannot be restrained to rights or duties. This is because the citizen of a State could simultaneously be a member of various other communities as well. This view, which is often labeled as 'differentiated citizenship'.

- Originally, the idea of a welfare state was introduced by German Chancellor Prince Bismarck.

- His policy of 'state socialism' included a series of reforms, giving workers various forms of insurance which marked the beginning of the welfare state.

- An ideology that supports State control of all private property and major instruments of social production is known as communism.

- Socialist states plan and manage national economy, protect interests of the working class and uphold socialist laws.

- A socialist state can use its dedicated labour force to better agricultural and industrial productions, thereby improving the growth of consumer goods.

- Modern socialist states concentrate primarily on improving education, literature, art and education, thereby promoting the material and intellectual lives of the people.

- According to the Marxist perspective, socialist state is a state where capitalism has been replaced by communism with an emphasis on economic and social development.

- Scholars agree that all the three factors—hostile masses, belligerent leaders and inter-ethnic security dilemmas—are essential for an ethnic war to result.

- The cause of ethno-national conflict can be understood as the factors threatening the sacredly preserved and maintained cultural identity of the certain ethnic groups.

- Economic condition is perhaps the most important source of ethno-national conflict.

- In British India, Muslims were given countrywide separate electorates, in which only Muslims could be the electors and the elected.

- According to *Encyclopedia*, self-determination is the principle in international law that nations have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no external compulsion or external interference.

- According to this theory, the Hindu and Muslim population of pre-Independence India constituted two different nations and could not stay together.

- Pakistan, which was formed with the objective of establishing a homeland for Muslims in South Asia, today has comparatively fewer number of Muslims than India. In 1971, a large portion of Bengali Muslims had succeeded from Pakistan.

- The term 'social inequality' means unequal distribution of privileges and resources in the society whereby some people possess more wealth, power and privileges than the rest of the people in the society.

- Social inequality comprises both the vertical and horizontal division of a society; but social stratification only signifies the vertical division of a society.

- Inequality is a relational phenomenon, that is, it is not to be seen in an absolute sense. For instance, in a family, the members may be unequal on the basis of kinship-based statuses, but they are equal as members of an intimate primary primordial unit.

- The behaviouralist paradigm rides on a liberal view of politics. Classically, such a view draws a distinction between state and individual on the one hand and public and private on the other.

- Wider political participation must include some degree of democratic control either over or within large-scale economic enterprises, decentralization of government to smaller units, such as region or locality, and considerable use of referenda.

- Any observer of Indian political scene would not miss the tremendous growth of political parties in power. This growth has taken place both at the national and state levels.

- There has been an upsurge in political participation in India with increasing competitiveness of the political parties, increased voter turnout, emergence of new forms of participation such as new social movements, institutions of grassroots politics, local level democracy and political assertions of the historically disadvantaged castes and ethno-regional groups.

- Indian democratic experience has witnessed new forms of political participation in recent years and a rise in the quantity of political participation, though the exact nature and significance of that for Indian democracy can be disputed.

- The political significance of group conflicts varies from state to state, to the extent there is variation in the strength of the link between social groups and the parties.

- Since the 1980s, there has been a proliferation of autonomous women's groups in most parts of the country and this has added a new social dimension to political participation in India.

## 4.6 KEY TERMS

- **Votaries:** It refers to a person, such as a monk or nun, who has made vows of dedication to religious service.

- **Belligerent:** It means hostile and aggressive.

- **Castigated:** It means to reprimand (someone) severely.

- **Inegalitarian:** It is characterized by or promoting inequality between people.

- **Communitarians:** It refers to someone who follows communitarianism, which is a philosophy that emphasizes the connection between the individual and the community.

- **Concretization:** It means to make concrete, real, or particular; give tangible or definite form to something.

- **Creolization:** It is a process in which Creole cultures emerge in the New World.

## 4.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Isaiah Berlin identified two conceptions of liberty:
   - Positive liberty
   - Negative liberty

2. For sustaining the freedom of the individual and the community as well as for maintaining the rule of law, the citizens must practice civic virtue.

3. Republicanism believes in the intrinsic value of political participation as the highest form of human living.

4. People attain a higher standard of living and experience a holistic development in their lives with the help of sympathetic government policies.

5. A socialist state can use its dedicated labour force to better agricultural and industrial productions, thereby improving the growth of consumer goods.

6. The cause of ethno-national conflict can be understood as the factors threatening the sacredly preserved and maintained cultural identity of the certain ethnic groups.

7. One section of the Shiv Sena ideology was nativist as it identified the south Indians as 'outsiders' to Maharashtra.

8. According to *Encyclopedia*, self-determination is the principle in international law that nations have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no external compulsion or external interference.

9. India repeatedly encounters ethnic violence of all kinds, especially of religious, linguistic and caste.

10. Social inequality comprises both the vertical and horizontal division of a society; but social stratification only signifies the vertical division of a society.

## 4.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

**Short-Answer Questions**

1. List the various features of the welfare state.
2. Write a short note on the Marxist perspective of a socialist state.
3. How and why did the demand for separate electoral system arise in India?
4. What was the aim of the Shiv Sena in 1966-69 in India?
5. How does Ralf Dahrendorf explain the concept of inequality?
6. What are the various forms of political participation?

**Long-Answer Questions**

1. What is meant by liberal conception of citizenship? Briefly explain the concepts of republican citizenship and liberalism in India and other parts of the world.

2. Explain the economic condition as the source of ethno-national conflict.

3. Explain Gabriel Almond's 'pattern of orientations' in a political system.

4. How is a political party social agent associated with political participation? Give a brief explanation of the influence of relational structures on political parties in India.

5. Analyse and briefly explain the factors responsible for the increment in political participation in India over the past few years.

## 4.9 FURTHER READING

Oommen, T. K. 1990. *State and Society in India: Studies in Nation Building*. Berkeley: SAGE Publications.

Fuller, Christopher John. 2001. *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*. London: Hurst and Company.

Desai, A. R. 2000. *State and Society in India*. Hyderabad: Sangam Books Limited.

Sankhdher, M. M. 2003. Yogakshema: *The Indian Model of Welfare State*. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications.

Madan, G. R. 1984. *India's Social Transformation: Development Welfare and Planning*. Lucknow: Allied Publishers Limited.