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# UNIT 13 POLITY AND SOCIETY\*

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## 13.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define the concept of polity and the political system in society;
- define and distinguish between state nation and society;
- trace the emergence of the Indian nation state;
- describe the strategy and challenges involved in the task of nation building; and
- define national integration and discuss the forces threatening national integration.

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## 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit on Race and Ethnicity you learnt about what constitutes the concept of race and ethnicity and its different social and political connotations. Here in this unit on, **Polity and Society** we will attempt to explain to you the meaning of polity and its relationship with society. How the political system exists and distinguish between the concepts of nation, state and society. We have explained the emergence of India as a nation and the challenges that it faces in terms of national integration.

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## 13.2 DEFINING POLITY

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Polity and Society are interlinked with each other. All societies have some ways and means to organize its members on the basis of certain social, political, economic criteria. These could be based on age, or sex categories, on criteria of birth in a social group i.e. based on ascription, as in simple tribal societies or caste societies. Power and authority are two dimensions based on which polity or political relations of a certain kind are established. The political institution that exists in all societies is based on certain set of relationships which are formally established and which constitutes the political system.

### 13.2.1 Political System and its Components

We find that for establishing social relationships people interact with one another. In doing so, they very often pursue their self-interests. These self-interests sometimes run contrary to the interests of others as also to the interests of the society. To serve their own interests people use the means of power and they control the interests of others. This situation invariably leads to conflict. For maintaining an orderly arrangement of social relationships, we need to both resolve the conflict and coordinate diverse activities of people. This is generally done by exercising power and imposing some kinds of constraint on people's behaviour. When social relationships are organised around the dimension of power, we say that we now move from the general area of social interaction to a more specialised area of power relationships. When the power relationships are systematised and ascribed specific functions, we speak of them as a political system. Thus, political systems develop whenever the relationships among individual and groups are organised according to the exercise of power and its various manifestations. These might range from sporadic meetings of village elders in simple societies to highly organised states. In order to understand the specific manner in which power operates at the national level, it is appropriate for us to first understand the notion of power and its relation to the definition of political system in general. Then we can also look at its link with the specific case of nation-states.

### 13.2.2 The Notion of Power

The ability to do something or anything, or to act upon a person or things, is the definition of power as given in the dictionary. Viewed in this way, power is a basic concept in social sciences. It implies the influence that any person, group or organisation brings to bear on the actions of others. In this sense, anyone seeking to serve an interest by eliciting a response from others is described as exercising one's power. This means that one has social power, which can be used to make another person do what is wanted. This social power is essentially an aspect of inter-personal relationships.

Let us see what happens if we were to take the use of social power as a criterion to define the political system. This would imply that almost all human actions and interactions would fall in the domain of politics. This would be the widest possible definition of politics. The political scientists do not accept it. Let us see what they have to say.

**Delimiting the Domain of Politics:** The political scientists argue that this view of politics reduces it to the level of a very commonplace and broad subject. They therefore delimit the domain of politics and reserve the term politics' to designate the domain where social power is used in public sphere rather than in private sphere. Thus, for example, what happens within the family, in terms of power relations, is not included in the category of politics. When the family or its representative participates in the affairs of the neighbourhood or the village by influencing others' opinions and actions, it is described as politics. Viewed in this way, power and its various manifestations, such as, authority, coercion, force etc. are the recognised terms for discussing politics. **Concept of Authority:** For further delimiting the special field of political relations, it is useful to apply the concept of authority. It refers to the legitimacy of the use of power. When power relationships in the public domain become regularised, and therefore to some extent predictable, they are also closely guided by the appropriate norms. People acknowledge the right of the political authority to exercise power. This implies the existence of a clear system of acceptance of the political institutions through which the authority or the legitimate use of power is exercised. In other words, power becomes authority because the actors involved in this relationship accept (to a greater or lesser degree) the legitimacy of those issuing commands. They are not physically compelled to comply, they do so willingly. Such systematised political relations are generally referred to as political systems.

**More Restricted View of Politics:** Taking an even more restricted view of politics, sociologists, like Max Weber, confine the political relations to an organisation of individuals. For them, this organisation is to be territorially defined. Secondly it has to be based on the ultimate sanction of physical force. In other words, Max Weber is referring to the notion of state as it has emerged in the modern sense. For the purpose of describing political relations at the national level, we need to focus on this restricted meaning of politics.

But as sociologists, we should not forget that political relationships are also present in those societies, which do not have a specialised political institution like the state. In a large number of tribal societies, political authority is not based on territory. For example, the nomadic tribals like the Gujjar in India and the Roma or Gypsies in Europe have councils to regulate the behaviour of deviant members, to settle disputes, to provide social security to their members. Yet, they do not have a state.

Here, as we are dealing with political relations, at the national level, in a society which has a fully developed state, we need to discuss the concepts of state and nation. Only then we can proceed to follow the story of the emergence of nation-state in India.

### Check Your Progress I

- i) What are the two essential requirements for an orderly arrangement of social relationships? Use four lines for your answer.

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ii) What is a political system? Answer in five lines.

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iii) Define power and authority in the context of politics. Use five lines for your answer.

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iv) What do we mean when we say there is restricted view of politics? Use seven lines for your answer.

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### 13.3 STATE, NATION AND SOCIETY

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While discussing politics in modern times, we generally talk of the state, the nation and the society. In the context of Western European experience, the three terms are somewhat coterminous. This is not so in the case of many other places. It is, therefore, essential that we first define these terms.

- i) **State:** The state is a political association, which is characterised by
- a) territorial jurisdiction,
  - b) more or less non-voluntary membership
  - c) a set of rules which define the rights of its members by way of a constitution and
  - d) claims to legitimacy of power over its members.

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

- ii) **Nation:** The term refers to group of people who have developed solidarity on the basis of common identity of culture, religion, language and state etc.

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

- iii) **Society:** It is the broadest category of social organisation which includes a large number of social institutions, like kinship, family, economy and polity. In this sense, the term society refers to social relationships which are interlinked. In interacting with each other people form social relationships. Repeated and regularised patterns of social relationships become institutionalised and hence as a relational concept society includes the study of social institutions.

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

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

Having discussed the concepts of state, nation and society, we now turn to the nature of politics in Indian society. For this purpose, in the next section, we will discuss the emergence of Indian nation state. You may ask what is a nation state. A nation state refers to a state organised for governing a nation, or perhaps two or more closely related nations. The territory of such a nation is determined by national boundaries and its law is determined, at least in part, by national customs and expectations. In this sense, India can also be discussed as a nation state and to discuss the nature of its national politics, we must first look at the way in which the Indian nation state emerged.

**Check Your Progress II**

- i) What is a society? Use about five lines for your answer.

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- ii) What is a nation? Use about three lines for your answer.

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iii) What is a state? Use about three lines for your answer.

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## 13.4 EMERGENCE OF INDIAN NATION STATE

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Indian national politics is influenced by the historical experience of nation-building. This experience is marked by efforts to bring together a large number of social groups in a common national identity. The nature of national politics in the post-independence period can be easily grasped if we outline a brief sketch of the historical experience. Here, we first describe the situation in India before 1858, when there was a relative absence of the idea of nation. Then we look at the period of British rule when growth of nationalism took place in India.

### 13.4.1 Absence of the Idea of a Nation before 1858

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

This does not, however, mean that we had no Indian national identity. Even without a politically unified territory, many factors combined and gave the country an identity of oneness. Although people lived all their lives in villages, these villages were not as self-contained isolated islands as was made by some Western scholars. People moved for marriage, for pilgrimage and for trade. The religious beliefs, practices and institutions provided the people a unifying force (Kothari 1986). One example of the unity can be seen in the setting of four seats of religious authority in four corners of India by Adi Sankaracharya. We may thus see the awareness of commonality, however nebulous it may be. This awareness grew out of one's participation in the world which existed beyond one's immediate geographical area. This consciousness did not, however, get translated into the political domain and we had therefore no national identity in the sense in which we talk of it today. The identity of the commonality that we had before the British can perhaps be best expressed as a cultural identity as a nation and not as a political identity as a nation.

### 13.4.2 Growth of Nationalism in India

The establishment of the British rule, although it enslaved us, paradoxically also started a process of our liberation. It made us think of ourselves as not only a cultural unity but also as a political unity. The growth of nationalism can

be seen in the efforts made by Indians for removing the British rule from this country. Although we were always divided in numerous ways in terms of language, religion, ethnic composition, two factors facilitated the emergence of Indian nationalism.

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

The various struggles, violent, non-violent, constitutional, extra-constitutional against the British further unified the diverse groups in India. Thus, Nehru's well-known phrase 'unity in diversity' was not merely a cliché (cliché is a phrase made common by repetition), but a factual description of the Indian experience. Our purpose is, here, not to go into the details of the Indian national movement. Rather we need to discuss how our nation state came into being. For this purpose we shall in the next section describe how during the post-Independence period a modern nation state developed in India. We should also remember that the process of nation-building was not complete on attaining independence. It is, in fact, a continuing process and is reflected in the nature of politics. We can also say that it is a process of translating cultural identity into a political national identity. Let us now look at the nature of politics in independent India so that we can make out how this translation takes place.

### Activity 1

Read a book written by Mahatma Gandhi like *My Experiments with Truth* or by Jawaharlal Nehru like *The Discovery of India* or by any other leader of the national movement for independence. Look at what the author has to say about

- a) the attitude of the British towards the Indian leader's cause for freedom.
- b) the people who joined hands in freedom struggle (men/women from different regions, castes, classes and religions).
- c) the important events which marked the struggles for independence.

Make a two-page note on the above points and discuss, if possible, your note with the notes of other students in the study centre.

## 13.5 NATURE OF POLITICS IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

The major task for the independence movement was not merely to attain political independence from the British rule but also to develop a modern nation state. We can say that some definite steps in this direction were taken at the political level while others were at the economic level. We can discuss both types of strategies followed in India for nation-building.

### 13.5.1 Strategy at the Political Level

The political organisation, which was carrying out the activity of nation-building in India, was mainly the Indian National Congress Party. This political party consisted of diverse sections of population and activists, in some cases, with

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

**The Constitution:** The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, was the first attempt at nation-building. We have a written constitution, which is a comprehensive document. It provides the foundation or the design of the government. Let us see what this design is.

India has a federal government. A federal government in India implies that authority is divided between the centre and the states. The Constitution has established a parliamentary system of government at both the centre and the states. The word 'parliament' has different connotations, the important ones being that it is an assembly of representatives of the people and it is a body of persons gathered for discussion. In our context, parliament refers to the legislative organ of the government. The President is the constitutional head of the country and the council of ministers headed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the head of the executive which is responsible to the Lok Sabha. The parliament consists of the President and the two Houses, namely the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the House of the People (Lok Sabha).

In the states, the council of ministers is headed by the 'Chief Minister' who is responsible to the Legislative Assembly. Every state has a legislature. Some states have one House while others have two. Where there is one House it is known as the Legislative Assembly or *Vidhan Sabha* and where there are two Houses, one is called the legislative Council (*Vidhan Parishad*) and the other is known as Legislative Assembly (*Vidhan Sabha*). India is a parliamentary democracy and this means that the government is derived from public opinion. It requires political parties, rule by the majority and a responsible government through discussion. Figure 13.1 shows the different constituents of Indian national politics.

By way of building up a united nation state the Constitution of India also lays down, among other things, some "Fundamental Duties" of Indian citizens. Some of them are (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem, (b) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all people of India, (c) to protect natural environment, (d) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform, (e) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture and so on. Our Constitution not only provides fundamental rights to citizens but also gives directives to the state to provide the necessary economic, social and political benefits to the citizens. It goes to the credit of the leaders of the early phase of independent India, who were sensitive to the potential disruption of the Indian polity. Our national leaders believed that the Constitution of India would help to integrate the people into a united nation.

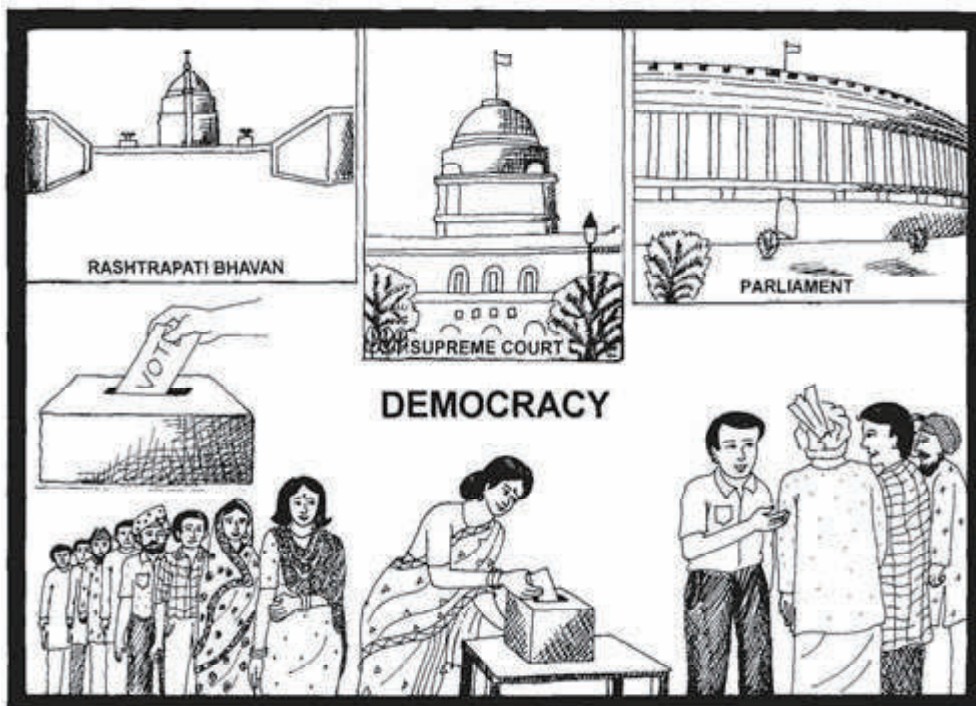


Fig. 13.1: National politics

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

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

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

### Check Your Progress III

i) What are the two factors, which have helped the emergence of Indian nationalism? Answer in four lines.

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- ii) Outline the attempts at nation-building at the political level? Use four lines for your answer.

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- iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

- a) The Members of the Indian National Congress Party at the time of attainment of independence were drawn from one caste mainly.
- b) A federal government denotes that authority is divided between the centre and the states.
- c) India is a parliamentary democracy.
- d) The parliament consists of the President and the two houses namely the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha.

### 13.5.2 Strategy at the Economic Level

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

The planning process is not merely an economic activity. It is also a political activity. The Planning Commission not only decides about which sector has to produce how much, it also allocates projects to various states. This is where political decisions have to be made. Let us take a concrete example. Suppose the government decides to establish a steel plant. It is not only in terms of the economic viability of location of a steel plant that a decision is made. The Commission takes into account the costs and benefits in economic terms and it also considers the decision in terms of possible offsetting regional imbalance in location of industries. Similarly, the balance has to be maintained between the various interest groups, which have emerged around different sectors of the economy. For this purpose, take the simple example of the use of electric power.

How much electricity should be made available to industry as against agriculture is a political decision. In the economic sphere, as in the social and political spheres, national politics has followed the policy of reconciling different interests and thereby avoiding conflicts to surface.

The Indian nation state not only concentrated on making available goods for distribution, but it also decided to follow the path of distributive justice. Distributive justice refers to achieving a fair and equal distribution of goods and services among all people. The intentions for distributive justice are clear in India's adoption of a socialist pattern of society. A socialist pattern of society denotes that people have equal opportunities and equal rights. The state as an administrative device guarantees individuals their rights. It distributes goods and services equally and fairly for the welfare of the people. It also strives for elimination of rigid systems of control. For example, private property is permissible in India, but only in so far as it does not amount to a system of control of the owner over another who does not own it. We can also find instances of distributive justice in many social legislations, such as the Industrial Disputes Act, which protects the rights of the industrial workers, or, the Untouchability Offences Act, which protects the untouchable castes from discrimination or the Hindu Marriage Act, which grants rights to Hindu women. Thus our nation-building efforts involve not only goals of development but also equality and social justice. The latest in terms of strategy at the economic level is adoption of the New Economic Policy of liberalisation of economy. About this step you have already read in Unit 12 and therefore we would now proceed to look at the factors, which have challenged our efforts for nation-building.

### 13.5.3 Forces which Challenge Nation-building Efforts

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

- i) The diversity of groups which constitute Indian society.
- ii) Regional and cultural identities.
- iii) Casteism.

Let us take a brief look at each of these forces.

- i) **Diversity of Constituents:** India is a heterogeneous society. It is made of a number of diverse groups. The first potential threat to the Indian nation state lies in this plurality. The Indian society was and is divided in terms of religion, caste, language and ethnic origin. The British were able to somewhat control the diverse groups by following the policy of pitting one group against the other. But the divisive tendencies were sharply manifested even during the nationalist movement when different groups apparently united to remove the British rule from India. One of the more serious challenges that Indian national leaders in India face even now is how to integrate the interests of the divergent groups. Each of them has its own distinctive aspirations, history, and way of life. Attempts to minimise confrontation between conflicting groups do not always succeed. As we have already seen, the adoption of an egalitarian model of society is one

important strategy to contain the divisive tendencies. It is, of course, necessary that these divisions are not allowed to threaten the nation state.

- ii) **Regional and Cultural Identities:** The task of nation-building has also faced a threat from regionalism. We find that national politics in our country is still marked by emergence of regional nationalities. This is quite evident in the formation of states on linguistic basis. It is also evident in demands by some regional identities such as the Gorkha for Gorkhaland and by some tribals for a separate Jharkhand state before November 2000. But there have been instances that the government of India conceded to such demands for a separate state. The agitation started by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha for a separate state impelled to establish the Jharkhand Area Autonomous council in 1995 and finally a full-fledged state in November 2000 (India 2003).

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

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

As a matter of fact, the national level politics has recognised the existence of regional and cultural identities and the central government has even provided legal sanctions. The Constitution of India recognised fifteen national languages till 1992. In 1992 through a Constitutional Amendment (71st Amendment) three more languages were added to the Eighth Schedule and making the list of national languages to 18. As on 2003 there are 18 national languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution (India 2003). It allows each state to carry out its administration in the regional language. It does not interfere in the religious, social and political activities of the minorities. To some people this may appear to provide special protection to the minorities. The number of people holding this view is not very small. But then there are others who consider protection of the rights of minorities as a major gain for the nation. This keeps the nation state together and forges a political unity.

- iii) **Casteism:** The issue of casteism in national politics has been discussed again and again by a number of people, public men, scholars and laymen alike. Caste is one of the more distinguishing institutions of Indian society. Its role in the political sphere is of recent origin. It is widely observed that caste has become the major basis for political articulation. This is so mainly because caste provides the mechanisms for bringing people together. This is also the requirement for a successful democratic state. By politicizing the institution of caste, political process in India has assumed a unique

character. Political parties in India are formed on the basis of caste alliances and voting behaviour of the Indian electorate can be described in terms of caste identity.

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

From what we have discussed so far, it is obvious that the task of building a nation state is not an easy exercise. A growing realisation is that national integration is the key to achieving a political identity. We shall in the next section discuss the concept of national integration.

**Check Your Progress IV**

i) What was the strategy at the economic level to build up a nation state? Use five lines for your answer.

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ii) What are the three main forces, which pose a challenge to nation building efforts? Use two lines for your answer.

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iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

- a) The politics of reconciliation involves efforts to harmonise the diverse interests of various groups in a national framework.
- b) In India each state does not have the right to carry out its administration in its own regional language.
- c) Caste is one of the important basis for political articulation.

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**13.6 NATIONAL INTEGRATION**

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National integration is a process of developing the different parts of the national social system into an integrated whole. In an integrated society, social institutions and values associated with them have a high degree of social acceptance.

However, linguism, communalism, social inequalities and regional disparities are some of the factors, which threaten the ideal of national integration in India, Let us look at each of them one by one.

- i) **Linguism:** India is a multi-linguistic nation. Language has become, specially since Independence, a powerful source of political articulation. For instance, in the South, particularly in Tamil Nadu, language sentiments have been propagated among the people for getting power within state politics.

The language problem has two aspects, namely (i) medium of instruction at the level of school, college and public service examinations, and (ii) meeting the demands of non-Hindi and Hindi-speaking radicals.

Responding to the first aspect, the Government of India decided to implement a three-language formula. This consists of (a) teaching the regional language, or mother-tongue when the latter is different from the regional language, (b) Hindi or another Indian language in the Hindi speaking area and (c) English or another modern European language. Today for the Union Public Service Commission in India examinations can be written in Hindi or English or in any regional language of the country.

Regarding the second aspect of the language problem, namely, demands of Hindi and non-Hindi speaking radicals, the Government of India passed the Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1967. This Act decided that English will continue to be the official language of the Indian union for all the non-Hindi speaking states until these states themselves would opt for Hindi (Kishore 1987: 41). Thus, Hindi is today only one of the official languages of the Indian Union. The provision made under the above mentioned Act and the three-language formula have helped to reduce the possibility of conflict on the basis of language.

- ii) **Communalism:** Broadly defined, communalism refers to the tendency of any socio-religious group to maximise its economic, political and social strength at the cost of other groups. This tendency runs counter to the notion of the secular nation state that India purports to be. Secularism in the Indian context is defined as the peaceful coexistence of all religions without state patronage to any of them. The state is to treat all of them equally. Yet, in a secular state like India, we very often hear, see and read about communal conflicts. While making conscious efforts towards the goals of democracy and socialism, the Indian nation state has not been free of communal clashes (Kishore 1987: 69).

### Activity 2

On the basis of the information you have gathered from newspapers, magazines, radio and TV about caste and politics note down the following facts.

- i) Caste composition of major political parties in your state  
ii) What role did the caste factor play in your state in the last Lok Sabha elections?

Describe the role of caste in terms of the issues raised in the election campaign.

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

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

iv) **Regional Disparities:** The unequal development of different regions of India has negatively affected the character of national integration. The unequal development has become the major cause of many social movements after the independence. For instance, the erstwhile Jharkhand movement, which involved tribal groups from Bihar, M.P, Bengal and Orissa, stressed the backwardness of the region among other issues. While demanding a separate state, people involved in this movement argued that the rich natural resources of the area have been drained out to benefit others. The dissatisfaction caused by the perceived and/or actual threat of material deprivation has led people to think that the socio-economic development of their region is not possible if they continue to be a part of the Indian Union. Finally the National Government conceded their demand for a separate state and the three new States of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh were formed in November 2000. The demand in the case of Jharkhand was for a State comprising of tribal areas of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. The new State was created encompassing only parts of Bihar State. The regional disparities in terms of socio-economic development have at times proved to be a threat to the concept of united nation state.

In brief, we can summarise this section by saying that various forces pose a challenge to national integration in India. The government and those concerned with the task of nation-building have utilised many strategies, like planned socio-economic development and expansion of education and mass communication and at times even reorganising the existing states to strengthen and promote the concept of national integration.

**Check Your Progress V**

i) What is national integration? Use four lines for your answer.

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ii) What are the factors which threaten the ideal of national integration in India? Use four lines for your answer.

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iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

- a) The three language formula was adopted by way of responding to the problem of medium of instruction at school, college and public service examinations.
- b) Hindi is the only official language of the Indian Union today.
- c) India is a secular state.

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### 13.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we discussed the various aspects of national politics. First we identified the political system and its concept in which we discussed the notion of power and its dimensions in society. We then moved on to define concepts like state, nation and society. In the context of Indian national politics we briefly traced the emergence of Indian nation state and the strategies adopted at the national level to build up a nation state. We also looked at the forces, which have challenged the task of nation-building. In our last section we outlined the issues related to the task of national integration, which we said, is essentially a process of building up a nation state.

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### 13.8 REFERENCES

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### 13.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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#### Check Your Progress I

- i) Co-ordination of people's different activities and resolution of conflict emanating from clash of interests are the two requirements for an orderly arrangement of social relationships.

- ii) A political system refers to a system of social relationships among individuals or groups organised around the exercise of power and its various manifestations. The manifestations refer to authority, coercion and force.
- iii) Power is the ability to achieve whatever effect is desired. It implies the influence any person or group or organisation has on the action of others. Authority is the legitimisation of power. Both the concepts are used in the context of politics.
- iv) A restricted view of politics confines the definition of political relations to an organisation of individuals who live in a particular territory. This organisation is also based on the sanction of physical force. This restricted view fails to take note of such political relations, which are not territorially defined.

### Check Your Progress II

- i) Society refers to social relationships that are inter-linked. It is also a category of social organisation, which includes a large number of social institutions like kinship, family, economy, polity and communities and association.
- ii) A nation refers to groups of people who have developed solidarity based on common identity of culture, religion, language and state.
- iii) A state refers to a political association, which is characterised by territorial jurisdiction, non-voluntary membership, and a constitution. It also claims to have legitimacy of power over its members.

### Check Your Progress III

- i) The two factors which facilitated the emergence of Indian nationalism are (a) the presence of a common enemy (b) the existence of the cultural identity of oneness that preceded the unification of India as one state.
- ii) The adoption of a constitution and a socialist pattern of society constituted the major attempts at nation-building at the political level.
- iii) a) F  
b) T  
c) T  
d) F

### Check Your Progress IV

- i) The five-year plans constitute an important strategy at the economic level for nation-building. The Planning Commission is given the responsibility of deciding which sectors has to produce how much and what projects have to be allocated to each state. The principle of distributive justice guides the distribution of goods and services.
- ii) The three main forces are diversity of constituents, regional and cultural identities and casteism.
- iii) a) T

b) F

c) T

**Check Your Progress V**

- i) National integration is a process of integrating the various and diverse elements of a national social system into a unified whole.
- ii) The factors, which threaten the ideal of national integration in India, are linguism, communalism, social inequalities and regional disparities.
- iii) a) T  
b) F  
c) T



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