

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Nation, Democracy And Citizenship

What is this Nation? A Nation, in the sense of political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which the whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose. A nation may refer to a community of people who share a common language, culture, ethnicity, descent, and/or history. In this definition, a nation has no physical borders. However, it can also refer to people who share a common territory and government (for example the inhabitants of a sovereign state) irrespective of their ethnic make-up. In international relations, nation can refer to a country or sovereign state.

***Nationalism** is a political ideology that involves a strong identification of a group of individuals with a political entity defined in national terms, i.e. a nation. In the 'modernist' image of the nation, it is nationalism that creates national identity. There are various definitions for what constitutes a nation. Nationalism emphasizes collective identity - people must be autonomous, united, and express a single national culture.*

Nationalism is sometimes reactionary, calling for a return to the national past, and sometimes for the expulsion of foreigners. Other forms of nationalism are revolutionary, calling for the establishment of an independent state as a homeland for an ethnic underclass.

The concept of nation developed in the West. Nationalism got momentum as an ideology during the freedom struggle. After this national awakening we got independence and went for formulation of new constitution guaranteeing equality, liberty etc.

All the problems faced by India today is due to lack of unity. Why search for nationalism?

- Because it is necessary for political discourse.*
- Because it makes a secular credentials weaker/stronger.*
- Because search for nationalism is inevitable.*

British introduced and practised the divide and rule policy prior to which people used to share harmonic relationship. Today we have growing cultural, religious influence in politics. Why did India go for secularism even though we can see the presence of God everywhere in public life e.g. " people asked to swear on religious books. Politician takes oath in the name of God. Hence Indians being secular is questionable because religion is present and hidden in the heart and soul of people which is cashed upon by the politicians.

Rise of cultural consciousness is contesting with secular ideology. Why religion - culture is used in the name of nationalism?

All freedom struggle leaders along with reform leaders glorified nationalism on the foundation of culture and religion. Bankim Chandra said that nationalism is not a political agenda but the moral duty of the people born in this particular territory to protect their motherland. The cultural nationalism got critical orientation with rightist. They indicated, following the footsteps of Max Mueller and Sir William Jones that Aryans are not invaders to India but original inhabitants.

After freedom struggle we changed attention from nationalist state to inclusive, democratic, socialist and pluralistic nation. Modern India is driven on the premise of progressive nation.

Ambedkar was critical of Gandhi's philosophy of cultural nationalism. During 1930s secessionist movement was started in South India as a fear that after Independence Aryan culture will be imposed on them thereby questioning their identity. They considered Hinduism as an aggressive ideology.

Amartya Sen tells that nationalism is a form of religious revivalism that is attacking to individual freedom, secular character of the country, accelerating communal tension and putting the development programmes and welfare measures at the backseat. TN Madan considered that cultural revivalism and glorification of communal politics is a natural phenomena in a society like India. In India people are so committed to culture in terms of language, speech, food, marriage and rituals that bringing inflation back to public sphere is never difficult.

Andre Beteille considered that search for nationalism is not relevant to contemporary times when illiteracy, deprivation, poverty, gender issue are so greatly affecting to the rise of India as a pluralistic secular state. DL Joshi consider that nationalism, its evolution, growth and decline must be studied in the context of time. He indicates that glorification of nationalism in contemporary times can be attributed to the following factors:

- cultural nationalism perceived as a mechanism to unify people in past. Using past experience as a mechanism by political parties to try to revoke cultural consciousness to get maximum support to capture state power.*
- Pluralism and secularism in India has failed to deliver result to majority and minority. As a result secularism is considered a sub policy adopted by the state to appease the minority at large.*
- Problems like cross-border terrorism manifest hostility between India and Pakistan is being used as a pretext for the glorification of Hindu revivalism that emphasises on the rise of strong state that can put a stop on the nuisance of hostile neighbours.*

In conclusion it can be advocated that search for nationalism today is a product of fragmented politics. It is evident from the fact that India was never a unified nation because different communities and culture located at different regions were speaking different languages, practising different culture, exhibiting the character of diversity. Therefore nationalism was construed agenda during freedom struggle in India. Bringing back the spirit of nationalism today can only develop suspicion, hatred and conflict among various sections of society to split Indian to different pieces.

Ramchandra Guha indicates that people of India go for differential nationalism rejecting outrightly cultural nationalism and few of these differential nationalism are cricket nationalism, Kargil nationalism, Nationalism to sympathise with tsunami victims etc which needs to be appreciated.

Citizenship

*Citizenship is one of the most commonly used terms in a democracy. It is used at all levels of politics; in formal legal documents, in laws, in constitutions, in party manifestoes and in speeches. But what is citizenship? Or, who is a citizen? A citizen is not anyone who lives in a nation-state. Among those who live in a nation-state, there are citizens and aliens. A citizen is not just an inhabitant. He or she does not merely live in the territory of a state. A citizen is one who participates in the process of government. In a democratic society, there must be a two-way traffic between the citizens and the government. All governments demand certain duties from the citizens. But, in return, the state must also admit some demands on itself. These are called rights. A citizen must have **economic rights, political rights and social rights**. A person who is ruled by laws but who has no political rights is not a citizen.*

***Economic rights:** It determines that one can have access to poverty in a legitimate manner in any part of the country. One can use his/her earned money as he/she likes it in a free manner and in a legitimate way. One can have trade and business ties with anyone in legitimate manner any part of the country and in addition to that one can also borrow money from public institutions to invest in a legitimate manner.*

***Social citizenship:** it gives an individual right to equality on the basis of gender, caste, religion, language.*

***Political citizenship :** it is right to people to register protest, freedom of speech and expression, right to vote.*

If all the rights extended and consumed by everybody then it is known as democratic rights. India is a democratic country but people are not enjoying democratic rights because of inequalities e.g. rural population.

Democracy

Democracy is a form of government in which all people have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives. Ideally, this includes equal (and more or less direct) participation in the proposal, development and passage of legislation into law. It can also encompass social, economic and cultural conditions that enable the free and equal practice of political self-determination. Democracy is not only a political system but an ideal, an aspiration, a reality, intimately connected to and dependent upon a picture of what it is to be human—of what it is a human should be to be fully human.

While there is no specific, universally accepted definition of 'democracy', equality and freedom have both been identified as important characteristics of democracy since ancient times. These principles are reflected in all citizens being equal before the law and having equal access to legislative processes. For example, in a representative democracy, every vote has equal weight, no unreasonable restrictions can apply to anyone seeking to become a representative, and the freedom of its citizens is secured by legitimized rights and liberties which are generally protected by a constitution. It includes elements such as political pluralism, equality before the law, the right to petition elected officials for redress of grievances, due process of law, civil liberties, human rights, and elements of civil society outside the government.

Majority rule is often listed as a characteristic of democracy. However, it is also possible for a minority to be oppressed by a "tyranny of the majority" in the absence of governmental or constitutional protections of individual or group rights. An essential part of an "ideal" representative democracy is competitive elections that are fair both substantively and procedurally. Furthermore, freedom of political expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press are considered to be essential, so that citizens are adequately informed and able to vote according to their own best interests as they see them. It has also been suggested that a basic feature of democracy is the capacity of individuals to participate freely and fully in the life of their society.

India is the largest democracy in the world. The Constitution of India was enforced on 26 January, 1950. It ushered in the age of democracy. India became a democratic republic infused with the spirit of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. The Preamble, the Directive Principles of State Policy and the Fundamental Rights reflect the Indian ideology. People belonging to all caste, creed, religion, or sex have the right to cast their vote. After the election, the majority party or coalition forms the government and its leader becomes the Prime Minister.

We enjoy every right in theory, but not in practice. Real democracy will come into being only when the masses are awakened and take part in the economic and political life of the country. There is inequality in every sphere—social, economic and political. Illiteracy is the main cause of inequality. The illiterate masses get easily lured by money during such an event. Also some of our legislators have criminal records against them. The people who make the laws themselves break them.

But India, as a democratic country, has progressed in many aspects. It has achieved self-sufficiency in food grains as a result of the green revolution. People vote for change whenever a government fails to come up to the expectations of the people. India has been a successful democratic country only because the people are law-abiding, self-disciplined and have the sense of social and moral responsibilities.

Democracy demands from the common man a certain level of ability and character, like rational conducts, an intelligent understanding of public affair, independent justice and unselfish devotion to public interest. People should not allow communalism, separatism, casteism, terrorism, etc to raise their heads. They are a threat to democracy. The government, the NGOs and the people together should work collectively for the economic development of the nation. Changes should come through peaceful, democratic and constitutional means. The talented youth of today should be politically educated so that they can become effective leaders of tomorrow.

*In a democracy where **civil society** is stronger, people are enjoying their citizenship right to the fullest. When we talk about state and citizenship we cannot ignore the role of civil society. The whole concept of civil society evolved from Western specifically coffee-house in Britain, Salons in France and Table Groups in Germany which are considered as the roots of civil society. At these places different issues were discussed leading to a particular public opinion which was then published in newspapers, magazines etc.*

Aware, articulating, educated people played an important role in the emergence of civil society. Civil society does not pass mere opinion, it involves certain seriousness. It is a voluntary organisation into which one can come and go as per their choice. Civil society is not hierarchical and everybody is equal and exhibit their own opinion and choice about larger issues therefore holistic group take diversified issues into consideration.

Meaningful democratic society cannot exist without the presence of civil society. India was not a state when civil society came into prominence; it was in the presence of civil society that India evolved into a state. Indian's never had citizenship rights under British state which was all-powerful, monopolistic without any concern for people.

Civil society evolved in India with the efforts of few Indians who were British educated and aware of the working of British society. They questioned the British government on various issues like land tenure system, discrimination on economic, social and political grounds etc. After 1990's civil society has become very strong in India and have taken upon itself various issues concerning people like corruption, environment, women issues, education, child labour etc.

Regionalism

Region refers to a geographic territory where one lives. It is not just the love for region but the sentiments attached with the territory, love for cultural aspects of that particular region, love for custom and values of that region. Regionalism is a voluntaristic phenomena.

Regionalism in India has become a decisive force which is all prepared to split the nation. The classical theory to regionalism considers it to be a threat. This theory points out that regionalism and nationalism are engaged in dialectics with each other. Regional consciousness is fast entering into sub-national consciousness which is leading to separatist tendencies paving the way for the division of India.

Regionalism develop a false consciousness wherein it acts as an obstacle to class mobilisation. The issues like poverty, unemployment etc have taken a back seat and regionalism is glorified which further encourages inequality. In order to understand regionalism today we have to understand its roots. In India we have 6000 dialects, 500 different languages out of which only few languages are recognised i.e. enjoy official status.

During 1950s reconstruction of Indian State on the basis of language sowed the seeds for regional aspirations which is prevalent even today. In a region we find people speaking different dialects and when people find out that language is the main criteria for recognition of state (organisation of state on linguistic basis) people transform their dialects into language. The constitutional provisions with regard to the creation of new region (state) is liberally in nature with the tilt of power towards the Central government to create new state and grant relative power and autonomy. This has made people having regional consciousness find no problem for demanding state. The contemporary regional movement is the result of two reasons i.e. overdevelopment in some areas and underdevelopment in other areas.

In Punjab in Maharashtra overdevelopment has taken place and the people staying there and start considering that state contribution to nation is not equivalent to nation's contribution to state. In North East India there is no single criteria on the basis of which one can create a state because every tribe is different from the other which creates big problem for government and so the concept of union territories come into play.

When there was single party rule it was relatively easier for the government to contain the regional aspirations of the people as both state and Centre were ruled by Congress. But the case is different today wherein multiplicity of party has opened a Pandora's box wherein state parties have no way out but to succumb to the pressure created by the local population.

But there is a contrasting viewpoint which has been put forward by various sociologist who do not consider regionalism as divisive force. **Rajni Kothari** believes that regional movement is a search for political aspirations that is making Indian democracy competent and strong.

Partho Chatterjee indicates that regionalism is a challenge to nationalism. During the early phase of Indian nationalism regionalism became an important instrument for national aspirations but in contemporary context, questions like development, underdevelopment, empowerment and powerlessness, relative deprivation are the guiding force behind regionalism.

Small is not always beautiful is evident from growing poverty in case of Chhattisgarh as compared to minimum poverty in Punjab. A small state cannot guarantee happiness. It is evident from our current position where failure of the state to address the deprivation of the people has given way to acceleration of naxalite movement. In the whole of North East India people are fighting on the basis of ethnic identity, sub ethnic identity and sub sub ethnic identity which brings forward the conclusion that small states are not always better governed and there is no end to people's aspirations for power.

Therefore in today's India where regionalism has become everyday experience our prime concern should not be to put an end to it, but rather to ensure that region and state do not engage in conflict by addressing to the needs and aspirations of the people.

Secularism

Secularism is a western ideology initiated during the Renaissance when people started questioning the Orthodox Church. The prominence of the protest movement as a result brought down the influence of the Church over the state. It was considered that state should be people centric so that rules framed cater to the people's need and that church focus only upon religion and not politics. When the influence of the Church dominated the decision-making of the state, only spiritual needs of individuals were fulfilled and other needs like gender equality, poverty, unemployment were not addressed. America largely evolved as a religious entity but when constitution was written greater emphasis was given on separation between state and church. When people enter the state their religious identity should be left behind. In US religion keeps away from public but on the contrary in India people mix-up their public position with secular position.

Rajendra Prasad said that state should not promote any religion. Secularism has many faces therefore one cannot have definite meaning to the concept of secularism. After independence there was no self-doubt in the minds of nationalist leader about what should be the future shape of India. It was perceived that Indian Constitution should be respecting the diversity of religion irrespective of origin and composition and membership of religious communities. It was realised that man and religion in India are so greatly embedded that India cannot go for nonreligious society like Communist countries therefore it has been specifically mentioned in the Constitution that every religion has freedom to preach, practice and propagate its own religious values and no citizen of the country will be discriminated on the grounds of religion.

State is also involved into negotiating religious conflict between various groups without favouring anyone. Neither state of India is religious in its function nor the people of India are told to give up their religion therefore secularism in India has evolved in a unique manner balancing the needs and emotions of people and the demands of secular state.

*Indian secularism stands on the premise of **pluralism** and Indian state can control religious institutions if it feels that on the basis of religious consolidation new Pakistan are regularly created leading to vertical division of society on the basis of religious or sectoral identity.*

Therefore secularism is not falling from heaven to carry universalistic character. It evolves from society to negotiate the conditions and compulsions of social structure. The working of secularism in India is subjected to sociological review when sociologists like TN Madan and Ashish Nandy consider that secularism will be a unique experience in Indian context because love for religion is so intensive and regular in case of India that we have never seen a single sphere without communal conflict since India's independence. They believe that religion is in the blood of people of India that strongly influenced their choice of marriage, food behaviour, pattern of thinking, interpersonal relations and therefore to separate man in India from religion is absolutely impossible. Thus when constitution tries to separate religion from public sphere, it slowly enters into public domain in one form or the other.

Ashish Nandy indicates that more India moves in the direction of modernity, higher is the acceleration of communal conflict. Information technology, television and telecommunications acts as an accelerating medium to spread communally charged messages in a big way in contemporary India. Therefore secular education, secular employment in no way has suppressed the communal passion and communalism in India is a way of life and thinking of secularism is a difficult proposition.

These arguments of anti-secularist nature are rejected by various sociologists who make use of certain specific scales to study the degree of secularism possible in any given society. These specific criteria are:

- to what extent the religion is prepared to go for internal reforms;
- to what extent one religion is prepared to coexist with other religion;
- to what extent one religion is prepared to borrow attributes from other religion and pass it on;
- and finally to what extent a state can offer equalitarian space to every religion maintaining a safe distance from every religion while discharging secular responsibilities.

Keeping in view the above scale to measure any society it can be advocated that no society is purely secular and no society is purely anti-secular or sacred.

Amartya Sen considers himself as non-reformist sociologist along with Andre Beteille and Upendra Bakshi and indicate that Indian state is duty bound to protect its secular credentials by paying equal respect to all religions. If any religious community by virtue of its size tries to seize the government through popular mandate, Constitutional provisions should be deterring them to cherish their distinctive religious goals. Therefore Indian secularism is not positioned at a weak space because the court of law, the Constitution of India stand as an obstacle to challenges coming to it.

More Indian secularism is challenged more secular credentials of India are protected therefore communal violence may simply offer a threat to Indian secularism but cannot destroy it. Therefore state of India must know that it is a secular state, only secular and no more and less. The secularism in India is a unique experience. It has been challenged by different forces at different points of time but has never crumbled down compromising with the principles of pluralism and equality for which one can conclude that Indian secularism is Indian secularism; it's neither weak nor strong and not a replica of secularism in the West.

Decentralisation Of Power (Panchayati Raj Institution)

Democracy is not just an experience doing well in West but it has been transferred to the east which has adapted to the political system giving in a whole new dimension. It is not just an institution borrowed from West but an experience which every section of society in their everyday life goes through. Since democratic experience has been fragmented in various societies as it caters to the elites who draw most of its benefit whereas masses have been left in the lurch. Gandhiji focused upon governance from below i.e. setting up of institution of Panchayati Raj to address effectively the problems of the people at the grassroots level.

When British came to India, they introduce Zamindari system which led to autocratic and coercive power resulting into the collapse of traditional structure. After independence to make India democratic, the principal of grassroots approach came into prominence. **Balwant Rai Mehta** committee was constituted in 1952 which gave its report in 1959 and so first Panchayati Raj institution was introduced in Rajasthan. It suggested three tier system i.e. village level, block level, district level. Its objective was to go for self-governance wherein member of village panchayat sitting together would take up issues related to everyday life like health, rural development, sanitation etc.

PRI is considered a landmark in the history of India because democracy was now evolving from grassroots level. India is known in the world for political decentralisation. But there is a point to it - India has political decentralisation but not administrative decentralisation. Several sociologists find out that PRI's have not broken any ice in the real sense and that nothing much has been achieved. PRI is about losing control by government and administration and this is seen as a challenge to its autonomy. All official proceedings of the PRI's can be altered/reviewed by the state to its convenience. State behaves like a big brother, their policies and finances and other processes are continuously scrutinise the state. State is also empowered to suspend any PRI institution, officer any time on the basis of inefficiency and so the members of Panchayati Raj don't have any functional autonomy.

PRI's have paved the way for "Sarpanchpati". Taking benefit in the name of women reservation they choose women from lower caste and make her run for election thereby creating an illusion among the people that PRI's are really working for women empowerment.

Introduction of new PRI has led to contest between old traditional powerholders and new aspirants of power. There have been instances in South India when Dalit were not permitted to cast vote in PRI election. Their votes were cast by other people. Booth capturing and muscle power is prominent and hence traditional hierarchy still persist therefore new PRI is like old wine in a new bottle.

Vellupuram village incident- The PRI election was won by a Dalit woman. She promised her electorates that once she came to power she will ensure drinking water for the masses. As per her promise she took all necessary steps to ensure water supply but dominant caste in order to pursue their dominance raped and murdered her in broad daylight. This incident left a question mark on the functioning of this modern institution in traditional society.

Rampura village incident -In this village in Rajasthan when a Dalit women came to hoist the national flag during 15 August she was beaten brutally as to how can she play the role meant for dominant caste.

Walter Fernandes indicates that PRI's are facing serious problem as it is trying to bring in the question of civil rights, democratic rights into society which is driven by culture of caste, patriarchy since ancient times. In case of Rajasthan there are instances when Dalit Sarpanch is made to sit on the floor while other members of the Panchayati Raj sit on the chair. PRI's meetings are initiated by members belonging to higher class/caste than by Sarpanch belonging to lower caste. This dichotomy indicates how PRI's have not really empowered the subaltern groups like Dalits, tribes and women.

Gail omvedt considers this kind of conflict as a failure of Panchayati Raj institutions which has not broken any ground to bring change in the power structure in village India.

Rejecting to the concept of "Sarpanchpati" **Kalpna Shah** indicate that empowerment of women in a hierarchical society can only come in a phased manner. The women Sarpanch who are not proxy leaders are going through a period of probation. She points out that power is inbuilt in women and that they will be exercising it in the most appropriate time. She considers that PRI's have really empowered women or at least it has given a boost for their self-assertion.

PRI's have worked well in states like Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal. Bringing people together it has put a stop on religious consolidation and communal conflict. In case of Karnataka it has given momentum to women empowerment. Mutual self-help groups have evolved under the patronage of PRI's in Karnataka. In case of West Bengal it has made people political sensitive who are no more willing to accept any nuisance from different political leaders any longer. Power and Politics are evolving as everyday phenomena in countryside therefore PRI's have introduced a political revolution in the microscopic structure of Indian society.

However a major threat to PRI's is coming from non-government organisation (NGO). The issues taken up by NGOs are delivering immediate results therefore people are backing the intervention of NGOs in rural development programme than simply wanting PRI's.

In conclusion it can be advocated that now PRI's though bringing revolution in micro-politics of India, its support base is quite fragile. This is evident for the reason that when social transformation takes place in traditional society driven by hierarchical principles there is absence of structural conduciveness for change and so conflicts become inevitable. Sociologically speaking these contradictions are manifestations of structural adjustment for which one cannot outrightly conceptualised that the experience of PRI's is an absolute failure. Thus India's experience with PRI is not a story of complete structural breakdown but the story of continuity and change.

Political Parties, Pressure Groups, Social And Political Elite

Political parties

A political party is a political organization that typically seeks to influence government policy, usually by nominating their own candidates and trying to seat them in political office, it is a group of people who share the same ideas about the way the country should be governed. They work together to introduce new laws, and alter old laws.

Indian party system is unique. It does not fit in any kind of classification that is generally used to categorise the party systems. It is defined by the singular nature of Indian politics on the one hand and the nature of State society relationship on the other. In the last two decades, there has been a substantial change both in the nature of politics as well as in the nature of relationship between the state and society. One of the very important manifestations of change is visible in the context of the politicisation of greater number of people, especially those belonging to the less privileged sections of society. That explains the change in the nature of party system as well. The distinctive feature that defined the party system of India in the first two decades after Independence are no more to be seen at present.

In case of India even if political parties are going for coalition they are not sharing common ideology and so they remain divided and hence lack stability. Political parties do not develop on the basis of requirement in India. First political party which evolved out of mass movement i.e. Indian freedom struggle was Congress. People from every walk of life were party to freedom struggle and therefore Congress had the advantage of incorporating them all within its ambit and enjoy absolute power for almost 3 decades.

From 1967 to 1975 political parties were evolving. There was a split in the Congress when Ram Manohar Lohia constituted his own party "Samakhya Vidhayak Dal" contesting election and winning in eight states. Driven by communist ideology he could not sustain for more than two years. Most of the members of his party joined back Congress thereby leading to the politics of "Aaya Ram Gaya Ram". After the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri there was an attempt by the Congress to go for centralisation of power. Indra Gandhi created space for younger population thereby creating support base for herself.

Interest-based politics became the central point of Indian political system. The concept of high command was introduced by the Congress which wanted to retain power. This led to the death of party system in India (though temporarily) wherein national property was converted to private property and Psycho fancy (annoying, immature, shallow, ignorant, pathological) became prominent. People wanted to appease high command in order to attain political positions.

During 1975 was political groups from the Congress constituted their own regional parties leading to development of bargain politics and support base became like a tradable commodity. Then came national emergency after which parties re-grouped together and by the end of 1976 Janta party became a prominent opposition to the Congress.

During 1970s green revolution resulted into success and prosperity which led to increasing political aspiration among people thereby we could see the emergence of new political parties. 1985 onwards we see a seachange in party system in India. For the first time Congress took support from regional parties to constitute government under PV Narasimha Rao. Hence regional party got momentum. This led to the emergence of politics of coalition.

Coalition politics has resulted into horse trading and affecting political ideology reducing Indian politics into skeletal democracy. **Rajni Kothari** contradicting to the above statement indicates that with centralised party system, regional interest and local interests were not glorified. As a result political aspiration of many were getting sidelined. The growth of small political parties and their growing significance in contemporary politics in India is making Indian politics Federal in character leading to inclusive governance. Other scholars indicate that coalition politics in India is giving way to growth of political polarisation taking Indian democracy in the direction of Western democracy.

In conclusion it can be advocated democracy is a form of experience in India which was introduced during 1950s but people's participation in democracy is getting accelerated in contemporary times. The rise of several political parties with distinctive ideology is catering to the local needs and standing as a testimony to the fact that people of India are no longer prepared to accept democracy driven by autocratic political parties. Multi-party system has made Indian politics inclusive and people centric. It is evident from the fact that forgetting their ideology, coalition partners are introducing policies like National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, housing schemes, roadways programme to prove that government is not only servicing but working as functional government to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the people. Therefore neither regional party nor coalition government can be considered as failure of democracy because they are making Indian society a pluralistic democracy.

Pressure Groups

A pressure group can be described as an organised group that does not put up candidates for election, but seeks to influence government policy or legislation. They can also be described as 'interest groups', 'lobby groups' or 'protest groups'. Some people avoid using the term 'pressure group' as it can inadvertently be interpreted as meaning the groups use actual pressure to achieve their aims, which does not necessarily happen.

A group may include large or small number of people having common social, cultural, trade or business interests. There can be no bar on a person being member of two or more groups. Interest groups

are not political parties as they do not participate in electoral politics, and on their own have no direct role in the governance of the country. However, if necessary, in their interest, they may support one political party or the other, and try to influence legislation and executive decisions by using various methods of exercising pressure on the government of the day.

When a group carries on its function of pressurising members of the legislature by contacting them in the parliamentary galleries, the practice is known as lobbying. This term originated in the United States where lobbying is an accepted practice, and there are regular lobbyists who charge fees for influencing the legislators and officers in the interest of certain groups.

Without being political parties, without contesting elections in their own name, and without seeking government jobs or entering the legislatures, the interest and pressure groups do play a vital role in contemporary democracies in the decision-making process.

Types of pressure group

Institutional Interest Groups: These groups are formally organised which consist of professional employed persons. They are part of government machinery and try to exert their influence. But they do not have much autonomy. These groups include political parties, legislatures, armies, bureaucracies and churches.

Associational Interest Groups : These are organised, specialist groups formed for interest articulation. These include trade unions, organisations of businessmen and industrialist (FICCI, CII, Indian Chambers of Commerce) and civic groups.

Anomic Interest Groups: These are the groups have individual self-representation. In such type of groups, perpetual infiltration such as contracts, demonstrations are observed. These groups are formed in the shape of movement, demonstrations, proceedings, signature campaigns, street corner meetings etc. Their activities may either be constitutional unconstitutional.

Non-Associational Interest Groups: These are the kinship and lineage groups having ethnic, regional, status and caste groups that articulate interest on the basis of individuals, family and religious sects.

Nature Of Pressure Groups In Indian

The Business Groups : The business group is the most important and organised pressure group in India. They are also most effective. They are independent of political parties and have enough resources with which they can safeguard their interest. Business associations is in existence in India even before independence. The important business groups include CII, Federation of Indian Chambers of commerce (FICCI) etc. They exert different kinds of pressures and try to influence planning, licensing and economic decision-making.

Some businesspersons are always there at the Centre as well as state level Ministry. During pre-budget meeting, the finance ministry interacts with these groups to secure suitable inputs which helps in budget formulation.

Trade unions: the trade unions were present even prior to independents. The emergence of Communist movement also played an important role in the growth of trade unions in India. In 1948, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was established. Trade unions in India are closely affiliated with the political parties; many national political parties have caught their own federations of trade unions. They exert significant pressure at policy formulation level and their strength is well recognised by political parties in government. Sometimes these trade unions can become very vocal and militant in their action to meet their demands. They work through the weapon of strike and have been able to achieve monetary gains in terms of wage increase, bonus, change in structure etc.

Peasants Organisations : The rise of peasant groups in India has been mainly due to the abolition of Zamindari system, implementation of Panchayati Raj, Land Reform measures and Green Revolution. All India Kisan Sabha was established in 1936 and after 1942 the Communist Party of India acquired control over it. Different parties have got their own peasant organisations. These agriculturalists are mainly organised in regional or local class unions than on all India basis. Some important influential peasant organisations are All India Kisan Congress, Akhila Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, All India Kisan Kamgar Sammelan, Bharatiya Kisan Party.

Students Organisations: The student organisation in India have also acted as pressure groups both prior to independence and after independence. The All Bengal student Association was formed in 1928. The All India Student Federation was established in 1936. After independence the political parties continue to be affiliated with students organisation. The all India Congress and later on the National Students Union Of India (NSUI) are affiliated to the Congress party. The All India Federation And Students Federation Of Indian (SFI) are controlled by Communist Party of India, Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP) etc are all affiliated to different political parties.

Community associations: there are various community associations in India. These committee groups organised on the basis of caste, class and vision. Some examples of caste organisations are scheduled Castes Federation, backward Caste Federation etc amongst other organisation there are some like Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Northern And Southern India Christian Conference etc which represents interest that is supposed to safeguard their respective religions.

Caste Pressure Groups: Indian society is divided into numerous castes this is equally true about Hindus, the Muslims and even about Christians. The caste group sometimes has a caste panchayat constituted by the influential members of the caste who determines important matters concerning the caste members. In recent times it is seen that most of the people vote for the members of their own caste. Caste-based politics exert very influential pressure over the politically elected leaders to conform to their demands.

Mass media: in today's world of information and telecommunication the role of media has become very prominent. They exert huge pressure over the state and have the capacity to influence the mindset of the people thereby forcing the government of the day to take necessary measures to contain any given situation.

Social And Political Elites

In sociology, an elite is a group of relatively small size, that is dominant within a large society, having a privileged status perceived as being envied by others of a lower line of order. If such an elite wields political power, it almost invariably puts itself in a position of leadership, whether it be expected or volunteered, and often subjects the holders of elite status to pressure to maintain their leadership position as part of status. They can be found in every walks of life including political one. These elites control political life of nation, become politically powerful and have capacity to rule over masses as they have mass appeal. Political elite concept developed in the United States, after the Second World War and thereafter it went on to become quite popular. Pareto and Mosca are the chief exponents of this concepts.

Political Elites In India

Political elites in India before independence came from upper-middle class. These leaders were usually foreign educated and at high and good contacts. These people did not come from masses had no mass base. It is only after some time that they began to understand the problems of the people. Political elites in India have no rural but only urban base. English educated people at that time were considered as elite group, particularly those who were foreign educated. They were intellectuals but did not like to mix with the common man whom they considered as low person with no power of understanding.

These political elites have somewhat changed after the Constitution of India came into force which provided equal opportunity to all in political life. Some of the elites now have begun to emerge from the rural areas and even from middle and lower middle classes. They become national leaders in their own right, they have mass appeal in their areas and among their caste and class. But by and large Indian political elite still comes from upper-middle class. Political elite group at the national level, do not wish to lose its grip over the local political life.

Green revolution has produced new elite group. Though Zamindari system has been abolished yet only a small chunk of elite (powerful and rich people) have sway over the people and active in political life who influence political leaders below them. In the elite group the influence of regional groups which was far less is now increasing considerably.

Political elites in India have, however shown one disturbing feature, namely that they do not adhere to their political ideology. As and when need arises or chance comes to change, they don't think twice before changing their ideology. In India now the people belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled

Tribes and other backward classes who could never think of becoming political elite, have joined the high rank of political elite. Some of them hold great power and position and also high prestige, therefore now in India political power belong to all sections of society which has diluted the role and number of political elites giving Indian democracy wide coverage.