Social Science

DEMOCRATIC POLITICS-II

Textbook in Political Science for Class X

Contents

Foreword *iii*

A Letter for You *v*

Unit I

Chapter 1
Power sharing 1

Chapter 2
Federalism 13

Unit II

Chapter 3
Democracy and Diversity 29

Chapter 4
Gender, Religion and Caste 39

Unit III

Chapter 5
Popular Struggles and Movements 57

Chapter 6
Political Parties 71

Unit IV

Chapter 7
Outcomes of Democracy 89

Chapter 8
Challenges to Democracy 101

Power sharing

Overview

With this chapter we resume the tour of democracy that we started last year. We noted last year that in a democracy all power does not rest with any one organ of the state. An intelligent sharing of power among legislature, executive and judiciary is very important to the design of a democracy. In this and the next two chapters we carry this idea of power sharing forward. We start with two stories from Belgium and Sri Lanka. Both these stories are about how democracies handle demands for power sharing.The stories yield some general conclusions about the need for power sharing in democracy. This allows us to discuss various forms of power sharing that will be taken up in the following two chapters.

Chapter I

Belgium and Sri Lanka

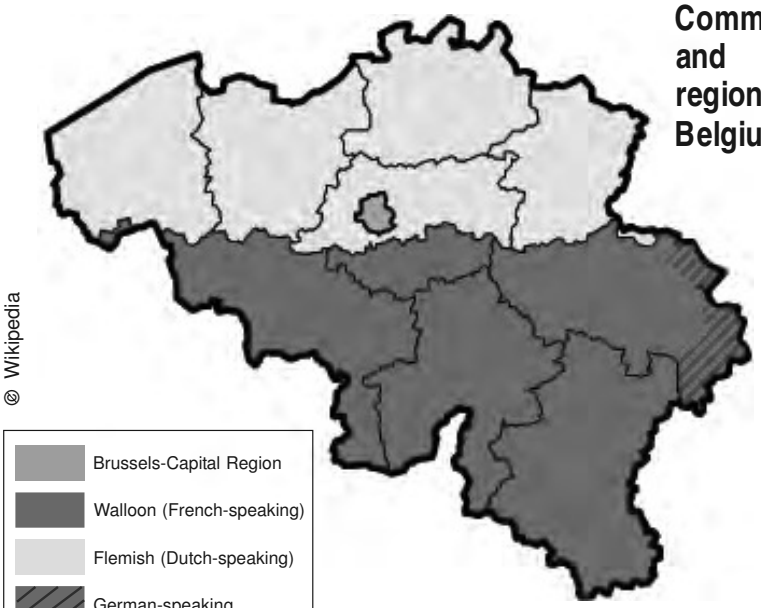
I have a simple equation in mind. Sharing power = dividing power = weakening the country. Why do we start by talking of this?

Belgium is a small country in Europe, smaller in area than the state of Haryana. It has borders with Netherlands, France and Germany. It has a population of a little over one crore, about half the population of Haryana. The ETHNIC composition of this small country is very complex. Of the country's total population, 59 per cent lives in the Flemish region and speaks Dutch language. Another 40 per cent people live in the Wallonia region and speak French. Remaining 1 per cent of the Belgians speak German. In the capital city Brussels, 80 per cent people speak French while 20 per cent are Dutch-speaking.

The minority French-speaking community was relatively rich and powerful. This was resented by the Dutch-speaking community who got the benefit of economic development and education much later. This led to tensions between the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking communities during the 1950s and 1960s. The tension between the two communities was more acute in Brussels. Brussels presented a special problem: the Dutch-speaking people constituted a majority in the country, but a minority in the capital.

Let us compare this to the situation in another country. Sri Lanka is an island nation, just a few kilometres off the southern coast of Tamil Nadu. It has about 2 crore people, about the same as in Haryana. Like other nations in the South Asia region, Sri Lanka has a diverse population. The major social groups are the Sinhala-speakers (74 per cent) and the Tamil-speakers (18 per cent). Among Tamils there are two sub-groups. Tamil natives of the country

Communities and regions of Belgium



Look at the maps of Belgium and Sri Lanka. In which region do you find concentration of different communities?

Glossary

Ethnic: A social division based on shared culture. People belonging to the same ethnic group believe in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of culture or both. They need not always have the same religion or nationality.

are called 'Sri Lankan Tamils' (13 per cent). The rest, whose forefathers came from India as plantation workers during colonial period, are called 'Indian Tamils'. As you can see from the map, Sri Lankan Tamils are concentrated in the north and east of the country. Most of the Sinhala-speaking people are Buddhist, while most of the Tamils are Hindus or Muslims. There are about 7 per cent Christians, who are both Tamil and Sinhala.

Just imagine what could happen in situations like this. In Belgium, the Dutch community could take advantage of its numeric majority and force its will on the French and German-speaking population. This would push the conflict among communities further. This could lead to a very messy partition of the country; both the sides would claim control over Brussels. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhala community enjoyed an even bigger majority and could impose its will on the entire country. Now, let us look at what happened in both these countries.

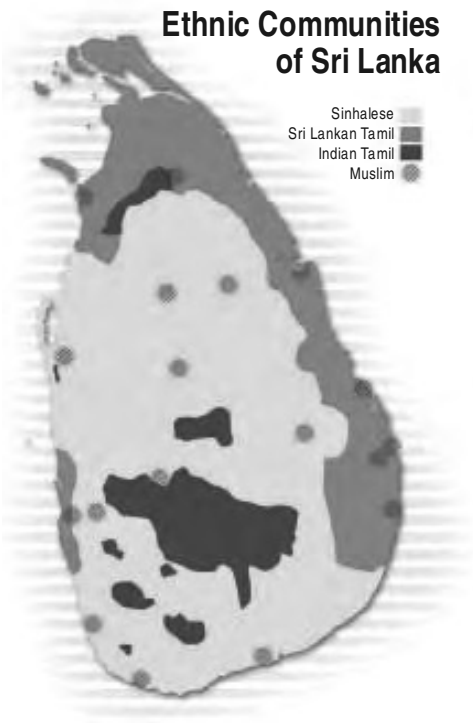
Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The leaders of the Sinhala community sought to secure dominance over government by virtue of their majority. As a result, the democratically elected government adopted a series of MAJORITARIAN measures to establish Sinhala supremacy.

In 1956, an Act was passed to recognise Sinhala as the only official language, thus disregarding Tamil. The governments followed preferential policies that favoured Sinhala applicants for university positions and government jobs. A new constitution stipulated that the state shall protect and foster Buddhism.

All these government measures, coming one after the other, gradually increased the feeling of alienation among the Sri Lankan Tamils. They felt that none of the major political parties led by the Buddhist Sinhala leaders were sensitive to their language and culture. They felt that the constitution and government policies denied them equal political rights, discriminated against them in getting jobs and other opportunities and ignored their interests. As a result, the relations

Ethnic Communities of Sri Lanka



Glossary

Majoritarianism: A belief that the majority community should be able to rule a country in whichever way it wants, by disregarding the wishes and needs of the minority.

What's wrong if the majority community rules? If Sinhalas don't rule in Sri Lanka, where else will they rule?

between the Sinhala and Tamil communities strained over time.

The Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles for the recognition of Tamil as an official language, for regional autonomy and equality of opportunity in securing education and jobs. But their demand for more autonomy to provinces populated by the Tamils was repeatedly denied. By 1980s several political organisations were formed demanding an independent Tamil Eelam (state) in northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

The distrust between the two communities turned into widespread conflict. It soon turned into a CIVIL WAR. As a result thousands of people of both the communities have been killed. Many families were forced to leave the country as refugees and many more lost their livelihoods. You have read (Chapter 1 of Economics textbook, Class X) about Sri Lanka's excellent record of economic development, education and health. But the civil war has caused a terrible setback to the social, cultural and economic life of the country.

Accommodation in Belgium

The Belgian leaders took a different path. They recognised the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities. Between 1970 and 1993, they amended their constitution four times so as to work out an arrangement that would enable everyone to live together within the same country. The arrangement they worked out is different from any other country and is very innovative. Here are some of the elements of the Belgian model:

- Constitution prescribes that the number of Dutch and French-speaking ministers shall be equal in the central government. Some special laws require the support of majority of members from each linguistic group. Thus, no single community can make decisions unilaterally.
- Many powers of the central government have been given to state governments of the two regions of the country. The state governments are not subordinate to the Central Government.
- Brussels has a separate government in which both the communities have equal representation. The French-speaking people accepted equal representation in Brussels because the Dutch-speaking community has accepted equal representation in the Central Government.

GlOssary

Civil war: A violent conflict between opposing groups within a country that becomes so intense that it appears like a war.

What kind of a solution is this? I am glad our Constitution does not say which minister will come from which community.

© Wikipedia

The photograph here is of a street address in Belgium. You will notice that place names and directions in two languages – French and Dutch.

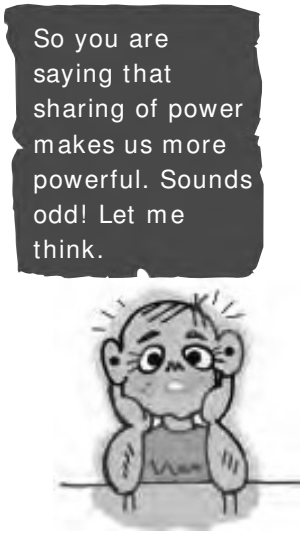
● Apart from the Central and the State Government, there is a third kind of government. This 'community government' is elected by people belonging to one language community – Dutch, French and German-speaking – no matter where they live. This government has the power regarding cultural, educational and language-related issues.

You might find the Belgian model very complicated. It indeed is very complicated, even for people living in Belgium. But these arrangements have worked well so far. They helped to avoid civic strife between the two major communities and a possible division of the country on linguistic lines. When many countries of Europe came together to form the European Union, Brussels was chosen as its headquarters.

European Union Parliament in Belgium

Read any newspaper for one week and make clippings of news related to ongoing conflicts or wars. A group of five students could pool their clippings together and do the following:

- Classify these conflicts by their location (your state, India, outside India).
- Find out the cause of each of these conflicts. How many of these are related to power sharing disputes?
- Which of these conflicts could be resolved by working out power sharing arrangements?



What do we learn from these two stories of Belgium and Sri Lanka? Both are democracies. Yet, they dealt with the question of power sharing differently. In Belgium, the leaders have realised that the unity of the country is possible only by respecting the feelings and interests of different communities and regions. Such a realisation resulted in mutually acceptable arrangements for sharing power. Sri Lanka shows us a contrasting example. It shows us that if a majority community wants to force its dominance over others and refuses to share power, it can undermine the unity of the country.

© Tab - *The Calgary Sun*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

The cartoon at the left refers to the problems of running the Germany's grand coalition government that include the two major parties of the country, namely the Christian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party. The two parties are historically rivals to each other. They have to form a coalition government because neither of them got clear majority of seats on their own in the 2005 elections. They take divergent positions on several policy matters, but still jointly run the government.

Why power sharing is desirable?

Thus, two different sets of reasons can be given in favour of power sharing. Firstly, power sharing is good because it helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups. Since social conflict often leads to violence and political instability, power sharing is a good way to ensure the stability of political order. Imposing the will of majority community over others may look like an attractive option in the short run, but in the long run it undermines the unity of the nation. Tyranny of the majority is not just oppressive for the minority; it often brings ruin to the majority as well.

There is a second, deeper reason why power sharing is good for democracies. Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy. A democratic rule involves sharing power with those affected by its exercise, and who have to live with its effects. People have a right to be consulted on how they are to be governed. A legitimate government is one where citizens, through participation, acquire a stake in the system.

Let us call the first set of reasons PRUDENTIAL and the second moral. While prudential reasons stress that power sharing will bring out better outcomes, moral reasons emphasises the very act of power sharing as valuable.

Glossary

Prudential: Based on prudence, or on careful calculation of gains and losses. Prudential decisions are usually contrasted with those decisions based purely on moral considerations.

Annette studies in a Dutch medium school in the northern region of Belgium. Many French-speaking students in her school want the medium of instruction to be French. Selvi studies in a school in the northern region of Sri Lanka. All the students in her school are Tamil-speaking and they want the medium of instruction to be Tamil.

- If the parents of Annette and Selvi were to approach respective governments to realise the desire of the child who is more likely to succeed? And why?

Khalil's dilemma

As usual, Vikram's was driving the motorbike under a vow of silence and Vetal was the pillion rider. As usual, Vetal started telling Vikram a story to keep him awake while driving. This time the story went as follows:

"In the city of Beirut there lived a man called Khalil. His parents came from different communities. His father was an Orthodox Christian and mother a Sunni Muslim. This was not so uncommon in this modern, cosmopolitan city. People from various communities that lived in Lebanon came to live in its capital, Beirut. They lived together, intermingled, yet fought a bitter civil war among themselves. One of Khalil's uncles was killed in that war.

At the end of this civil war, Lebanon's leaders came together and agreed to some basic rules for power sharing among different communities. As per these rules the country's President must belong to the Maronite sect of Catholic Christians. The Prime Minister must be from the Sunni Muslim community. The post of Deputy Prime Minister is fixed for Orthodox Christian sect and that of the Speaker for Shi'a Muslim. Under this pact, the Christians agreed not to seek French protection and the Muslim agreed not to seek unification with the neighbouring state of Syria.When the Christians and Muslims came to this agreement, they were nearly equal in population. Both sides have continued to respect this agreement though now the Muslims are in clear majority.

Khalil does not like this system one bit. He is a popular man with political ambition. But under the present system the top position is out of his reach barred from him. He does not practice either his father's or his mother's religion and does not wish to be known by either. He cannot understand why Lebanon can't be like any other 'normal' democracy. "Just hold an election, allow everyone to contest and whoever wins maximum votes becomes the president, no matter which community he comes from. Why can't we do that, like in other democracies of the world?" he asks. His elders, who have seen the bloodshed of the civil war, tell him that the present system is the best guarantee for peace..."

The story was not finished, but they had reached the TV tower where they stopped every day. Vetal wrapped up quickly and posed his customary question to Vikram: "If you had the power to rewrite the rules in Lebanon, what would you do? Would you adopt the 'regular' rules followed everywhere, as Khalil suggests? Or stick to the old rules? Or do something else?" Vetal did not forget to remind Vikram of their basic pact: "If you have an answer in mind and yet do not speak up, your mobike will freeze, and so will you!"

Can you help poor Vikram in answering Vetal?

Forms of power sharing

The idea of power sharing has emerged in opposition to the notions of undivided political power. For a long time it was believed that all power of a government must reside in one person or group of persons located at one place. It was felt that if the power to decide is dispersed, it would not be possible to take quick decisions and to enforce them. But these notions have changed with the emergence of democracy. One basic principle of democracy is that people are the source of all political power. In a democracy, people rule themselves through institutions of self-governance. In a good democratic government, due respect is given to diverse groups and views that exist in a society. Everyone has a voice in the shaping of public policies. Therefore, it follows that in a democracy political power should be distributed among as many citizens as possible.

In modern democracies, power sharing arrangements can take many forms. Let us look at some of the most common arrangements that we have or will come across.

1 Power is shared **among different organs of government,** such as the legislature, executive and judiciary. Let us call this horizontal distribution of power because it allows different organs of government placed at the same level to exercise different powers. Such a separation ensures that none of the organs can exercise unlimited power. Each organ checks the others. This results in a balance of power among various institutions. Last year we studied that in a democracy, even though ministers and government officials exercise power, they are responsible to the Parliament or State Assemblies. Similarly, although judges are appointed by the executive, they can check the functioning of executive or laws made by the legislatures. This arrangement is called a system of checks and balances.

2 Power can be shared **among governments at different levels –** a general government for the entire country and governments at the provincial or regional level. Such a general government for the entire country is usually called federal government. In India, we refer to it as the Central or Union Government. The governments at the provincial or regional level are called by different names in different countries. In India,

Reigning Reins

© Olle Johansson - Sweden, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Recently some new laws were made in Russia giving more powers to its president. During the same time the US president visited Russia. What, according to this cartoon, is the relationship between democracy and concentration of power? Can you think of some other examples to illustrate the point being made here?

we call them State Governments. This system is not followed in all countries. There are many countries where there are no provincial or state governments. But in those countries like ours, where there are different levels of governments, the constitution clearly lays down the powers of different levels of government. This is what they did in Belgium, but was refused in Sri Lanka. This is called federal division of power. The same principle can be extended to levels of government lower than the State government, such as the municipality and panchayat. Let us call division of powers involving higher and lower levels of government vertical division of power. We shall study these at some length in the next chapter.

3 Power may also be shared **among different social groups,** such as the religious and linguistic groups. 'Community government' in Belgium is a good example of this arrangement. In some countries there are constitutional and legal arrangements whereby socially weaker sections and women are represented in the legislatures and administration. Last year we studied the system of 'reserved constituencies' in assemblies and the parliament of our country. This type of arrangement is meant to give space in the government and administration to diverse social groups who otherwise would feel alienated from the government. This method is used to give minority communities a fair share in power. In Chapter 3, we shall look at various ways of accommodating social diversities.

4 Power sharing arrangements can also be seen in the way **political parties, pressure groups and movements** control or influence those in power. In a democracy, the citizens must have freedom to choose among various contenders for power. In contemporary democracies this takes the form of competition among different parties. Such competition ensures that power does not remain in one hand. In the long run power is shared among different political parties that represent different ideologies and social groups. Sometimes this kind of sharing can be direct, when two or more parties form an alliance to contest elections. If their alliance is elected, they form a coalition government and thus share power. In a democracy, we find interest groups such as those of traders, businessmen, industrialists, farmers and industrial workers. They also will have a share in governmental power, either through participation in governmental committees or bringing influence on the decision making process. In Chapter 4, we shall study the working of political parties, pressure groups and social movements.

Here are some examples of power sharing. Which of the four types of power sharing do these represent? Who is sharing power with whom?

- The Bombay High Court ordered the Maharashtra state government to immediately take action and improve living conditions for the 2,000-odd children at seven children's homes in Mumbai.
- The government of Ontario state in Canada has agreed to a land claim settlement with the aboriginal community. The Minister responsible for Native Affairs announced that the government will work with aboriginal people in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation.
- Russia's two influential political parties, the Union of Right Forces and the Liberal Yabloko Movement, agreed to unite their organisations into a strong right-wing coalition. They propose to have a common list of candidates in the next parliamentary elections.
- The finance ministers of various states in Nigeria got together and demanded that the federal government declare its sources of income. They also wanted to know the formula by which the revenue is distributed to various state governments.

Exercises

1. What are the different forms of power sharing in modern democracies? Give an example of each of these.
2. State one prudential reason and one moral reason for power sharing with an example from the Indian context.
3. After reading this chapter, three students drew different conclusions. Which of these do you agree with and why? Give your reasons in about 50 words.

   Thomman - Power sharing is necessary only in societies which have religiousm, linguistic or ethnic divisions.

   Mathayi – Power sharing is suitable only for big countries that have regional divisions.

   Ouseph – Every society needs some form of power sharing even if it is small or does not have social divisions.
4. The Mayor of Merchtem, a town near Brussels in Belgium, has defended a ban on speaking French in the town's schools. He said that the ban would help all non-Dutch speakers integrate in this Flemish town. Do you think that this measure is in keeping with the spirit of Belgium's power sharing arrangements? Give your reasons in about 50 words.

5. Read the following passage and pick out any one of the prudential reasons for power sharing offered in this.

   "We need to give more power to the panchayats to realise the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the hopes of the makers of our Constitution. Panchayati Raj establishes true democracy. It restores power to the only place where power belongs in a democracy – in the hands of the people. Giving power to Panchayats is also a way to reduce corruption and increase administrative efficiency. When people participate in the planning and implementation of developmental schemes, they would naturally exercise greater control over these schemes. This would eliminate the corrupt middlemen. Thus, Panchayati Raj will strengthen the foundations of our democracy."

6. Different arguments are usually put forth in favour of and against power sharing. Identify those which are in favour of power sharing and select the answer using the codes given below? Power sharing:

   A. reduces conflict among different communities
   B. decreases the possibility of arbitrariness
   C. delays decision making process
   D. accommodates diversities
   E. increases instability and divisiveness
   F. promotes people's participation in government
   G. undermines the unity of a country

(a)	A	B	D	F
(b)	A	C	E	F
(c)	A	B	D	G
(d)	B	C	D	G

7. Consider the following statements about power sharing arrangements in Belgium and Sri Lanka.

   A. In Belgium, the Dutch-speaking majority people tried to impose their domination on the minority French-speaking community.
   B. In Sri Lanka, the policies of the government sought to ensure the dominance of the Sinhala-speaking majority.
   C. The Tamils in Sri Lanka demanded a federal arrangement of power sharing to protect their culture, language and equality of opportunity in education and jobs.
   D. The transformation of Belgium from unitary government to a federal one prevented a possible division of the country on linguistic lines.

   Which of the statements given above are correct?

   (a) A, B, C and D (b) A, B and D (c) C and D (d) B, C and D

8. Match List I (forms of power sharing) with List II (forms of government) and select the correct answer using the codes given below in the lists:

	List I	**List II**
1.	Power shared among different organs of government	A. Community government
2.	Power shared among governments at different levels	B. Separation of powers
3.	Power shared by different social groups	C. Coalition government
4.	Power shared by two or more political parties	D. Federal government

	1	2	3	4
(a)	D	A	B	C
(b)	B	C	D	A
(c)	B	D	A	C
(d)	C	D	A	B

9. Consider the following two statements on power sharing and select the answer using the codes given below:
   A. Power sharing is good for democracy.
   B. It helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups.

   Which of these statements are true and false?

(a) A is true but B is false
(b) Both A and B are true
(c) Both A and B are false
(d) A is false but B is true

Federalism

Chapter 2

Overview

In the previous chapter, we noted that vertical division of power among different levels of governments is one of the major forms of power sharing in modern democracies. In this chapter, we focus on this form of power sharing. It is most commonly referred to as federalism. We begin by describing federalism in general terms. The rest of the chapter tries to understand the theory and practice of federalism in India. A discussion of the federal constitutional provisions is followed by an analysis of the policies and politics that has strengthened federalism in practice. Towards the end of the chapter, we turn to the local government, a new and third tier of Indian federalism.

What is federalism?

I am confused. What do we call the Indian government? Is it Union, Federal or Central?

Let us get back to the contrast between Belgium and Sri Lanka that we saw in the last chapter. You would recall that one of the key changes made in the Constitution of Belgium was to reduce the power of the Central Government and to give these powers to the regional governments. Regional governments existed in Belgium even earlier. They had their roles and powers. But all these powers were given to these governments and could be withdrawn by the Central Government. The change that took place in 1993 was that the regional governments were given constitutional powers that were no longer dependent on the central government. Thus, Belgium shifted from a unitary to a federal form of government. Sri Lanka continues to be, for all practical purposes, a unitary system where the national government has all the powers. Tamil leaders want Sri Lanka to become a federal system.

Federalism is a system of government in which the power is divided between a central authority and various constituent units of the country. Usually, a federation has two levels of government. One is the government for the entire country that is usually responsible for a few subjects of common national interest. The others are governments at the level of provinces or states that look after much of the day-to-day administering of their state. Both these levels of governments enjoy their power independent of the other.

Source: Montreal and Kingston, *Handbook of Federal Countries: 2002*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

Though only 25 of the world's 192 countries have federal political systems, their citizens make up 40 per cent of the world's population. Most of the large countries of the world are federations. Can you notice an exception to this rule in this map?

In this sense, federations are contrasted with unitary governments. Under the unitary system, either there is only one level of government or the sub-units are subordinate to the central government. The central government can pass on orders to the provincial or the local government. But in a federal system, the central government cannot order the state government to do something. State government has powers of its own for which it is not answerable to the central government. Both these governments are separately answerable to the people.

Let us look at some of the key features of federalism **:**

1 There are two or more levels (or tiers) of government.

2 Different tiers of government govern the same citizens, but each tier has its own JURISDICTION in specific matters of legislation, taxation and administration.

3 The jurisdictions of the respective levels or tiers of government are specified in the constitution. So the existence and authority of each tier of government is constitutionally guaranteed.

4 The fundamental provisions of the constitution cannot be unilaterally changed by one level of government. Such changes require the consent of both the levels of government.

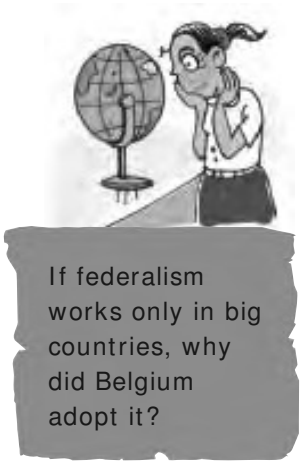
5 Courts have the power to interpret the constitution and the powers of different levels of government. The highest court acts as an umpire if disputes arise between different levels of government in the exercise of their respective powers.

6 Sources of revenue for each level of government are clearly specified to ensure its financial autonomy.

7 The federal system thus has dual objectives: to safeguard and promote unity of the country, while at the same time accommodate regional diversity. Therefore, two aspects are crucial for the institutions and practice of federalism. Governments at different levels should agree to some rules of power sharing. They should also trust that each would abide by its part of the agreement. An ideal federal system has both aspects : mutual trust and agreement to live together.

The exact balance of power between the central and the state government varies from one federation to another. This balance depends mainly on the historical context in which the federation was formed. There are two kinds of routes through which federations have been formed. The first route involves independent States coming together on their own to form a bigger unit, so that by pooling sovereignity and retaining identity they can increase their security. This type of **'coming together' federations** include the USA, Switzerland and Australia. In this first category of federations, all the constituent States usually have equal power and are strong vis-à-vis the federal government.

The second route is where a large country decides to divide its power between the constituent States and the national government. India, Spain and Belgium are examples of this kind of **'holding together' federations.** In this second category, the central government tends to be more powerful vis-à-vis the States. Very often different constituent units of the federation have unequal powers. Some units are granted special powers.



GlOssary

Jurisdiction: The area over which someone has legal authority. The area may be defined in terms of geographical boundaries or in terms of certain kinds of subjects.

Some Nepalese citizens were discussing the proposals on the adoption of federalism in their new constitution. This is what some of them said:

Khag Raj: I don't like federalism. It would lead to reservation of seats for different caste groups as in India.

Sarita: Ours in not a very big country. We don't need federalism.

Babu Lal: I am hopeful that the Terai areas will get more autonomy if they get their own state government.

Ram Ganesh: I like federalism because it will mean that powers that were earlier enjoyed by the king will now be exercised by our elected representatives.

If you were participating in this conversation what would be your response to each of these? Which of these reflect a wrong understanding of what federalism is? What makes India a federal country?

What makes India a federal country?

We have earlier seen how small countries like Belgium and Sri Lanka face so many problems of managing diversity. What about a vast country like India, with so many languages, religions and regions? What are the power sharing arrangements in our country?

Isn't that strange? Did our constitution makers not know about federalism? Or did they wish to avoid talking about it?

Let us begin with the Constitution. India had emerged as an independent nation after a painful and bloody partition. Soon after Independence, several princely states became a part of the country. The Constitution declared India as a Union of States. Although it did not use the word federation, the Indian Union is based on the principles of federalism.

Let us go back to the seven features of federalism mentioned above. We can see that all these features apply to the provisions of the Indian Constitution. The Constitution originally provided for a two-tier system of government, the Union Government or what we call the Central Government, representing the Union of India and the State governments. Later, a third tier of federalism was added in the form of Panchayats and Municipalities. As in any federation, these different tiers enjoy separate jurisdiction. The Constitution clearly provided a three-fold distribution of legislative powers between the Union Government and the State Governments. Thus, it contains three lists:

- **Union List** includes subjects of national importance such as defence of the country, foreign affairs, banking, communications and currency. They are included in this list because we need a uniform policy on these matters throughout the country. The Union Government alone can make laws relating to the subjects mentioned in the Union List.
- **State List** contains subjects of State and local importance such as police, trade, commerce, agriculture and irrigation. The State Governments

alone can make laws relating to the subjects mentioned in the State List.

- **Concurrent List** includes subjects of common interest to both the Union Government as well as the State Governments, such as education, forest, trade unions, marriage, adoption and succession. Both the Union as well as the State Governments can make laws on the subjects mentioned in this list. If their laws conflict with each other, the law made by the Union Government will prevail.

What about subjects that do not fall in any of the three lists? Or subjects like computer software that came up after the constitution was made? According to our constitution, the Union Government has the power to legislate on these 'residuary' subjects.

We noted above that most federations that are formed by 'holding together' do not give equal power to its constituent units. Thus, all States in the Indian Union do not have identical powers. Some States enjoy a special status. Jammu and Kashmir has its own Constitution. Many provisions of the Indian Constitution are not applicable to this State without the approval of the State Assembly. Indians who are not permanent residents of this State cannot buy land or house here. Similar special provisions exist for some other States of India as well.

There are some units of the Indian Union which enjoy very little power. These are areas which are too small to become an independent State but which could not be merged with any of the existing States. These areas, like Chandigarh, or Lakshadweep or the capital city of Delhi, are called Union Territories. These territories do not have the powers of a State. The Central Government has special powers in running these areas.

This sharing of power between the Union Government and the State governments is basic to the structure of the Constitution. It is not easy to make changes to this power sharing arrangement. The Parliament cannot on its own change this arrangement. Any change to it has to be first passed by both the Houses of Parliament with at least two-thirds majority. Then it has to be ratified by the legislatures of at least half of the total States.

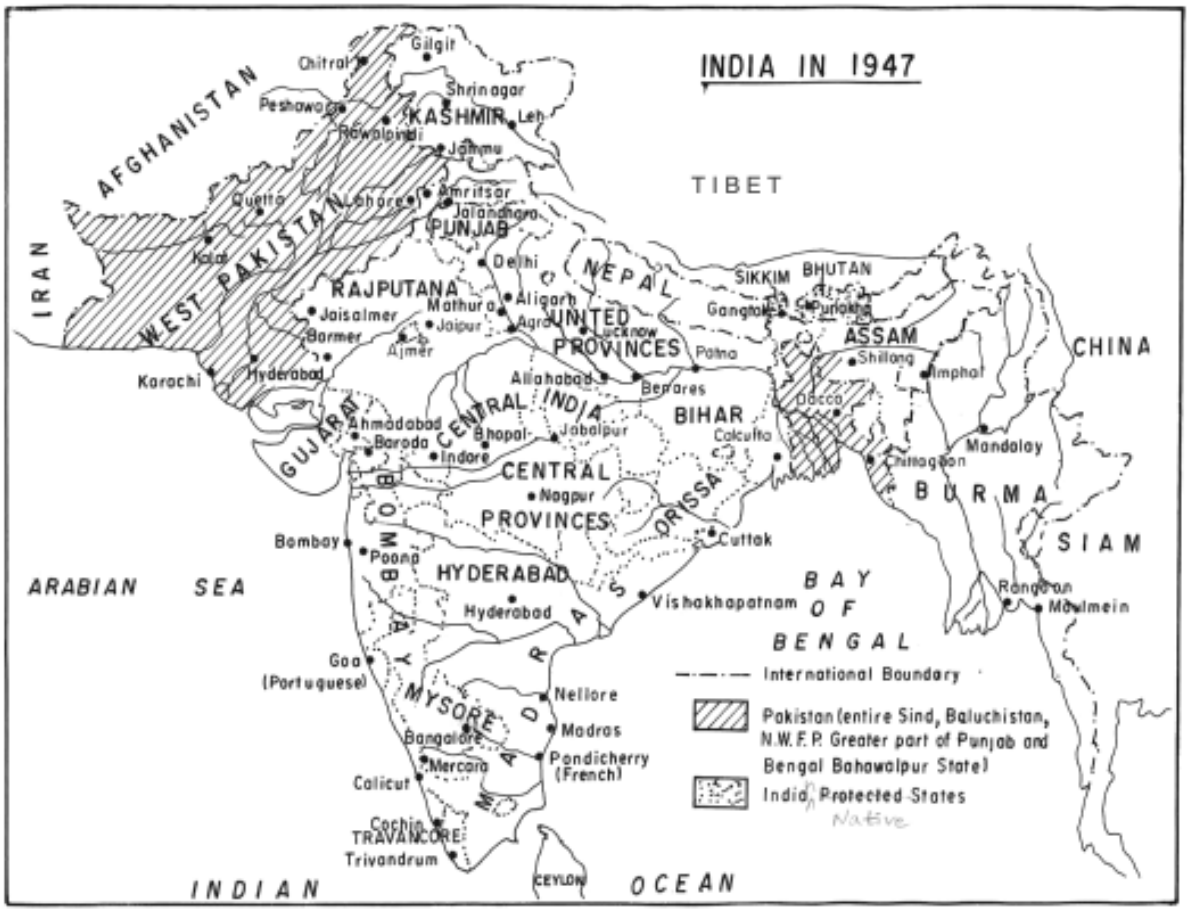
The judiciary plays an important role in overseeing the implementation of constitutional provisions and procedures. In case of any dispute about the division of powers, the High Courts and the Supreme Court make a decision. The Union and State governments have the power to raise resources by levying taxes in order to carry on the government and the responsibilities assigned to each of them.

If agriculture and commerce are state subjects, why do we have ministers of agriculture and commerce in the Union cabinet?

Listen to one national and one regional news bulletin broadcast by All India Radio daily for one week. Make a list of news items related to government policies or decisions by classifying these into the following categories:

- News items that relate only to the Central Government,
- News items that relate only to your or any other State Government,
- News items about the relationship between the Central and State Governments.

- Pokharan, the place where India conducted its nuclear tests, lies in Rajasthan. Suppose the Government of Rajasthan was opposed to the Central Government's nuclear policy, could it prevent the Government of India from conducting the nuclear tests?
- Suppose the Government of Sikkim plans to introduce new textbooks in its schools. But the Union Government does not like the style and content of the new textbooks. In that case, does the state government need to take permission from the Union Government before these textbooks can be launched?
- Suppose the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa have different policies on how their state police should respond to the naxalites. Can the Prime Minister of India intervene and pass an order that all the Chief Ministers will have to obey?



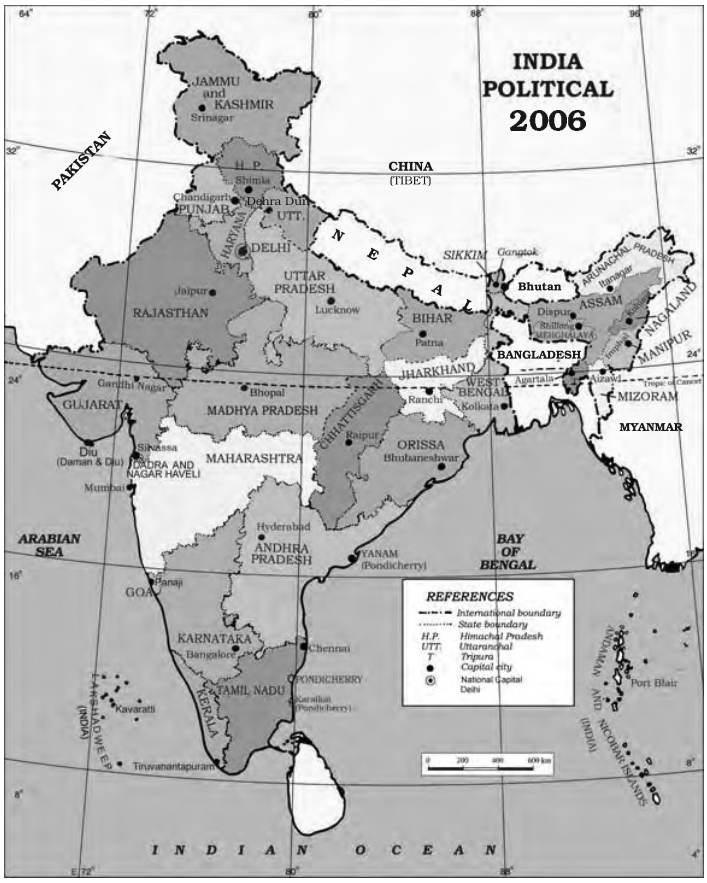
How is federalism practiced?

Constitutional provisions are necessary for the success of federalism but these are not sufficient. If the federal experiment has succeeded in India, it is not merely because of the clearly laid out constitutional provisions. The real success of federalism in India can be attributed to the nature of democratic politics in our country. This ensured that the spirit of federalism, respect for diversity and desire for living together became a shared ideal in our country. Let us look at some of the major ways in which this happened.

Linguistic States

The creation of Linguistic States was the first and a major test for democratic politics in our country. If you look at the political map of India when it began its journey as a democracy in 1947 and that of 2006, you will be surprised by the extent of the changes. Many old States have vanished and many new States have been created. Areas, boundaries and names of the States have been changed.

In 1947, the boundaries of several old States of India were changed in order to create new States. This was done to ensure that people who spoke the same language lived in the same State. Some States were created not on the basis of language but to recognise differences based on culture, ethnicity or geography. These include States like Nagaland, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand.



- *Has your village or town remained under the same State since Independence? If not, what was the name of the earlier State?*
- *Can you identify three State names in 1947 that have changed later?*
- *Identify any three States which have been carved out of a bigger State.*

When the demand for the formation of States on the basis of language was raised, some national leaders feared that it would lead to the disintegration of the country. The Central Government resisted linguistic States for some time. But the experience has shown that the formation of linguistic States has actually made the country, more united. It has also made administration easier.

Why Hindi? Why not Bangla or Telugu?

Language policy

A second test for Indian federation is the language policy. Our Constitution did not give the status of national language to any one language. Hindi was identified as the official language. But Hindi is the mother tongue of only about 40 per cent of Indians. Therefore, there were many safeguards to protect other languages. Besides Hindi, there are 21 other languages recognised as Scheduled Languages by the Constitution. A candidate in an examination conducted for the Central Government positions may opt to take the examination in any of these languages. States too have their own official languages. Much of the government work takes place in the official language of the concerned State.

Unlike Sri Lanka, the leaders of our country adopted a very cautious attitude in spreading the use of Hindi. According to the Constitution, the use of English for official purposes was to stop in 1965. However, many non-Hindi speaking States demanded that the use of English continue. In Tamil Nadu, this movement took a violent form. The Central Government responded by agreeing to continue the use of English along with Hindi for official purposes. Many critics think that this solution favoured the English-speaking elite. Promotion of Hindi continues to be the official policy of the Government of India. Promotion does not mean that the Central Government can impose Hindi on States where people speak a different language. The flexibility shown by Indian political leaders helped our country avoid the kind of situation that Sri Lanka finds itself in.

Centre-State relations

Restructuring the Centre-State relations is one more way in which federalism has been strengthened in practice. How the constitutional arrangements for sharing power work in reality depends to a large extent on how the ruling parties and leaders follow these arrangements. For a long time, the same party ruled both at the Centre and in most of the States. This meant that the State governments did not exercise their rights as autonomous federal units. As and when the ruling party at the State level was different, the parties that ruled at the Centre tried to undermine the power of the States. In those days, the Central Government would often misuse the Constitution to dismiss the State governments that were controlled by rival parties. This undermined the spirit of federalism.

All this changed significantly after 1990. This period saw the rise of regional political parties in many States of the country. This was also the beginning of the era of COALITION GOVERNMENTS at the Centre. Since no single party got a clear majority in the Lok Sabha, the major national parties had to enter into an alliance with many parties including several regional parties to form a government at the Centre. This led to a new culture of power sharing and respect for the autonomy of State Governments. This trend was

GlOssary

Coalition government: A government formed by the coming together of at least two political parties. Usually partners in a coalition form a political alliance and adopt a common programme.

The States Plead for More Powers

© Kutty - *Laughing with Kutty*

Perils of Running a Coalition Government

© Ajith Ninan - *India Today Book of Cartoons*

Here are two cartoons showing the relationship between Centre and States. Should the State go to the Centre with a begging bowl? How can the leader of a coalition keep the partners of government satisfied?

supported by a major judgement of the Supreme Court that made it difficult for the Central Government to dismiss state governments in an arbitrary manner. Thus, federal power sharing is more effective today than it was in the early years after the Constitution came into force.

Linguistic diversity of India

How many languages do we have in India? The answer depends on how one counts it. The latest information that we have is from the Census of India held in 1991. This census recorded more than 1500 distinct languages which people mentioned as their mother tongues. These languages were grouped together under some major languages. For example languages like Bhojpuri, Magadhi, Bundelkhandi, Chhattisgarhi, Rajasthani, Bhili and many others were grouped together under 'Hindi'. Even after this grouping, the Census found 114 major languages. Of these 22 languages are now included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and are therefore called 'Scheduled Languages'. Others are called 'non-Scheduled Languages'. In terms of languages, India is perhaps the most diverse country in the world.

A look at the enclosed table makes it clear that no one language is the mother tongue of the majority of our population. The largest language, Hindi, is the mother tongue of only about 40 per cent Indians. If we add to that all those who knew Hindi as their second or third language, the total number was still less than 50 per cent in 1991. As for English, only 0.02 per cent Indians recorded it as their mother tongue. Another 11 per cent knew it as a second or third language.

Read this table carefully, but you do not need to memorise it. Just do the following:

- Make a bar or pie chart on the basis of this information.
- Prepare a map of linguistic diversity of India by shading the region where each of these languages is spoken on the map of India.
- Find out about three languages that are spoken in India but are not included in this table.

Scheduled Languages of India

Language	Proportion of speakers (%)
Assamese	1.6
Bangla	8.3
Bodo	0.1
Dogri	0.2
Gujarati	4.9
Hindi	40.2
Kannada	3.9
Kashmiri	0.5
Konkani	0.2
Maithili	0.9
Malayalam	3.6
Manipuri	0.2
Marathi	7.5
Nepali	0.3
Oriya	3.4
Punjabi	2.8
Sanskrit	0.01
Santhali	0.6
Sindhi	0.3
Tamil	6.3
Telugu	7.9
Urdu	5.2

Note: The first column in this table lists all the languages currently included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The second column gives the proportion of the speakers of each of these languages as per cent of the total population of India. These figures are based on the Census of India, 1991. The figures for Kashmiri and Dogri are based on estimates, as the Census was not conducted in Jammu and Kashmir in 1991.

Read the following excerpts from an article by noted historian, Ramachandra Guha, that appeared in the *Times of India* on November 1, 2006:

"The report of the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC), was implemented exactly 50 years ago, on November 1, 1956. This, in its own time and own way, has also transformed the political and institutional life of the nation. … Gandhi and other leaders promised their followers that when freedom came, the new nation would be based on a new set of provinces, these based on the principle of language. However, when India was finally freed in 1947, it was also divided...

Partition was the consequence of a primordial attachment to one's faith; how many more partitions would that other primordial loyalty, language, lead to? So ran the thinking of Nehru, Patel and Rajaji.

Far from undermining Indian unity, linguistic states have helped strengthen it. It has proved to be perfectly consistent to be Kannadiga and Indian, Bengali and Indian, Tamil and Indian, Gujarati and Indian. To be sure, these states based on language sometimes quarrel with one another.

While these disputes are not pretty, they could in fact have been far worse.

It is the formation of linguistic states that has allowed India to escape what might have been a worse fate still. If the sentiments of the native speakers of Telugu, Marathi, et. al. had been disregarded, what we might have here was: 'One language: 14 or 15 nations'."

Take the example of your own state or any other state that was affected by linguistic reorganisation. Write a short note for or against the argument given by the author here on the basis of that example.

Decentralisation in India

So, we are like a three-tier coach in a train! I always prefer the lower berth!

We noted above that federal governments have two or more tiers of governments. We have so far discussed the two-tiers of government in our country. But a vast country like India cannot be run only through these two-tiers. States in India are as large as independent countries of Europe. In terms of population, Uttar Pradesh is bigger than Russia, Maharashtra is about as big as Germany. Many of these States are internally very diverse. There is thus a need for power sharing within these States. Federal power sharing in India needs another tier of government, below that of the State governments. This is the rationale for decentralisation of power. Thus, resulted a third-tier of government, called local government.

When power is taken away from Central and State governments and given to local government, it is called decentralisation. The basic idea behind decentralisation is that there are a large number of problems and issues which are best settled at the local level. People have better knowledge of problems in their localities. They also have better ideas on where to spend money and how to manage things more efficiently. Besides, at the local level it is possible for the people to directly participate in decision making. This helps to inculcate a habit of democratic participation. Local government is the best way to realise one important principle of democracy, namely local self-government.

The need for decentralisation was recognised in our Constitution. Since then, there have been several attempts to decentralise power to the level of villages and towns. Panchayats in villages and municipalities in urban areas were set up in all the States. But these were directly under the control of state governments. Elections to these local governments were not held regularly. Local governments did not have any powers or resources of their own. Thus, there was very little decentralisation in effective terms.

A major step towards decentralisation was taken in 1992. The Constitution was amended to make the third-tier of democracy more powerful and effective.

- Now it is constitutionally mandatory to hold regular elections to local government bodies.
- Seats are reserved in the elected bodies and the executive heads of these institutions for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.
- At least one-third of all positions are reserved for women.
- An independent institution called the State Election Commission has been created in each State to conduct panchayat and municipal elections.
- The State governments are required to share some powers and revenue with local government bodies. The nature of sharing varies from State to State.

Rural local government is popularly known by the name panchayati raj. Each village, or a group of villages in some States, has a gram panchayat. This is a council consisting of several ward members, often called panch, and a president or sarpanch. They are directly elected by all the adult population living in that ward

or village. It is the decision-making body for the entire village. The panchayat works under the overall supervision of the gram sabha. All the voters in the village are its members. It has to meet at least twice or thrice in a year to approve the annual budget of the gram panchayat and to review the performance of the gram panchayat.

The local government structure goes right up to the district level. A few gram panchayats are grouped together to form what is usually called a panchayat samiti or block or mandal. The members of this representative body are elected by all the panchyat members in that area. All the panchayat samitis or mandals in a district together constitute the zilla (district) parishad. Most members of the zilla parishad are elected. Members of the Lok Sabha and MLAs of that district and some other officials of other district level bodies are also its members. Zilla parishad chairperson is the political head of the zilla parishad.

Similarly, local government bodies exist for urban areas as well. Municipalities are set up in towns. Big cities are constituted into municipal corporations. Both municipalities and municipal corporations are controlled by elected bodies consisting of people's representatives. Municipal chairperson is the political head of the municipality. In a municipal corporation such an officer is called the mayor.

Prime Minister runs the country. Chief Minister runs the state. Logically, then, the chairperson of Zilla Parishad should run the district. Why does the D.M. or Collector administer the district?

What do these newspaper clippings have to say about efforts of decentralisation in India?

An experiment in Brazil

A city called Porto Alegre in Brazil has carried out an extraordinary experiment in combining decentralisation with participative democracy. The city has set up a parallel organisation operating alongside the municipal council, enabling local inhabitants to take real decisions for their city. The nearly 13 lakh people in this city get to participate in making the budget for their own city. The city is divided into many sectors or what we call wards. Each sector has a meeting, like that of the gram sabha, in which anyone living in that area can participate. There are some meetings to discuss issues that affect the entire city. Any citizen of the city can participate in those meetings. The budget of the city is discussed in these meetings. The proposals are put to the municipality that takes a final decision about it.

About 20,000 people participate in this decision making exercise every year. This method has ensured that the money cannot be spent only for the benefit of the colonies where rich people live. Buses now run to the poor colonies and builders cannot evict slum-dwellers without resettling them.

In our own country, a similar experiment has taken place in some areas in Kerala. Ordinary people have participated in making a plan for the development of their locality.

This new system of local government is the largest experiment in democracy conducted anywhere in the world. There are now about 36 lakh elected representatives in the panchayats and municipalities etc., all over the country. This number is bigger than the population of many countries in the world. Constitutional status for local government has helped to deepen democracy in our country. It has also increased women's representation and voice in our democracy. At the same time, there are many difficulties. While elections are held regularly and enthusiastically, gram sabhas are not held regularly. Most state governments have not transferred significant powers to the local governments. Nor have they given adequate resources. We are thus still a long way from realising the ideal of self-government.

Find out about the local government in the village or town you live in.

If you live in a village, find out the names of the following: your panch or ward member, your sarpanch, your panchayat samiti, the chairperson of your zilla parishad. Also find out when did the last meeting of the gram sabha take place and how many people took part in that.

If you live in urban areas, find out the name of your municipal councillor, and the municipal chairperson or mayor. Also find out about the budget of your municipal corporation, municipality and the major items on which money was spent.

Exercises

1. Locate the following States on a blank outline political map of India: Manipur, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh and Goa.
2. Identify and shade three federal countries (other than India) on a blank outline political map of the world.
3. Point out one feature in the practice of federalism in India that is similar to and one feature that is different from that of Belgium.
4. What is the main difference between a federal form of government and a unitary one? Explain with an example.
5. State any two differences between the local government before and after the Constitutional amendment in 1992.
6. Fill in the blanks:

   Since the United States is a _____ type of federation, all the constituent States have equal powers and States are _____vis-à-vis the federal government. But India is a _____ type of federation and some States have more power than others. In India, the _____ government has more powers.
7. Here are three reactions to the language policy followed in India. Give an argument and an example to support any of these positions.

   Sangeeta: The policy of accommodation have strengthened national unity.

   Arman: Language based States has divided us by making everyone conscious of their language.

   Harish: This policy has only helped to consolidate the dominance of English over all other languages.
8. The distinguishing feature of a federal government is:

   (a) National government gives some powers to the provincial government.

   (b) Power is distributed among the legislature, executive and judiciary.

   (c) Elected officials exercise supreme power in the government.

   (d) Governmental power is divided between different levels of government.
9. A few subjects in various Lists of the Indian Constitution are given here. Group them under the Union, State and Concurrent Lists as provided in the table below.

   A. Defence; B. Police; C. Agriculture; D. Education;

   E. Banking; F. Forests; G. Communications; H. Trade; I. Marriages

Union List	
State List	
Concurrent List	

10. Examine the following pairs that give the level of government in India and the powers of the government at that level to make laws on the subjects mentioned against each. Which of the following pairs is not correctly matched?

(a) State government	State List
(b) Central government	Union List
(c) Central and State governments	Concurrent List
(d) Local governments	Residuary powers

11. Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

List I	List II
1. Union of India	A. Prime Minister
2. State	B. Sarpanch
3. Municipal Corporation	C. Governor
4. Gram Panchayat	D. Mayor

	1	2	3	4
(a)	D	A	B	C
(b)	B	C	D	A
(c)	A	C	D	B
(d)	C	D	A	B

12. Consider the following two statements.
    A. In a federation the powers of the federal and provincial governments are clearly demarcated.
    B. India is a federation because the powers of the Union and State Governments are specified in the Constitution and they have exclusive jurisdiction on their respective subjects.
    C. Sri Lanka is a federation because the country is divided into provinces.
    D. India is no longer a federation because some powers of the States have been devolved to the local government bodies.

    Which of the statements given above are correct?

    (a) A, B and C (b) A, C and D (c) A and B only (d) B and C only

Democracy and Diversity

Chapter 3

Overview

In the last chapter, we saw how power can be distributed to accommodate linguistic and regional diversities. But language and region are not the only features that give a distinct identity to people. Sometimes, people also identify themselves and relate with others on the basis of their physical appearance, class, religion, gender, caste, tribe, etc. In this chapter, we study how democracy responds to social differences, divisions and inequalities. We begin with an example of public expression of social divisions. We then draw some general lessons about how social differences can take various forms. We then turn to how democratic politics affects and is affected by these social diversities.

A Story from Mexico Olympics

My salute to Carlos and Smith! Will I ever have the courage to do what they did?

The pictures on this page depict an important landmark in the history of the CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES. These represent the medal ceremony of the 200 metres race in the 1968 Olympics held at Mexico City. The two men standing with clenched fists upraised and heads bowed, while the American national anthem was played, are the US athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos. They are AFRICAN-AMERICANS. They had won the gold and bronze medals respectively. They received their medals wearing black socks and no shoes to represent Black poverty. With this gesture, they tried to draw international attention to racial discrimination in the United States. The black-gloved and raised clenched fists were meant to symbolise BLACK POWER. The silver medallist, white Australian athlete, Peter Norman, wore a human rights badge on his shirt during the ceremony to show his support to the two Americans.

Do you think that Carlos and Smith should have raised an internal matter of American society in an international forum? Would you say that what they did was political? Why do you think Peter Norman, who was neither Black nor American, joined in the gesture of protest? If you were in Norman's place what would you do?

Glossary

Civil Rights Movement in the USA (1954-1968) refers to a set of events and reform movements aimed at abolishing legal racial discrimination against African-Americans. Led by Martin Luther King Jr., this movement practiced non-violent methods of civil disobedience against racially discriminatory laws and practices.

African-American, Afro-American, Black American, or Black are the terms used to refer mainly to the descendants of Africans who were brought into America as slaves between the 17th century and early 19th century.

The Black Power movement emerged in 1966 and lasted till 1975, which was a more militant anti-racist movement, advocating even violence if necessary to end racism in the US.

© wikipedia & photo flickr.com Kevin

In 2005, the San Jose State University installed a 20-foot high sculpture representing the protest by Tommie Smith and John Carlos. A photograph of the original medal ceremony in 1968 is on the top.

The International Olympic Association held Carlos and Smith guilty of violating the Olympic spirit by making a political statement. Their medals were taken back. Back home, they were subjected to a lot of criticism. Norman too suffered for his action and was not included in the Australian team for the next Olympic. But their action succeeded in gaining international attention for the Civil Rights Movement in the US. Recently, the San Jose (pronounced 'Saan Hoze') State University, of which they were former students, honoured them and installed their statue in the University campus. When Norman died in 2006, Smith and Carlos were pallbearers at his funeral.

Let Us .. DEBATE ..

Some *Dalit* groups decided to participate in the UN Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001, demanding the inclusion of caste in the agenda of this conference. Here are three reactions to this move:

Amandeep Kaur (a government official): Our Constitution declares caste discrimination to be illegal. If some caste discrimination continues, it is an internal matter. I am opposed to this being raised in an international forum.

Oinam (a sociologist): I am opposed to this because caste and race are not similar divisions. Caste is a social division, while race is a biological one. Raising caste in this conference on racism would mean equating the two.

Ashok (a *Dalit* activist): The argument about internal matter is a way of preventing open discussion of oppression and discrimination. Race is not purely biological. It is as much a legal and sociological category as caste. Caste discrimination must be raised in this conference.

Which of the three opinions do you agree with most and why?

I met this group of girls from Pakistan and felt that I had more in common with them than many girls from other parts of my own country. Is this anti-national to feel so?

Differences, similarities, divisions

The athletes in the example above were responding to social divisions and social inequalities. But does that happen only in societies which have racial divisions? In the previous two chapters we have already noted some other forms of social divisions. The examples of Belgium and Sri Lanka show both regional and social divisions. In the case of Belgium we noted that people who live in different regions speak different languages. In Sri Lanka, we noted linguistic as well as religious differences. Thus social diversity can take different forms in different societies.

Origins of social differences

These social differences are mostly based on accident of birth. Normally we don't choose to belong to our community. We belong to it simply because we were born into it. We all experience social differences based on accident of birth in our everyday lives. People around us are male or female, they are tall and short, have different kinds of complexions, or have different physical abilities or disabilities. But all kinds of social differences are not based on accident of birth. Some of the differences are based on our choices. For example, some people are atheists. They don't believe in God or any religion. Some people choose to follow a religion other than the one in which they were born. Most of us choose what to study, which occupation to take up and which games or cultural activities to take part in. All these lead to formation of social groups that are based on our choices.

Every social difference does not lead to social division. Social differences divide similar people from one another, but they also unite very different people. People belonging to different social groups share differences and similarities cutting across the boundaries of their groups. In the instance above, Carlos and Smith were similar in one way (both were African-American) and thus different from Norman who was white. But they were also all similar in other ways – they were all athletes who stood against racial discrimination.

It is fairly common for people belonging to the same religion to feel that they do not belong to the same community, because their caste or sect is very different. It is also possible for people from different religions to have the same caste and feel close to each other. Rich and poor persons from the same family often do not keep close relations with each other for they feel they are very different. Thus, we all have more than one identity and can belong to more than one social group. We have different identities in different contexts.

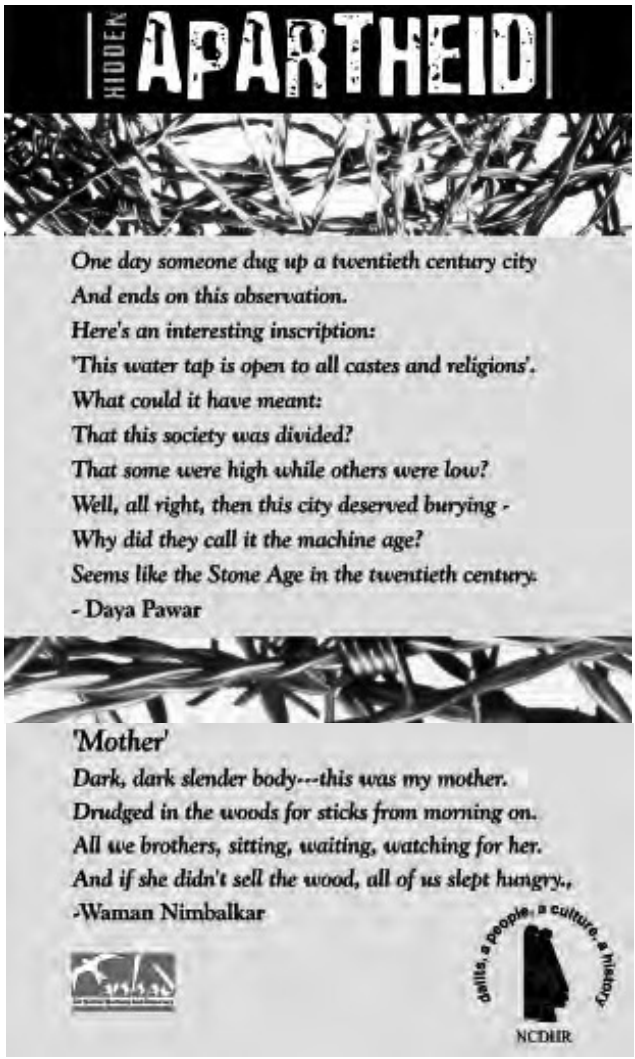
© Ares - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

A cartoon like this can be read by different people to mean different things. What does this cartoon mean to you? How do other students in your class read this?

Overlapping and cross-cutting differences

Social division takes place when some social difference overlaps with other differences. The difference between the Blacks and Whites becomes a social division in the US because the Blacks tend to be poor, homeless and discriminated against. In our country *Dalits* tend to be poor and landless. They often face discrimination and injustice. Situations of this kind produce social divisions, when one kind of social difference becomes more important than the other and people start feeling that they belong to different communities.

If social differences cross cut one another, it is difficult to pit one group of people against the other. It means that groups that share a common interest on one issue are likely to be in different sides on a different issue. Consider the cases of Northern Ireland and the Netherlands. Both are predominantly Christian but divided between Catholics and Protestants. In Northern Ireland, class and religion overlap with each other. If you are Catholic, you are also more likely to be poor, and you may have suffered a history of discrimination. In the Netherlands, class and religion tend to cut across each other. Catholics and Protestants are about equally likely to be poor or rich. The result is that Catholics and Protestants have had conflicts in Northern Ireland, while they do not do so in the Netherlands. Overlapping social differences create possibilities of deep social divisions and tensions. Cross-cutting social differences are easier to accommodate.



Read these two poems by Dalit *writers. Why do you think the poster is titled 'Hidden Apartheid' ?*

Social divisions of one kind or another exist in most countries. It does not matter whether the country is small or big. India is a vast country with many communities. Belgium is a small country with many communities. Even those countries such as Germany and Sweden, that were once highly HOMOGENEOUS, are undergoing rapid change with influx of people from other parts of the world. MIGRANTS bring with them their own culture and tend to form a different social community. In this sense most countries of the world are multi-cultural.

GlOssary

Homeogenous society: A society that has similar kinds of people, especially where there are no significant ethnic differences.

Migrant: Anybody who shifts from one region or country to another region within a country or to another country, usually for work or other economic opportunities.

Imrana is a student of Class X, section B. She and all her classmates are planning to help students of Class XI in giving a farewell party to the students of Class XII. Last month she played for section team in a game of kho-kho against the team of Class X, section A. She goes back home in a bus and joins all the students from various classes. They all come from trans-Yamuna area in Delhi. Back home, she often joins her elder sister, Naima, in complaining against her brother who does no work at home, while the sisters are asked to help their mother. Her father is looking for a good match for her elder sister, from a Muslim family with a similar economic status from their own 'biradari'.

Can you list the various kinds of identities Imrana has?

At home	she is	a girl
In terms of religion	she is	.....
In the school	she is	.....
.....	she is	.....
.....	she is	.....

Politics of social divisions

How do these social divisions affect politics? What does politics do to these social divisions? At first sight, it would appear that the combination of politics and social divisions is very dangerous and explosive. Democracy involves competition among various political parties. Their competition tends to divide any society. If they start competing in terms of some existing social divisions, it can make social divisions into political divisions and lead to conflict, violence or even disintegration of a country. This has happened in many countries.

Range of outcomes

Take the case of Northern Ireland that we referred to above. This region of the United Kingdom has been for many years the site of a violent and bitter ethno-political conflict. Its population is divided into two major sects of Christianity: 53 per cent are Protestants, while 44 per cent are Roman Catholics. The Catholics were represented by Nationalist parties who demanded that Northern Ireland be unified with the Republic of Ireland, a predominantly Catholic country. The Protestants were represented by Unionists who wanted to remain with the UK, which is predominantly protestant. Hundreds of civilians, militants and security forces were killed in the fight between Unionists and Nationalists and between the security forces of the UK and the Nationalists. It was only in 1998, that the UK government and the Nationalists

Bulgaria, Romania or India?

Ganesh had come back from his trip and was talking to Mahashweta about the Roma people who live in many countries of Eastern Europe. He met Yordanka who works as a nurse in Bulgaria. This is what she has to say about Roma people:

"Being a nurse you can't refuse to look after some people, but these Roma people are very dirty. Even when something small happens to any one in their family, all the family and even the neighbours just march to our hospital. And once they are in the hospital they don't know how to keep quiet. They talk aloud, smoke and drop ashes all over and spit on the wall! They have no patience, and they just start pestering our doctors! And when they are just hanging out like that any way they look so aggressive. After all these dark skinned people don't look like us. They have a strange sense of colour. Look at their dress, why can't they try to look like everyone else in the country? And we all know they are thieves. I have heard people say that these Roma people live by selling their blood. None of them can afford the hospital fees. But when they are ill they just rush to hospital at the cost of good Bulgarians who pay their taxes!"

"That sounds familiar' said Mahashweta.

Ganesh went on to talk about Modruzeni, a Romani who lives in Romania. When she was eighteen years old, she went to the hospital, to give birth to her first child. She had no money to pay to the doctor or nurse. Though she was in the hospital, nobody bothered to come and take care of her. Finally the sweeper, who was also a Romani, helped her give birth to a boy. And then the nurse appeared on the scene and said, "Here we have another criminal". Talking about how the Roma people are treated in public hospitals, she says: "These doctors keep us waiting outside their cabins. On one occasion one doctor asked me to take a bath if I needed to be examined! Of course, I smelled. During the pregnancy I ate from the garbage containers, because I was so hungry all the time. My husband had left me. I had two children, and I was pregnant with the third.

The social worker refused my request for food assistance. My neighbour helped me to deliver the baby. I often feel it is better not to visit these hospitals."

Mahashweta heard him out and said, "Ganesh, why do you have to travel halfway across the world to find this out? This is not a story about Romania and Bulgaria or about the Roma people. This is as much a story about our own country and about our people who are branded as criminals by our system."

- Do you think Mahashweta is right? Do you know of some community in your area that is treated like the Romas?
- Have you heard people say things similar to what Yordanka or Modruzeni say here? If yes, try to think of what the story would sound like if you heard it from the other side?

Do you think the Bulgarian government should try to ensure that the Roma people dress and behave like other people from Bulgaria?

So, it happens all over the world, even in Europe! I thought it was only in countries like India that we have social divisions.

reached a peace treaty after which the latter suspended their armed struggle. In Yugoslavia, the story did not have a happy end. Political competition along religious and ethnic lines led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia into six independent countries.

Such examples lead some people to conclude that politics and social divisions must not be allowed to mix. They think that it would be best if there are no social divisions in any country. If social divisions do exist in a country, they must never be expressed in politics.

At the same time every expression of social divisions in politics does not lead to such disasters. We have already seen that social divisions of one kind or another exist in most countries of the world. Wherever they exist, these divisions are reflected in politics. In a democracy it is only natural that political parties would talk about these divisions, make different promises to different communities, look after due representation of various communities and make policies to redress the grievances of the disadvantaged communities. Social divisions affect voting in most countries. People from one community tend to prefer some party more than others. In many countries there are parties that focus only on one community. Yet all this does not lead to disintegration of the country.

© Orion / Juska Rantanen flickr.com

In some societies of Northern Ireland, the colonies of Protestant and Catholic communities are divided by walls. These walls are sometimes filled with graffiti as you can see here. The Irish Republican Army and British Government signed an agreement in 2005. What does the graffiti here tell about the conflict in the society?

Three determinants

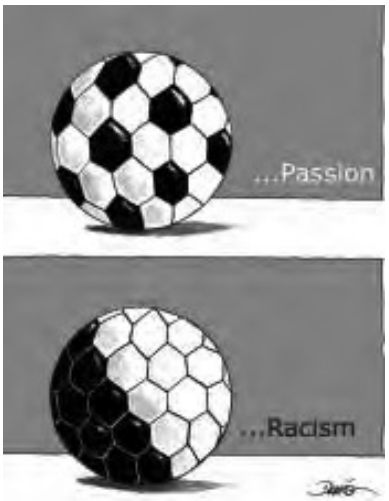
Three factors are crucial in deciding the outcome of politics of social divisions. First of all the outcome depends on how people perceive their identities. If people see their identities in singular and exclusive terms, it becomes very difficult to accommodate. As long as people in northern Ireland saw themselves as only Catholic or Protestant, their differences were difficult to reconcile. It is much easier if the people see that their identities are multiple and are complementary with the national identity. A majority of Belgians now feel that they are as much Belgian as they are Dutch or German-speaking. This helps them to stay together. This is how most people in our country see their identity: they think of themselves as Indian as well as belonging to a state or a language group or a social or religious community.

Second, it depends on how political leaders raise the demands of any community. It is easier to accommodate demands that are within the constitutional framework and are not at the cost of another community.

The demand for 'only Sinhala' was at the cost of the interest and identity of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. In Yugoslavia, the leaders of different ethnic communities presented their demands in such a way that these could not be accommodated within a single country.

Third, it depends on the how the government reacts to demands of different groups. As we saw in the examples of Belgium and Sri Lanka, if the rulers are willing to share power and accommodate the reasonable demands of minority community, social divisions become less threatening for the country. But if they try to suppress such a demand in the name of national unity, the end result is often quite the opposite. Such attempts at forced integration often sow the seeds of disintegration.

Thus the assertion of social diversities in a country need not be seen as a source of danger. In a democracy, political expression of social divisions is very normal and can be healthy. This allows various disadvantaged and marginal social groups to express their grievances and get the government to attend to these. Expression of various kinds of social divisions in politics often results in their cancelling one another out and thus reducing their intensity. This leads to strengthening of a democracy.



© Dario Castillejos - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

But a positive attitude towards diversity and a willingness to accommodate it do not come about easily. People who feel marginalised, deprived and discriminated have to fight against the injustices. Such a fight often takes the democratic path, voicing their demands in a peaceful and constitutional manner and seeking a fair position through elections. Sometimes social differences can take the form of unacceptable level of social inequality and injustice. The struggle against such inequalities sometimes takes the path of violence and defiance of state power. However history shows that democracy is the best way to fight for recognition and also to accommodate diversity.

Draw or collect some images of social divisions in different aspects of life. Can you think of some examples of social division or discrimination in the field of sports?

So, you are saying that too many small divisions are better than a single big division? Are you also saying that politics is a force of unity?

Exercises

1. Discuss three factors that determine the outcomes of politics of social divisions.
2. When does a social difference become a social division?
3. How do social divisions affect politics? Give two examples.
4. _____ social differences create possibilities of deep social divisions and tensions. _____ social differences do not usually lead to conflicts.

Exercises

5. In dealing with social divisions which one of the following statements is NOT correct about democracy?
   (a) Due to political competition in a democracy, social divisions get reflected in politics.
   (b) In a democracy it is possible for communities to voice their grievances in a peaceful manner.
   (c) Democracy is the best way to accommodate social diversity.
   (d) Democracy always leads to disintegration of society on the basis of social divisions.

6. Consider the following three statements.
   A. Social divisions take place when social differences overlap.
   B. It is possible that a person can have multiple identities.
   C. Social divisions exist in only big countries like India.

   Which of the statements is/are correct?

   (a) A, B and C (b) A and B (c) B and C (d) Only C

7. Arrange the following statements in a logical sequence and select the right answers by using the code given below.
   A. But all political expression of social divisions need not be always dangerous.
   B. Social divisions of one kind or the other exist in most countries.
   C. Parties try to win political support by appealing to social divisions.
   D. Some social differences may result in social divisions.

   (a) D, B, C, A (b) D, B, A, C (c) D, A, C, B (d) A, B, C, D

8. Among the following, which country suffered disintegration due to political fights on the basis of religious and ethnic identities?

   (a) Belgium (b) India (c) Yugoslavia (d) Netherlands

9. Read the following passage from a famous speech by Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963. Which social division is he talking about? What are his aspirations and anxieties? Do you see a relationship between this speech and the incident in Mexico Olympics mentioned in this chapter?

   "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. Let freedom ring. And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring—when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children—black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics—will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!' I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal'."

Gender, Religion and Caste

Chapter 4

Overview

In the previous chapter we noted that the existence of social diversity does not threaten democracy. Political expression of social differences is possible and sometimes quite desirable in a democratic system. In this chapter we apply these ideas to the practice of democracy in India. We look at three kinds of social differences that can take the form of social divisions and inequalities. These are social differences based on gender, religion and caste. In each case we look at the nature of this division in India and how it gets expressed in politics. We also ask whether different expressions based on these differences are healthy or otherwise in a democracy.

Gender and politics

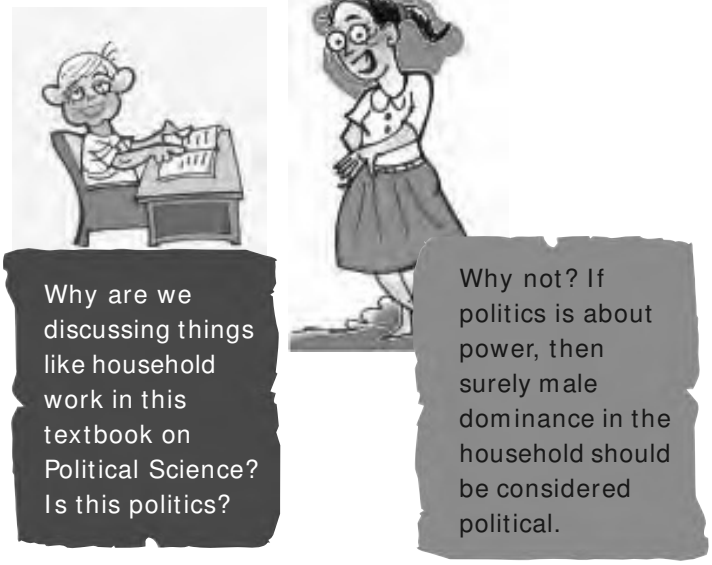
© Zuban

A poster from Bengal affirming women's strength.

Let us begin with gender division. This is a form of hierarchical social division seen everywhere, but is rarely recognised in the study of politics. The gender division tends to be understood as natural and unchangeable. However, it is not based on biology but on social expectations and stereotypes.

Glossary

Sexual division of labour: A system in which all work inside the home is either done by the women of the family, or organised by them through the domestic helpers.



Public/private division

Boys and girls are brought up to believe that the main responsibility of women is housework and bringing up children. This is reflected in a SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR in most families: women do all work inside the home such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, tailoring, looking after children, etc., and men do all the work outside the home. It is not that men cannot do housework; they simply think that it is for women to attend to these things. When these jobs are paid for, men are ready to take up these works. Most tailors or cooks in hotels are men. Similarly, it is not that women do not work outside their home. In villages, women fetch water, collect fuel and work in the fields. In urban areas, poor women work as domestic helper in middle class homes, while middle class women work in offices. In fact the majority of women do some sort of paid work in addition to domestic labour. But their work is not valued and does not get recognition.

The result of this division of labour is that although women constitute half of the humanity, their role in public life, especially politics, is minimal in most societies. Earlier, only men were allowed to participate in public affairs, vote and contest for public offices. Gradually the gender issue was raised in politics. Women in different parts of the world organised and agitated for equal rights. There were agitations in different countries for the extension of voting rights to women. These agitations demanded enhancing the political and legal status of women and improving

their educational and career opportunities. More radical women's movements aimed at equality in personal and family life as well. These movements are called FEMINIST movements.

Political expression of gender division and political mobilisation on this question helped to improve women's role in public life. We now find women working as scientists, doctors, engineers, lawyers, managers and college and university teachers which were earlier not considered suitable for women. In some parts of the world, for example in

© Zuban

Discuss all these perceptions of an ideal woman that prevail in our society. Do you agree with any of these? If not, what is your image of an ideal woman?

Glossary

Feminist: A woman or a man who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway and Finland, the participation of women in public life is very high.

In our country, women still lag much behind men despite some improvement since Independence. Ours is still a male-dominated, PATRIARCHAL society. Women face disadvantage, discrimination and oppression in various ways:

- The literacy rate among women is only 54 per cent compared with 76 per cent among men. Similarly, a smaller

A 'time use survey' was conducted in six states of our country. It shows that an average woman works every day for a little over seven and half hours while an average man works for six and a half hours. Yet the work done by men is more visible because most of their work leads to generation of income. Women also do a lot of direct income generating work, but the bulk of their work is household related. This work remains unpaid and invisible.

Daily time use (hours: minutes)

Activities	Men	Women
Income generating work	6:00	2:40
Household and related work	0:30	5:00
Talking, Gossip	1:25	1:20
No work/ Leisure	3:40	3:50
Sleep, self-care, reading etc.	12:25	11:10

Source: Government of India, *Time Use Survey*, 1998-99.

You can conduct a similar time use survey in your own household. Observe all the adult male and female members of your family for one week. Every day note down the number of hours each of them spends on the following activities: income generating activity (working at the office or shop or factory or field, etc.), household related activity (cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water, looking after children or elders, etc.), reading and recreation, talking/gossiping, self-care, taking rest or sleeping. If necessary make new categories. Add up the time taken on each activity for a week and calculate the daily average for each activity for each member. Do women work more in your family as well?

Patriarchy: Literally, rule by father, this concept is used to refer to a system that values men more and gives them power over women.

proportion of girl students go for higher studies. When we look at school results, girls perform as well as boys, if not better in some places. But they drop out because parents prefer to spend their resources for their boys' education rather than spending equally on their sons and daughters.

- No wonder the proportion of women among the highly paid and valued jobs is still very small. On an average an Indian woman works one hour more than an average man every day. Yet much of her work is not paid and therefore often not valued.

- The Equal Wages Act provides that equal wages should be paid to equal work. However in almost all areas of work, from sports and cinema, to factories and fields, women are paid less than men, even when both do exactly the same work.

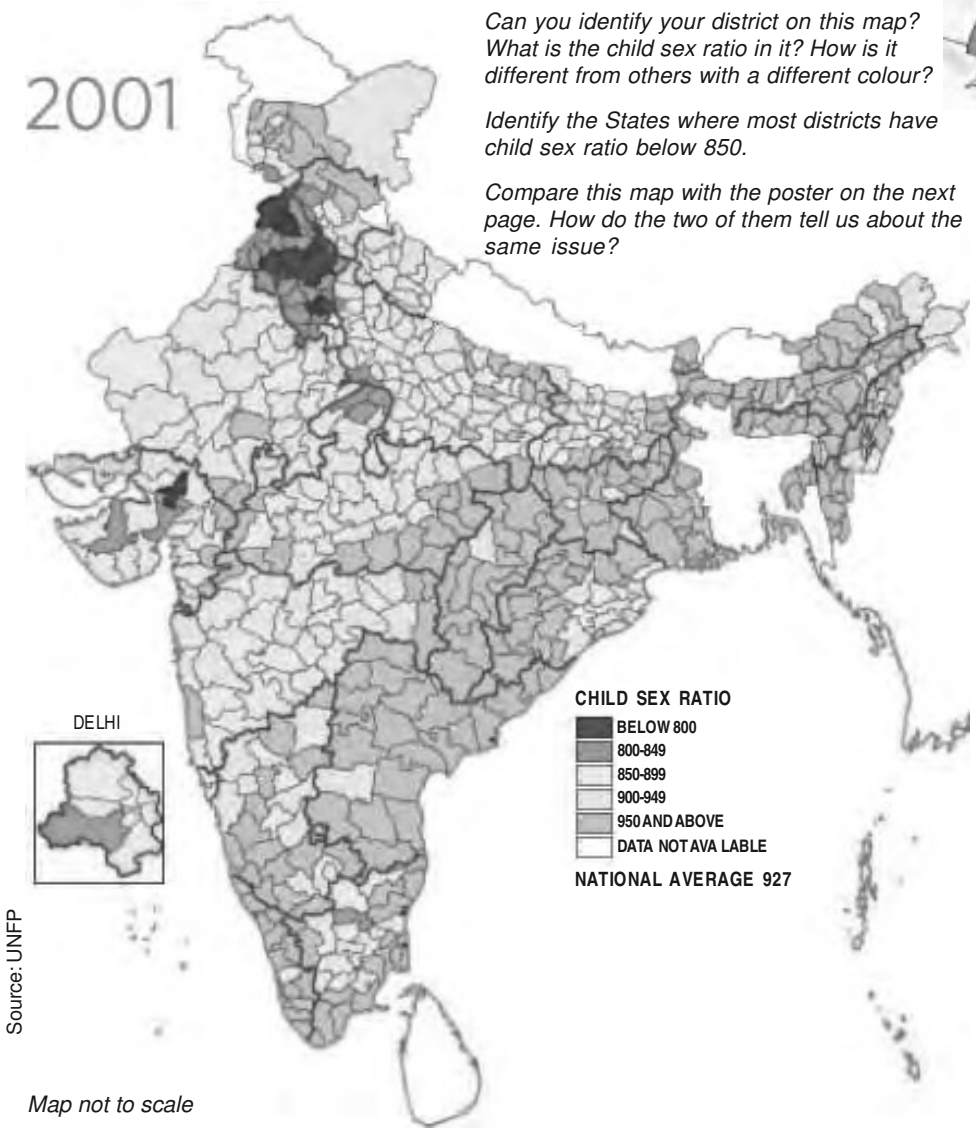
- In many parts of India parents prefer to have sons and find ways to have the girl child aborted before she is born. Such sex-selective abortion led to a decline in child sex ratio (number of girl children per thousand boys) in the

Mummy always says to outsiders: "I don't work. I am a housewife." But I see her working non-stop all the time. If what she does is not work, what else is work?

Can you identify your district on this map? What is the child sex ratio in it? How is it different from others with a different colour?

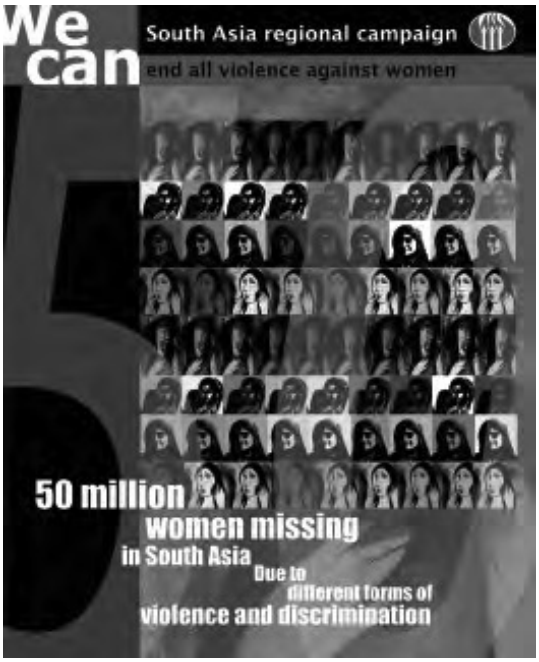
Identify the States where most districts have child sex ratio below 850.

Compare this map with the poster on the next page. How do the two of them tell us about the same issue?



Source: UNFP

Map not to scale



© Oxfam GB

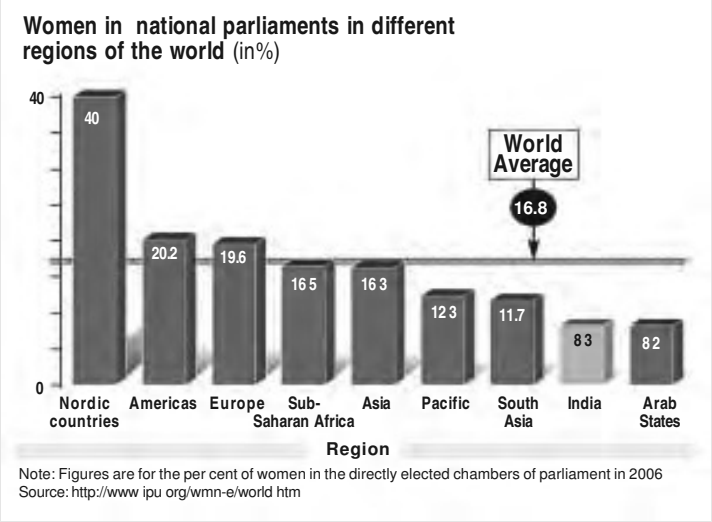
country to merely 927. As the map shows, this ratio has fallen below 850 or even 800 in some places.

There are reports of various kinds of harassment, exploitation and violence against women. Urban areas have become particularly unsafe for women. They are not safe even within their own home from beating, harrassment and other forms of domestic violence.

Women's political representation

All this is well known. Yet issues related to women's well being or otherwise are not given adequate attention. This has led many feminists and women's movements to the conclusion that unless women control power, their problems will not get adequate attention. One way to ensure this is to have more women as elected representatives.

In India, the proportion of women in legislature has been very low. For example, the percentage of elected women members in Lok Sabha has never reached even 10 per cent of its total strength. Their share in the state assemblies is less than 5 per cent. In this respect, India is among the bottom group of nations in the world (see the graph below). India is behind the



Note: Figures are for the per cent of women in the directly elected chambers of parliament in 2006
Source: http://www ipu org/wmn-e/world htm

Could you think of some reasons why women's representation is so low in India? Do you think America's and Europe have achieved a satisfactory level of women's representation?

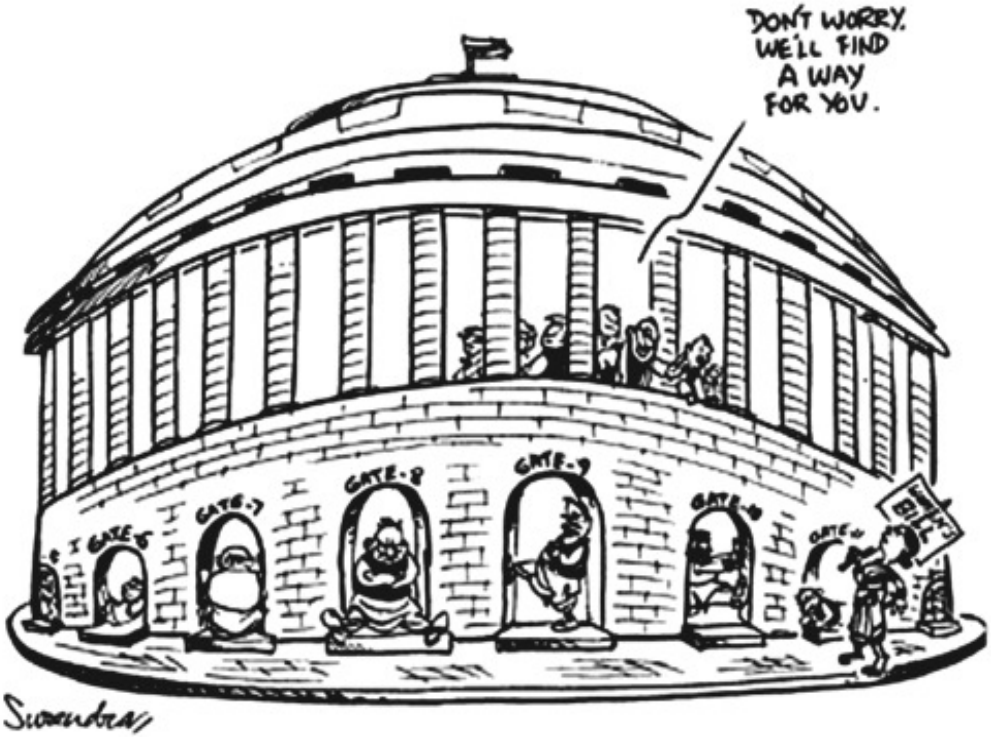
averages for several developing countries of Africa and Latin America. In the government, cabinets are largely all-male even when a woman becomes the Chief Minister or the Prime Minister.

One way to solve this problem is to make it legally binding to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies. This is what the Panchayati Raj has done in India. One-third of seats in local government bodies – in panchayats and municipalities – are now reserved for women. Now there are more than 10 lakh elected women representatives in rural and urban local bodies.

Women's organisations and activists have been demanding a similar reservation of at least one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women. A bill with this proposal has been pending before the Parliament for more than a decade. But there is no consensus over this among all the political parties. The bill has not been passed.

Gender division is an example that some form of social division needs to be expressed in politics. This also shows that disadvantaged groups do benefit when social divisions become a political issue. Do you think that women could have made the gains we noted above if their unequal treatment was not raised in the political domain?

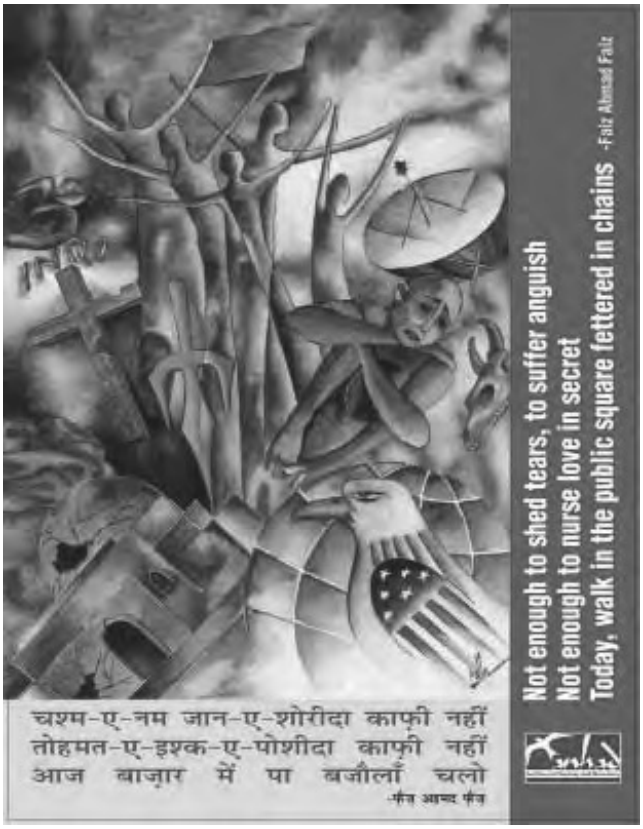
If casteism and communalism are bad, what makes feminism a good thing? Why don't we oppose all those who divide the society on any lines – caste, religion or gender?



© Surender - *The Hindu*

This cartoon offers an understanding of why the Women's Reservation Bill has not been passed in the Parliament. Do you agree with this reading?

Religion, communalism and politics



I am not religious. Why should I bother about communalism and secularism?

Let us now turn to a very different kind of social division, the division based on religious differences. This division is not as universal as gender, but religious diversity is fairly widespread in the world today. Many countries including India have in their population, followers of different religions. As we noticed in the case of Northern Ireland, even when most of the people belong to the same religion, there can be serious differences about the way people practice that religion. Unlike gender differences, the religious differences are often expressed in the field of politics.

Consider the following:

- Gandhiji used to say that religion can never be separated from politics. What he meant by religion was not any particular religion like Hinduism or Islam but moral values that inform all religions. He believed that politics must be guided by ethics drawn from religion.
- Human rights groups in our country have argued that most of the victims of communal riots in our country are people from religious minorities. They have demanded that the government take special steps to protect religious minorities.
- Women's movement has argued that FAMILY LAWS of all religions discriminate against women. So they have demanded that government should change these laws to make them more equitable.

All these instances involve a relationship between religion and politics.

But they do not seem very wrong or dangerous. Ideas, ideals and values drawn from different religions can and perhaps should play a role in politics. People should be able to express in politics their needs, interests and demands as a member of a religious community. Those who hold political power should sometimes be able to regulate the practice of religion so as to prevent discrimination and oppression. These political acts are not wrong as long as they treat every religion equally.

Communalism

The problem begins when religion is seen as the basis of the nation. The example of Northern Ireland in Chapter 3 shows the dangers of such an approach to nationalism. The problem becomes more acute when religion is expressed in politics in exclusive and partisan terms, when one religion and its followers are pitted against another. This happens when beliefs of one religion are presented as superior to those of other religions, when the demands of one religious group are formed in opposition to another and when state power is used to establish domination of one religious group over the rest. This manner of using religion in politics is communal politics.

Communal politics is based on the idea that religion is the principal basis of social community. Communalism involves thinking along the following lines. The followers of a particular religion must belong to one community. Their fundamental interests are the same. Any difference that they may have is irrelevant or trivial for community life. It also follows that people who follow different religions cannot belong to the same social community. If the followers of different religion have some commonalities these are superficial and immaterial. Their interests are bound to be different and involve a conflict. In its extreme form communalism leads to the belief that people belonging to different religions cannot live as equal citizens within one nation. Either, one of them has to dominate the rest or they have to form different nations.

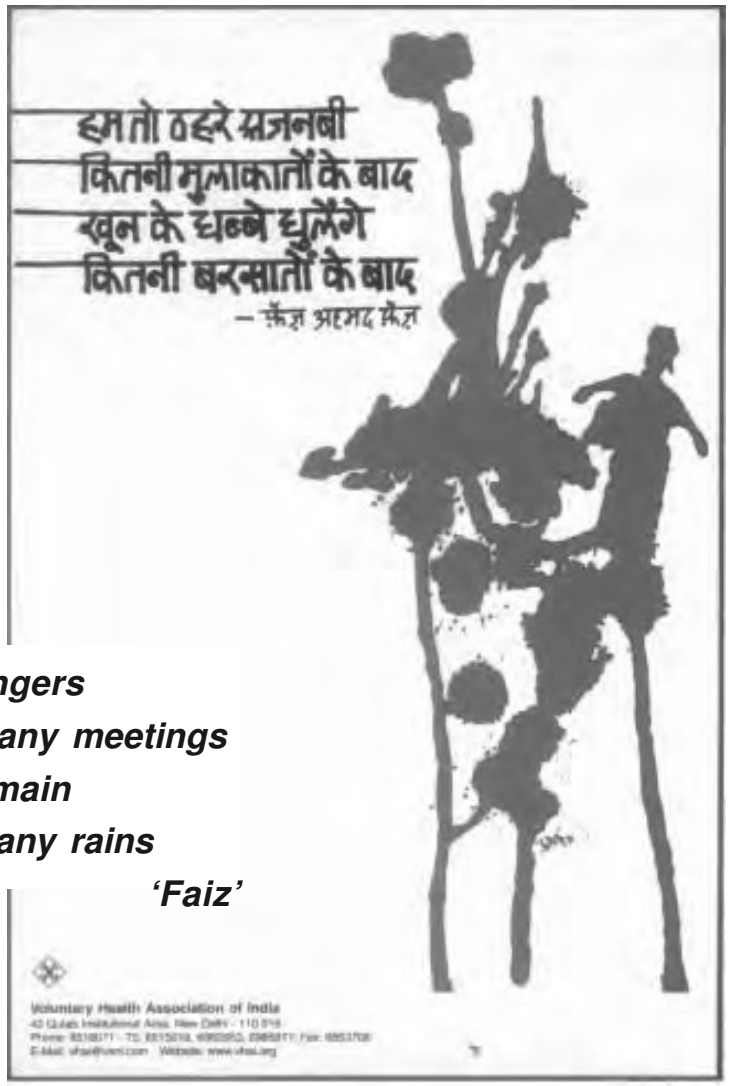
This belief is fundamentally flawed. People of one religion do not have the same interests and aspirations in every context. Everyone has several other roles, positions and identities. There are many voices inside every community. All these voices have a right to be heard. Therefore any attempt to bring all followers of one religion together in context other than religion is bound to suppress many voices within that community.

Communalism can take various forms in politics:

- The most common expression of communalism is in everyday beliefs. These routinely involve religious prejudices, stereotypes of religious communities and belief in the superiority of one's religion over other religions. This is so common that we often fail to notice it, even when we believe in it.
- A communal mind often leads to a quest for political dominance of one's own religious community. For those belonging to majority community, this takes the form of majoritarian dominance. For those belonging to the minority community, it can take the form of a desire to form a separate political unit.
- Political mobilisation on religious lines is another frequent form of

Glossary

Family laws: Those laws that deal with family related matters such as marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance, etc. In our country, different family laws apply to followers of different religions.



We remain strangers
Even after so many meetings
Blood stains remain
Even after so many rains
'Faiz'

communalism. This involves the use of sacred symbols, religious leaders, emotional appeal and plain fear in order to bring the followers of one religion together in the political arena. In electoral politics this often involves special appeal to the interests or emotions of voters of one religion in preference to others.

- Sometimes communalism takes its most ugly form of communal violence, riots and massacre. India and Pakistan suffered some of the worst communal riots at the time of the Partition. The post-Independence period has also seen large scale communal violence.

Secular state

Communalism was and continues to be one of the major challenges to democracy in our country. The makers of our Constitution were aware of this challenge. That is why they chose the model of a secular state. This choice was reflected in several constitutional provisions that we studied last year:

- There is no official religion for the Indian state. Unlike the status of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, that of Islam in Pakistan and that of Christianity in England, our Constitution does not give a special status to any religion.

- The Constitution provides to all individuals and communities freedom to profess, practice and propagate any religion, or not to follow any.
- The Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion.
- At the same time the Constitution allows the state to intervene in the matters of religion in order to ensure equality within religious communities. For example, it bans untouchability.

Understood in this sense, secularism is not just an ideology of some parties or persons. This idea constitutes one of the foundations of our country. Communalism should not be seen as a threat to some people in India. It threatens the very idea of India. That is why communalism needs to be combated. A secular Constitution like ours is necessary but not sufficient to combat communalism. Communal prejudices and propaganda needs to be countered in every day life and religion based mobilisation needs to be countered in the arena of politics.

© Ajith Ninan - *The Times of India*

This chair is for the CM-designate, to prove his secular credentials... There will be plenty of rocking!

Caste and politics

We have seen two instances of the expression of social divisions in the arena of politics, one largely positive and the other largely negative. Let us turn to our final case, that of caste and politics, that has both positive and the negative aspects.

Caste inequalities

Unlike gender and religion, caste division is special to India. All societies have some kind of social inequality and some form of division of labour. In most societies, occupations are passed on from one generation to another. Caste system is an extreme form of this. What makes it different from other societies is that in this system, hereditary occupational division was sanctioned by rituals. Members of the same caste group were supposed to form a social community that practiced the same or similar occupation, married within the caste group and did not eat with members from other caste groups.

Caste system was based on exclusion of and discrimination against the 'outcaste' groups. They were subjected to the inhuman practice of untouchability about which you have studied in Class IX. That is why political leaders and social reformers like Jotiba Phule, Gandhiji, B.R. Ambedkar and Periyar Ramaswami

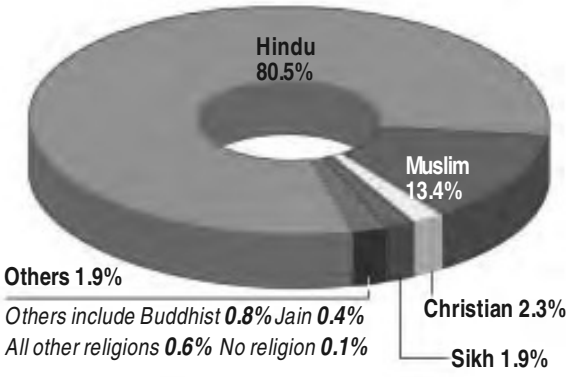
Social and Religious Diversity of India

The Census of India records the religion of each and every Indian after every ten years. The person who fills the Census form visits every household and records the religion of each member of that household exactly the way each person describes it. If someone says she has 'no religion' or that he is an 'atheist', this is exactly how it is recorded. Thus we have reliable information on the proportion of different religious communities in the country and how it has changed over the years. The pie chart below presents the population proportion of six major religious groups in the country. Since Independence, the total population of each group has increased substantially but their proportion in the country's population has not changed much. In percentage terms, the population of the Hindus, Jains and Christians has declined marginally since 1961. The proportion of Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist population has increased slightly. There is a common but mistaken impression that the proportion of the Muslims in the country's population is going to overtake other religious groups. Expert estimates done for the Prime Minister's High Level Committee (popularly known as Sachar Committee) show that the proportion of the Muslims is expected to go up a little, by about 3 to 4 per cent, in the next 50 years. It proves that in overall terms, the population balance of different religious groups is not likely to change in a big way.

The same is true of the major caste groups. The Census of India counts two social groups: the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. Both these broad groups include hundreds of castes or tribes whose names are listed in an official Schedule. Hence the prefix 'Scheduled' in their name. The Scheduled Castes, commonly known as *Dalits*, include those that were previously regarded as 'outcaste' in the Hindu social order and were subjected to exclusion and untouchability. The Scheduled Tribes, often referred to as *Adivasis*, include those communities that led a secluded life usually in hills and forests and did not interact much with the rest of society. In 2001, the Scheduled Castes were 16.2 per cent and the Scheduled Tribes were 8.2 per cent of the country's population.

The Census does not yet count the Other Backward Classes, the group we discussed in class IX. Hence there are some differences about their proportion in the country's population. The National Sample Survey of 2004-05 estimates their population to be around 41 per cent. Thus the SC, ST and the OBC together account for about two-thirds of the country's population and about three-fourths of the Hindu population.

Population of different religious group in India, 2001

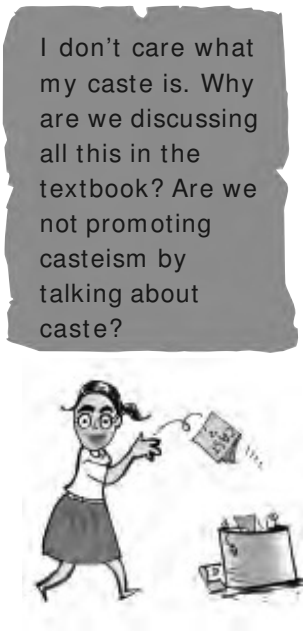


Source: Census of India, 2001

Naicker advocated and worked to establish a society in which caste inequalities are absent.

Partly due to their efforts and partly due to other socio-economic changes, castes and caste system in modern India have undergone great changes. With economic development, large scale URBANISATION, growth of literacy and education, OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY and the weakening of the position of landlords in the villages, the old notions of CASTE HIERARCHY are breaking down. Now, most of the times, in urban areas it does not matter much who is walking along next to us on a street or eating at the next table in a restaurant. The Constitution of India prohibited any caste-based discrimination and laid the foundations of policies to reverse the injustices of the caste system. If a person who lived a century ago were to return to India, she would be greatly surprised at the change that has come about in the country.

Yet caste has not disappeared from contemporary India. Some of the older aspects of caste have persisted. Even now most people marry within their own caste or tribe. Untouchability has not ended completely, despite constitutional prohibition. Effects of centuries of advantages and disadvantages continue to be felt today. The caste groups that had access to education under the old system have done very well in acquiring modern education as well. Those groups that did not have access to education or were prohibited from acquiring it have naturally lagged behind. That is why there is a disproportionately large presence of 'upper caste' among the urban middle classes in our country. Caste continues to be closely linked to economic status. (See Plus Box on Page 52.)



Caste in politics

As in the case of communalism, casteism is rooted in the belief that caste is the sole basis of social community. According to this way of thinking, people belonging to the same caste belong to a natural social community and have the same interests which they do not share with anyone from another caste. As we saw in the case of communalism, such a belief is not borne out by our experience. Caste is one aspect of our experience but it is not the only relevant or the most important aspect.

Caste can take various forms in politics:

- When parties choose candidates in elections, they keep in mind the caste composition of the electorate and nominate candidates from different castes so as to muster necessary support to win elections. When governments are formed, political parties usually take care that representatives of different castes and tribes find a place in it.

Glossary

Urbanisation: Shift of population from rural areas to urban areas

Occupational mobility: Shift from one occupation to another, usually when a new generation takes up occupations other than those practiced by their ancestors.

Caste hierarchy: A ladder like formation in which all the caste groups are placed from the 'highest' to the 'lowest' castes.

Caste inequality today

Caste is an important source of economic inequality because it regulates access to resources of various kinds. For example, in the past, the so-called 'untouchable' castes were denied the right to own land, while only the so-called 'twice born' castes had the right to education. Although this kind of explicit and formalised inequality based on caste is now outlawed, the effects of centuries of accumulated advantages and disadvantages continue to be felt. Moreover, new kinds of inequalities have also developed.

The relationship between caste and economic status has certainly changed a lot. Today, it is possible to find very rich and very poor people in every caste, whether 'low' or 'high'. This was not true even twenty or thirty years ago – it was very rare indeed to find rich people among the 'lowest' castes. However, as this evidence from the National Sample Survey shows, caste continues to be very strongly linked to economic status in many important ways:

- The average economic status (measured by criteria like monthly consumption expenditure) of caste groups still follows the old hierarchy – the 'upper' castes are best off, the *Dalits* and *Adivasis* are worst off, and the backward classes are in between.
- Although every caste has some poor members, the proportion living in extreme poverty (below the official 'poverty line') is much higher for the lowest castes and much lower for the upper castes, with the backward classes once again in between.
- Although every caste has some members who are rich, the upper castes are heavily over-represented among the rich while the lower castes are severely under-represented.

Percentage of poulation living below the poverty line, 1999-2000

Caste and Community groups	Rural	Urban
Scheduled Tribes	45.8	35.6
Scheduled Castes	35.9	38.3
Other Backward Classes	27.0	29.5
Muslim Upper Castes	26.8	34.2
Hindu Upper Castes	11.7	9.9
Christian Upper Castes	9.6	5.4
Sikh Upper Castes	0.0	4.9
Other Upper Castes	16.0	2.7
All Groups	27.0	23.4

Note: 'Upper Caste' here means those who are not from SC, ST, or OBC. Below the poverty line means those who spent Rs 327 or less per person per month in rural and Rs 454 or less per person per month in urban areas.
Source: *National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Government of India,* 55th *Round*, 1999-2000

- Political parties and candidates in elections make appeals to caste sentiment to muster support. Some political parties are known to favour some castes and are seen as their representatives.
- Universal adult franchise and the principle of one-person-one-vote compelled political leaders to gear up to the task of mobilising and securing political support. It also brought new consciousness among the people of castes that were hitherto treated as inferior and low.

The focus on caste in politics can sometimes give an impression that elections are all about caste and nothing else. That is far from true. Just consider these:

- No parliamentary constituency in the country has a clear majority of one single caste. So, every candidate and party needs to win the confidence of more than one caste and community to win elections.
- No party wins the votes of all the voters of a caste or community. When people say that a caste is a 'vote bank' of one party, it usually means that a large proportion of the voters from that caste vote for that party.
- Many political parties may put up candidates from the same caste (if that caste is believed to dominate the electorate in a particular constituency). Some voters have more than one candidate from their caste while many voters have no candidate from their caste.
- The ruling party and the sitting MP or MLA frequently lose elections in our country. That could not have happened if all castes and communities were frozen in their political preferences.

Clearly, while caste matters in electoral politics, so do many other factors. The voters have strong attachment to political parties which is often stronger than their attachment to their caste or community. People within the same caste or community have different interests depending on their economic condition. Rich and poor or men and women from the same caste often vote very differently. People's assessment of the performance of the government and the popularity rating of the leaders matter and are often decisive in elections.

Politics in caste

We have so far looked at what caste does to politics. But it does not mean that there is only a one-way relation between caste and politics. Politics too influences the caste system and caste identities by bringing them into the political arena.

© Ajith Ninan - *India Today Book of Cartoons*

Do you think that political leaders are right to treat people belonging to a caste as 'vote banks'?

Thus, it is not politics that gets caste-ridden, it is the caste that gets politicised. This takes several forms:

- Each caste group tries to become bigger by incorporating within it neighbouring castes or sub-castes which were earlier excluded from it.
- Various caste groups are required to enter into a coalition with other castes or communities and thus enter into a dialogue and negotiation.
- New kinds of caste groups have come up in the political arena like 'backward' and 'forward' caste groups.

Thus, caste plays different kinds of roles in politics. In some situations, expression of caste differences in politics gives many disadvantaged communities the space to demand their share of power. In this sense-caste politics has helped people from *Dalits* and OBC castes to gain better access to decision making. Several political and non-political organisations have been demanding and agitating for an end to discrimination against particular castes, for more dignity and more access to land, resources and opportunities.

At the same time exclusive attention to caste can produce negative results as well. As in the case of religion, politics based on caste identity alone is not very healthy in a democracy. It can divert attention from other pressing issues like poverty, development and corruption. In some cases caste division leads to tensions, conflict and even violence.

Exercises

1. Mention different aspects of life in which women are discriminated or disadvantaged in India.
2. State different forms of communal politics with one example each.
3. State how caste inequalities are still continuing in India.
4. State two reasons to say that caste alone cannot determine election results in India.
5. What is the status of women's representation in India's legislative bodies?
6. Mention any two constitutional provisions that make India a secular state.
7. When we speak of gender divisions, we usually refer to:
   (a) Biological difference between men and women
   (b) Unequal roles assigned by the society to men and women
   (c) Unequal child sex ratio
   (d) Absence of voting rights for women in democracies
8. In India seats are reserved for women in
   (a) Lok Sabha
   (b) State legislative assemblies
   (c) Cabinets
   (d) Panchayati Raj bodies
9. Consider the following statements on the meaning of communal politics. Communal politics is based on the belief that:
   A. One religion is superior to that of others.
   B. People belonging to different religions can live together happily as equal citizens.
   C. Followers of a particular religion constitute one community.
   D. State power cannot be used to establish the domination of one religious group over others.

   Which of the statements is/are correct?

   (a) A, B, C, and D (b) A, B, and D (c) A and C (d) B and D
10. Which among the following statements about India's Constitution is wrong? It
    (a) prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion.
    (b) gives official status to one religion.
    (c) provides to all individuals freedom to profess any religion.
    (d) ensures equality of citizens within religious communities.
11. Social divisions based on _____ are peculiar to India.

12. Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the Lists:

	List I	**List II**
1.	A person who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men	A. Communalist
2.	A person who says that religion is the principal basis of community	B. Feminist
3.	A person who thinks that caste is the principal basis of community	C. Secularist
4.	A person who does not discriminate others on the basis of religious beliefs	D. Castiest

	1	2	3	4
(a)	B	C	A	D
(b)	B	A	D	C
(c)	D	C	A	B
(d)	C	A	B	D

Popular Struggles and Movements

Overview

In the earlier chapters we discussed why power sharing is important in a democracy and how different tiers of government and various social groups share power. In this chapter we will carry this discussion further and see how those who exercise power are constrained by the influence and pressure exerted on them. Democracy almost invariably involves conflict of interests and viewpoints. These differences are often expressed in organised ways. Those who are in power are required to balance these conflicting demands and pressures. We begin this chapter with a discussion of how struggles around conflicting demands and pressures shape democracy. This leads to an analysis of the different ways and organisations through which ordinary citizen can play a role in democracy. In this chapter, we look at the indirect ways of influencing politics, through pressure groups and movements. This leads us in the next chapter to the direct ways of controlling political power in the form of political parties.

Chapter 5

Popular struggles in Nepal and Bolivia

Do you remember the story of the triumph of democracy in Poland? We studied it last year in the first chapter of class IX. The story reminded us about the role played by the people in the making of democracy. Let us read two recent stories of that kind and see how power is exercised in democracy.

Movement for democracy in Nepal

Nepal witnessed an extraordinary popular movement in April 2006. The movement was aimed at restoring democracy. Nepal, you might recall, was one of the 'third wave' countries that had won democracy in 1990. Although the king formally remained the head of the state, the real power was exercised by popularly elected representatives. King Birendra, who has accepted this transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, was killed in a mysterious massacre of the royal family in 2001. King Gyanendra, the new king of Nepal, was not prepared to accept democratic rule. He took advantage of the weakness and unpopularity of the democratically elected government. In February 2005, the king dismissed the then Prime Minister and dissolved the popularly elected Parliament. The movement of April 2006 was aimed at regaining popular control over the government from the king.

© Min Bajarachya

Political parties and people of Nepal in a rally demanding restoration of democracy in their country

All the major political parties in the parliament formed a Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and called for a four day strike in Kathmandu, the country's capital. This protest soon turned into an indefinite strike in which MAOIST insurgents and various other organisations joined hands. People defied curfew and took to the streets. The security forces found themselves unable to take on more than a lakh people who gathered almost every day to demand restoration of democracy. The number of protesters reached between three to five lakhs on 21 April and they served an ultimatum to the king. The leaders of the movement rejected the half-hearted concessions made by the king. They stuck to their demand for restoration of parliament, power to an all-party government and a new constituent assembly.

On 24 April 2004, the last day of the ultimatum, the king was forced to concede all the three demands. The SPA chose Girija Prasad Koirala as the new Prime Minister of the interim government. The restored parliament met and passed laws taking away most of the powers of the king. The SPA and the Maoists came to an understanding about how the new Constituent Assembly was going to be elected. This struggle came to be known as Nepal's second movement for democracy. The struggle of the Nepali people is a source of inspiration to democrats all over the world.

Glossary

Maoists: Those communists who believe in the ideology of Mao, the leader of the Chinese revolution. They seek to overthrow the government through an armed revolution so as to establish the rule of the peasants and workers.

Bolivia's Water War

The story of Poland and that of Nepal apply to the struggle for establishing or restoring democracy. But the role of popular struggles does not come to an end with the establishment of democracy. People's successful struggle against privatisation of water in Bolivia reminds us that popular struggles are integral to the working of democracy.

Bolivia is a poor country in Latin America. The World Bank pressurised the government to give up its control of municipal water supply. The government sold these rights for the city of Cochabamba to a multi-national company (MNC). The company immediately increased the price of water by four times. Many people received monthly water bill of Rs 1000 in a country where average income is around Rs 5000 a month. This led to a spontaneous popular protest.

In January 2000, a new alliance of labour, human rights and community leaders organised a successful four-day general strike in the city. The government agreed to negotiate and the strike was called off. Yet nothing happened. The police resorted to brutal repression when the agitation was started again in February. Another strike followed in April and the government imposed martial law. But the power of the people forced the officials of the MNC to flee the city and made the government concede to all the demands of the protesters. The contract with the MNC was cancelled and water supply was restored to the municipality at old rates. This came to be known as Bolivia's water war.

Are you suggesting that strike, dharna, bandh and demonstration are a good thing? I thought it happened only in our country, because we are not a mature democracy yet.

Democracy and popular struggles

These two stories are from very different contexts. The movement in Nepal was to establish democracy, while the struggle in Bolivia involved claims on an elected, democratic government. The popular struggle in Bolivia was about one specific policy, while the struggle in Nepal was about the foundations of the country's politics. Both these struggles were successful but their impact was at different levels.

Despite these differences, both the stories share some elements which are relevant to the study of the past and future of democracies. Both these are instances of political conflict that led to popular struggles. In both cases the struggle involved mass mobilisation. Public demonstration of mass support clinched the dispute. Finally, both instances involved critical role of political organisations. If you recall the first chapter of class IX textbook, this is how democracy has evolved all over the world. We can therefore draw a few conclusions from these examples:

- Democracy evolves through popular struggles. It is possible that some significant decisions may take place through consensus and may not involve any conflict at all. But that would be an exception. Defining moments of democracy usually involve conflict between those groups who have exercised power and those who aspire for a share in power. These moments come when the country is going through transition to democracy, expansion of democracy or deepening of democracy.
- Democratic conflict is resolved through mass mobilisation. Sometimes

it is possible that the conflict is resolved by using the existing institutions like the parliament or the judiciary. But when there is a deep dispute, very often these institutions themselves get involved in the dispute. The resolution has to come from outside, from the people.

- These conflicts and mobilisations are based on new political organisations. True, there is an element of spontaneity in all such historic moments. But the spontaneous public participation becomes effective with the help of organised politics. There can be many agencies of organised politics. These include political parties, pressure groups and movement groups.

Does it mean that whichever side manages to mobilise a bigger crowd gets away with whatever it wants? Are we saying that 'Might is Right' in a democracy?

In 1984, the Karnataka government set up a company called Karnataka Pulpwood Limited. About 30,000 hectares of land was given virtually free to this company for 40 years. Much of this land was used by local farmers as grazing land for their cattle. However the company began to plant eucalyptus trees on this land, which could be used for making paper pulp. In 1987, a movement called *Kittiko-Hachchiko* (meaning, pluck and plant) started a non-violent protest, where people plucked the eucalyptus plants and planted saplings of trees that were useful to the people.

Suppose you belong to any of the following groups, what arguments would you put forward to defend your side: a local farmer, an environmental activist, a government official working in this company or just a consumer of paper.

Mobilisation and organisations

Let us go back to our two examples and look at the organisations that made these struggles successful. We noted that the call for indefinite strike was given by the SPA or the Seven Party Alliance in Nepal. This alliance included some big parties that had some members in the Parliament. But the SPA was not the only organisation behind this mass upsurge. The protest was joined by the Nepalese Communist Party (Maoist) which did not believe in parliamentary democracy. This party was involved in an armed struggle against the Nepali government and had established its control over large parts of Nepal.

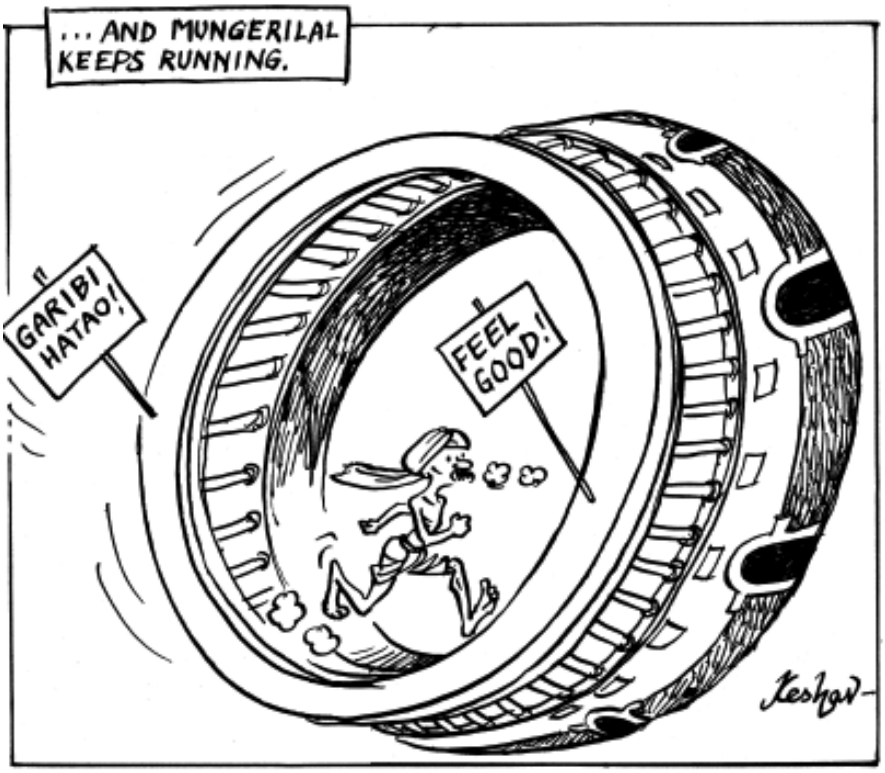
The struggle involved many organisations other than political parties. All the major labour unions and their federations joined this movement. Many other organisations like the organisation of the indigenous people, teachers, lawyers and human rights groups extended support to the movement.

I don't like this word 'mobilisation'. Makes it feel as if people are like sheep.

The protest against water privatisation in Bolivia was not led by any political party. It was led by an organisation called FEDECOR. This organisation comprised of local professionals, including engineers and environmentalists. They were supported by a federation of farmers who relied on irrigation, the confederation of factory workers' unions, middle class students from the the University of Cochabamba and the city's growing population of homeless street children. The movement was supported by the Socialist Party. In 2006, this party came to power in Bolivia.

From both these examples we can see that in a democracy several different kinds of organisations work behind any big struggle. These organisations play their role in two ways. One obvious way of influencing the decisions in a democracy is direct participation in competitive politics. This is done by creating parties, contesting elections and forming governments. But every citizen does not participate so directly. They may not have the desire, the need or the skills to take part in direct political activity other than voting.

There are many indirect ways in which people can get governments to listen to their demands or their point of view. They could do so by forming an organisation and undertaking activities to promote their interest or their viewpoint. These are called interest groups or pressure groups. Sometimes people decide to act together without forming organisations.



© Keshav - *The Hindu*

Governments initiate schemes and programme to alleviate the suffering of the poor and meet their basic needs. But poverty remains in the country? What could be the reasons for such a situation?

Can you identify the pressure groups functioning in the news clippings given here? What demand are they making?

Pressure groups and movements

Pressure groups are organisations that attempt to influence government policies. But unlike political parties, pressure groups do not aim to directly control or share political power. These organisations are formed when people with common occupation, interest, aspirations or opinions come together in order to achieve a common objective.

In the course of the discussion above we came across entities that are not quite an organisation. The struggle in Nepal was called a movement for democracy. We often hear the word people's movement to describe many forms of collective action: Narmada Bachao Andolan, Movement for Right to Information, Anti-liquor Movement, Women's Movement, Environmental Movement. Like an interest group, a movement also attempts to influence politics rather than directly take part in electoral competition. But unlike the interest groups, movements have a loose organisation. Their decision making is more informal and flexible. They depend much more on spontaneous mass participation than an interest group.

© w kipedia.com

Land rights protest: farmers of West Java, Indonesia. On June 2004, about 15,000 landless farmers from West Java, travelled to Jakarta, the capital city. They came with their families to demand land reform, to insist on the return of their farms. Demonstrators chanted, "No land, No vote" declaring that they would boycott Indonesia's first presidential election if no candidate backed land reform.

Sectional interest groups and public interest groups

Usually interest groups seek to promote the interests of a particular section or group of society. Trade unions, business associations and professional (lawyers, doctors, teachers, etc.) bodies are some examples of this type. They are sectional because they represent a section of society: workers, employees, business-persons, industrialists, followers of a religion, caste group, etc. Their principal concern is the betterment and well being of their members, not society in general.

Sometimes these organisations are not about representing the interest of one section of society. They represent some common or general interest that needs to be defended. The members of the organisation may not benefit from the cause that the organisation represents. The Bolivian organisation FEDECOR is an example of that kind of an organisation. In the context of Nepal, we noted the participation of human rights organisations. We read about these organisations in class IX.

These second type of groups are called promotional groups or public interest groups. They promote collective rather than selective good. They aim to help groups other than their own members. For example, a group fighting against bonded labour fights not for itself but for those who are suffering under such bondage. In some instances the members of a public interest group may undertake activity that benefits them as well as others too. For example, BAMCEF (Backward and Minorities Community Employees Federation) is an organisation largely made up of government employees that campaigns against caste discrimination. It addresses

the problems of its members who suffer discrimination. But its principal concern is with social justice and social equality for the entire society.

Movement groups

As in the case of interest groups, the groups involved with movements also include a very wide variety. The various examples mentioned above already indicate a simple distinction. Most of the movements are issue specific movements that seek to achieve a single objective within a limited time frame. Others are more general or generic movements that seek to achieve a broad goal in the very long term.

The Nepalese movement for democracy arose with the specific objective of reversing the king's orders that led to suspension of democracy. In India, Narmada Bachao Andolan is a good example of this kind of movement. The movement started with the specific issue of the people displaced by the creation of Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada river. Its objective was to stop the dam from being constructed. Gradually it became a wider movement that questioned all such big dams and the model of development that required such dams. Movements of this kind tend to have a clear leadership and some organisation. But their active life is usually short.

These single-issue movements can be contrasted with movements that are long term and involve more than one issue. The environmental movement and the women's movement are examples of such movements. There is no single organisation that controls or guides such movements. Environmental movement is a label for a large number of organisations and issue-specific movements. All of these have separate organisation, independent leadership and often different views on policy

Social movements and pressure groups try to mobilise citizens in many ways. The collage here show some of them.

© Surendera - *The Hindu*

The Right to Information Act is one of the recent legislations passed by Parliament? Who is shown as obstructing the implementation of the legislation?

related matters. Yet all of these share a broad objective and have a similar approach. That is why they are called a movement. Sometimes these broad movements have a loose umbrella organisation as well. For example, the National Alliance for Peoples' Movements (NAPM) is an organisation of organisations. Various movement groups struggling on specific issues are constituents of this loose organisation which coordinates the activities of a large number of peoples' movements in our country.

How do they influence politics?

Pressure groups and movements exert influence on politics in a variety of ways:

- They try to gain public support and sympathy for their goals and their activity by carrying out information campaigns, organising meetings, file petitions, etc. Most of these groups try to influence the media into giving more attention to these issues.
- They often organise protest activity like strikes or disrupting government

What are the social movements listed in these news clippings? What efforts are they making? Which sections are they trying to mobilise?

programmes. Workers' organisations, employees' associations and most of the movement groups often resort to these tactics in order to force the government to take note of their demand.

- Business groups often employ professional lobbyists or sponsor expensive advertisements. Some persons from pressure groups or movement groups may participate in official bodies and committees that offer advice to the government.

While interest groups and movements do not directly engage in party politics, they seek to exert influence on political parties. Most of the movement groups take a political stance without being a party. They have political ideology and political position on major issues. The relationship between political parties and pressure groups can take different forms, some direct and others very indirect:

- In some instances the pressure groups are either formed or led by the leaders of political parties or act as extended arms of political parties. For example, most trade unions and students' organisations in India are either established by or affiliated to one or the other major political party. Most of the leaders of such pressure groups are usually activists and leaders of party.

- Sometimes political parties grow out of movements. For example, when the Assam movement led by students against the 'foreigners' came to an end, it led to the formation of the Asom Gana Parishad. The roots of parties like the DMK and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu can be traced to a long drawn social reform movement during the 1930 and 1940s.

- In most cases the relationship between parties and interest or movement groups is not so direct. They often take positions that are opposed to each other. Yet they are in dialogue and negotiation. Movement groups have raised new issues that have been taken up by political parties. Most of the new leadership of political parties comes from interest or movement groups.

Is their influence healthy?

It may initially appear that it is not healthy for groups that promote interest of one section to have influence in democracy. A democracy must look after the interest of all, not just one section. Also, it may seem that these groups wield power without responsibility. Political parties have to face the people in elections, but these groups are not accountable to the people. Pressure groups and movements may not get their funds and support

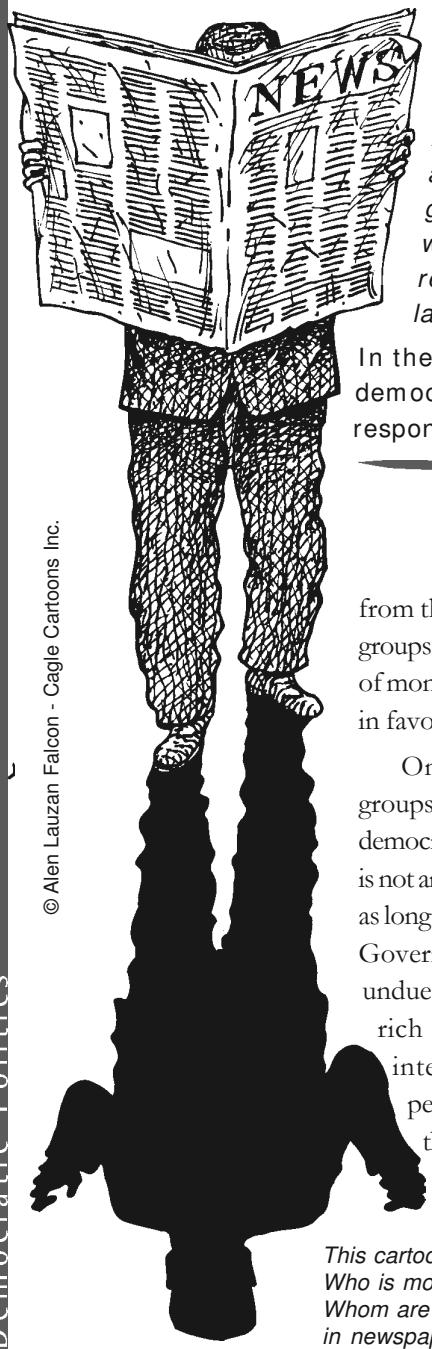
Follow the news on any news TV channel for one week. Make a note of news related to pressure groups or movements representing the following sectors or sections: farmers, traders, labour, industry, environment and women. Which of these are mentioned most on television news? Which sections or interests get mentioned the least? You may follow a newspaper if you don't have TV at home.

Let us revise

The Green Belt Movement has planted 30 million trees across Kenya. Its leader Wangari Maathai is very disappointed with the response of government officials and politicians:

"In the 1970s and 1980s, as I was encouraging farmers to plant trees on their land, I also discovered that corrupt government agents were responsible for much of the deforestation by illegally selling off land and trees to well-connected developers. In the early 1990's, the livelihoods, the rights and even the lives of many Kenyans in the Rift Valley were lost when elements of President Daniel Arap Moi's government encouraged ethnic communities to attack one another over land. Supporters of the ruling party got the land, while those in the pro-democracy movement were displaced. This was one of the government's ways of retaining power; if communities were kept busy fighting over land, they would have less opportunity to demand democracy."

In the above passage what relationship do you see between democracy and social movements? How should this movement respond to the government?



© Alen Lauzan Falcon - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

*This cartoon is called **'News-no-news'**. Who is most often visible in the media? Whom are we most likely to hear about in newspapers?*

from the people. Sometimes, pressure groups with small public support but lots of money can highjack public discussion in favour of their narrow agenda.

On balance, however, pressure groups and movements have deepened democracy. Putting pressure on the rulers is not an unhealthy activity in a democracy as long as everyone gets this opportunity. Governments can often come under undue pressure from a small group of rich and powerful people. Public interest groups and movements perform a useful role of countering this undue influence and reminding the government of the needs and concerns of ordinary citizens.

Even the sectional interest groups play a valuable role. Where different groups function actively, no one single group can achieve dominance over society. If one group brings pressure on government to make policies in its favour, another will bring counter pressure not to make policies in the way the first group desires. The government gets to hear about what different sections of the population want. This leads to a rough balance of power and accommodation of conflicting interests.

Exercises

1. In what ways do pressure groups and movements exert influence on politics?
2. Describe the forms of relationship between pressure groups and political parties?
3. Explain how the activities of pressure groups are useful in the functioning of a democratic government.
4. What is a pressure group? Give a few examples.
5. What is the difference between a pressure group and a political party?
6. Organisations that undertake activities to promote the interests of specific social sections such as workers, employees, teachers, and lawyers are called _____ groups.
7. Which among the following is the special feature that distinguishes a pressure group from a political party?
   (a) Parties take political stances, while pressure groups do not bother about political issues.
   (b) Pressure groups are confined to a few people, while parties involve larger number of people.
   (c) Pressure groups do not seek to get into power, while political parties do.
   (d) Pressure groups do not seek to mobilise people, while parties
8. Match List I (organisations and struggles) with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:do.

	List I	**List II**
1.	Organisations that seek to promote the interests of a particular section or group	A. Movement
2.	Organisations that seek to promote common interest	B. Political parties
3.	Struggles launched for the resolution of a social problem with or without an organisational structure	C. Sectional interest groups
4.	Organisations that mobilise people with a view to win political power	D. Public interest groups

	1	2	3	4
(a)	C	D	B	A
(b)	C	D	A	B
(c)	D	C	B	A
(d)	B	C	D	A

9. Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

	List I	List II
1.	Pressure group	A. Narmada Bachao Andolan
2.	Long term movement	B. Asom Gana Parishad
3.	Single issue movement	C. Women's movement
4.	Political party	D. Fertilizer dealers' association

	1	2	3	4
(a)	D	C	A	B
(b)	B	A	D	C
(c)	C	D	B	A
(d)	B	D	C	A

10. Consider the following statements about pressure groups and parties.
    A. Pressure groups are organised expression of the interests and views of specific social sections.
    B. Pressure groups take positions on political issues.
    C. All pressure groups are political parties.

    Which of the statements given above are correct?

    (a) A, B, and C (b) A and B (c) B and C (d) A and C

11. *Mewat is one of the most backward areas in Haryana. It used to be a part of district Gurgaon and Faridabad. The people of Mewat felt that the area will get better attention if it were to become a separate district. But political parties were indifferent to this sentiment. The demand for a separate district was raised by Mewat Educational and Social Organisation and Mewat Saksharta Samiti in 1996. Later Mewat Vikas Sabha was founded in 2000 and carried out a series of public awareness campaigns. This forced both the major parties, Congress and the Indian National Lok Dal, to announe their support for the new district before the assembly elections held in February 2005. The new district came into existence in July 2005.*

In this example what is the relationship that you observe among movement, political parties and the government? Can you think of an example that shows a relationship different from this one?

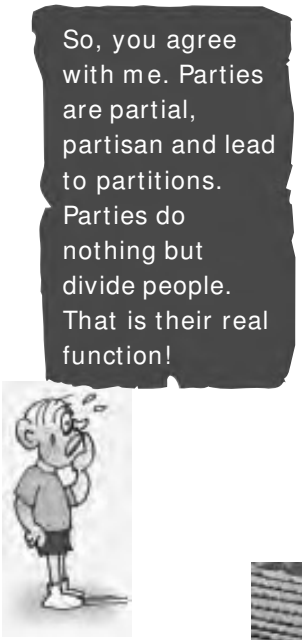
Political Parties

Chapter 6

Overview

In this tour of democracy we have come across political parties several times. In Class IX, we noticed the role of political parties in the rise of democracies, in the formation of constitutional designs, in electoral politics and in the making and working of governments. In this textbook, we have glanced at political parties as vehicles of federal sharing of political power and as negotiator of social divisions in the arena of democratic politics. Before concluding this tour, let us take a close look at the nature and working of political parties, especially in our country. We begin by asking two common questions: Why do we need parties? How many parties are good for a democracy? In the light of these we introduce the national and regional political parties in today's India and then look at what is wrong with political parties and what can be done about it.

Why do we need political parties?



Political parties are easily one of the most visible institutions in a democracy. For most ordinary citizens, democracy is equal to political parties. If you travel to remote parts of our country and speak to the less educated citizens, you could come across people who may not know anything about our Constitution or about the nature of our government. But chances are that they would know something about our political parties. At the same time this visibility does not mean popularity. Most people tend to be very critical of political parties. They tend to blame parties for all that is wrong with our democracy and our political life. Parties have become identified with social and political divisions.

Therefore, it is natural to ask – do we need political parties at all? About hundred years ago there were few countries of the world that had any political party. Now there are few that do not have parties. Why did political parties become so omnipresent in democracies all over the world? Let us first answer what political parties are and what they do, before we say why we need them.

Meaning

A political party is a group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government. They agree on some policies and programmes for the society with a view to promote the collective good. Since there can be different views on what is good for all,

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

Election Commission has officially banned wall writing by parties during election times. Most political parties argue that was the cheapest way for their campaign. These election times used to create amazing graffiti on the walls. Here are some examples from Tamil Nadu.

© (1) M Govarthan (2) A Muralidharan (3) M Moorthy (4) T Singaravelou, *The Hindu*

© RK Laxman - *Brushing up the years*

parties try to persuade people why their policies are better than others. They seek to implement these policies by winning popular support through elections.

Thus, parties reflect fundamental political divisions in a society. Parties are about a part of the society and thus involve PARTISANSHIP. Thus a party is known by which part it stands for, which policies it supports and whose interests it upholds. A political party has three components:

- the leaders,
- the active members and
- the followers

Functions

What does a political party do? Basically, political parties fill political offices and exercise political power. Parties do so by performing a series of functions:

1 Parties **contest elections**. In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties. Parties select their candidates in different ways. In some countries, such as the USA, members and supporters of a party choose its candidates. Now more and more countries are following this method. In other countries like India, top party leaders choose candidates for contesting elections.

2 Parties put forward different **policies and programmes** and the voters choose from them. Each of us may have different opinions and views on what policies are suitable for the society. But no government can handle such a large variety of views. In a democracy, a large number of similar opinions have to be grouped together to provide a direction in which policies can be formulated by the governments. This is what the parties do. A party reduces a vast multitude of opinions into

Glossary

Partisan: A person who is strongly committed to a party, group or faction. Partisanship is marked by a tendency to take a side and inability to take a balanced view on an issue.

a few basic positions which it supports. A government is expected to base its policies on the line taken by the RULING PARTY.

3 Parties play a decisive role in **making laws** for a country. Formally, laws are debated and passed in the legislature. But since most of the members belong to a party, they go by the direction of the party leadership, irrespective of their personal opinions.

4 Parties **form and run governments**. As we noted last year, the big policy decisions are taken by political executive that comes from the political parties. Parties recruit leaders, trains them and then make them ministers to run the government in the way they want.

5 Those parties that lose in the elections play the **role of opposition** to the parties in power, by voicing different views and criticising government for its failures or wrong policies. Opposition parties also mobilise opposition to the government.

6 Parties **shape public opinion**. They raise and highlight issues. Parties have lakhs of members and activists spread all over the country. Many of the pressure groups are the extensions of political parties among different sections of society. Parties sometimes also launch movements for the resolution of problems faced by people. Often opinions in the society crystallise on the lines parties take.

7 Parties provide people **access to government machinery and welfare schemes** implemented by governments. For an ordinary citizen it is easy to approach a local party leader than a government officer. That is why they feel close to parties even when they do not fully trust them. Parties have to be responsive to people's needs and demands. Otherwise people can reject those parties in the next elections.

Okay, granted that we can't live without political parties. But tell me how do we live with the kind of political parties we have?

Glossary

Ruling Party: Political party that runs government.

Necessity

This list of functions in a sense answers the question asked above: we need political parties because they perform all these functions. But we still need to ask why modern democracies cannot exist without political parties. We can understand the necessity of political parties by imagining a situation without parties. Every candidate in the elections will be independent. So no one will be able to make any promises to the people about any major policy changes. The government may be formed, but its utility will remain ever uncertain. Elected representative will be accountable to their constituency for what they do in the locality. But no one will be responsible for how the country run.

We can also think about it by looking at the non-party based elections to the panchayat in many states. Although, the parties do not contest formally, it is generally noticed that the village gets split into more than one faction, each of which puts up a 'panel' of its candidates. This is exactly what the party does. That is the reason we find political parties in almost all countries of the world, whether these countries are big or small, old or new, developed or developing.

The rise of political parties is directly linked to the emergence of representative democracies. As we have seen, large scale societies need representative democracy. As societies became large and complex, they also needed some agency to gather different views on various issues and to present these to the government. They needed

some way to bring various representatives together so that a responsible government could be formed. They needed a mechanism to support or restrain the government, make policies, justify or oppose them. Political parties fulfill these needs that every representative government has. We can say that parties are a necessary condition for a democracy.

Categorise these photographs by the functions of political parties they illustrate. Find one photograph or news clipping from your own area for each of the functions listed above.

© (1) C V Subrahmanyan (2) K Gopinathan (3) A Chakrabarty, *The Hindu*

***1**: Activists of BJP Mahila Morcha demonstrating against hike in prices of onions and LPG in Visakhapatnam*
***2**: Minister distributes Rs One lakh cheque to the hooch victims family at their houses.*
***3**: Activists of CPI (M), CPI, OGP and JD (S) take out a rally in Bhubaneswar to protest against POSCO, the Korean steel company for being permitted by the State Government to export iron ore from Orissa to feed steel plants in China and Korea*

How many parties should we have?

In a democracy any group of citizens is free to form a political party. In this formal sense there are a large number of political parties in each country. More than 750 parties are registered with the Election Commission of India. But not all these parties are serious contenders in the elections. Usually only a handful of parties are effectively in the race to win elections and form the government. So the question then is: how many major or effective parties are good for a democracy?

In some countries only one party is allowed to control and run the government. These are called one-party systems.

A moral force in politics?

What did Kishenji mean by an alternative political *formation*? The question came up in a conversation between Sudha, Karuna, Shaheen and Gracy. All four women had led very powerful people's movements in different parts of the country. They were meeting in a village in Orissa, away from their day-to-day struggles, to think afresh the future of people's movements.

The discussion naturally turned to Kishenji, who was regarded as a friend, political philosopher and moral guide by all the movement groups in the country. He had argued that people's movement should embrace politics openly. His argument was simple yet powerful. Movements focused on a single issue are suitable as long as we wish to achieve limited changes in a particular aspect of life. But if we wish to bring about a fundamental social transformation, or basic change even in one aspect of life, we would need a political organisation. People's movement must establish a new political formation to act as a moral force in politics. This was an urgent task, he said, because all the existing political parties had become irrelevant for social transformation.

"But Kishenji never clarified what that organisation will be. He talked of an alternative political *formation* or a third *force* in politics. But did he mean a political party?" said Gracy. She felt that an old style political party was not the right instrument for social change.

Sudha agreed with her. "I have thought about it several times. I agree that all the struggles that we are involved with – the struggle against displacement, against globalisation, against caste and gender oppression and for an alternative kind of development – all this is political. But the moment we form a party, all the goodwill we have earned all these years will be lost. People will think of us as no different from other politicians."

© Zuban

"Besides", added Karuna, "we have seen that a lot can be achieved by putting pressure on the existing political parties. We tried putting up candidates in panchayat elections, but the results were not very encouraging. People respect our work, they even adore us, but when it comes to voting they go for the established political parties."

Shaheen did not agree with them: "Let us be very clear. Kishenji wanted all the people's movements to forge a new political party. Of course he wanted this party to be a different kind of a party. He was not for political alternatives, but for an alternative kind of politics."

Kishenji is no more. What would be your advice to these four activists? Should they form a new political party? Can a political party become a moral force in politics? What should that party be like?

In Class IX, we noted that in China, only the Communist Party is allowed to rule. Although, legally speaking, people are free to form political parties, it does not happen because the electoral system does not permit free competition for power. We cannot consider one party system as a good option because this is not a democratic option. Any democratic system must allow at least two parties to compete in elections and provide a fair chance for the competing parties to come to power.

In some countries, power usually changes between two main parties. Several other parties may exist, contest elections and win a few seats in the national legislatures. But only the two main parties have a serious chance of winning majority of seats to form government. Such a party system is called two-party system. The United States of America and the United Kingdom are examples of two-party system.

If several parties compete for power, and more than two parties have a reasonable chance of coming to power either on their own strength or in alliance with others, we call it a multi-party system. Thus in India, we have a multi-party system. In this system, the government is formed by various parties coming together in a coalition. When several parties in a multi-party system join hands for the purpose of contesting elections and winning power, it is called an alliance or a front. For example, in India there were three such major alliances in 2004 parliamentary elections– the National Democratic Alliance, the United Progressive Alliance and the Left Front. The multi-party system often appears very messy and leads to political instability. At the same time, this system allows a variety of interests and opinions to enjoy political representation.

So, which of these is better? Perhaps the best answer to this very common question is that this is not a very good question. Party system is not something any country can choose. It evolves over a long time, depending on the nature of society, its social and regional divisions, its history of politics and its system of elections. These cannot be changed very quickly. Each country develops a party system that is conditioned by its special circumstances. For example, if India has evolved a multi-party system, it is because the social and geographical diversity in such a large country is not easily absorbed by two or even three parties. No system is ideal for all countries and all situations.

I don't like so many parties. It's such a mess. I wonder how the politicians manage these coalitions. I can't even remember the names of all the parties.

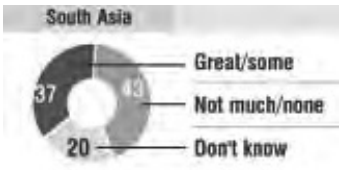
Let us apply what we have learnt about party systems to the various states within India. Here are three major types of party systems that exist at the State level. Can you find the names of at least two States for each of these types?

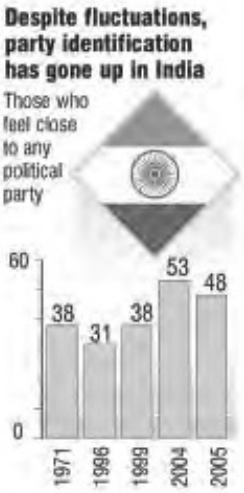
- Two-party system
- Multi-party system with two alliances
- Multi-party system

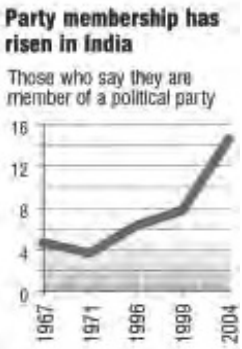
Popular participation in political parties

It is often said that political parties are facing a crisis because they are very unpopular and the citizens are indifferent to political parties. The available evidence shows that this belief is only partly true for India. The evidence, based on a series of large sample surveys conducted over several decades, shows that:

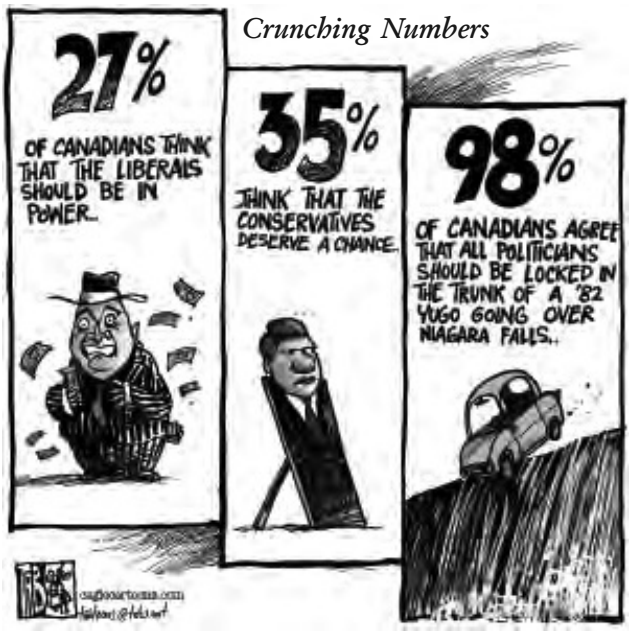
- Political parties do not enjoy much trust among the people in South Asia. The proportion of those who say their trust in political parties is 'not much' or 'not at all' is more than those who have 'some' or 'great' trust.
- The same is true of most other democracies as well. Political parties are one of the least trusted institutions all over the world.
- Yet the level of participation in the activities of political parties was fairly high. The proportion of those who said they were members of some political party was higher in India than many advanced countries like Canada, Japan, Spain and South Korea.
- Over the last three decades the proportion of those who report to be members of political parties in India has gone up steadily.
- The proportion of those who say they feel 'close to a political party' has also gone up in India in this period.







Source: SDSA Team, *State of Democracy in South Asia,* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007



© Tab - *The Calgary Sun*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Does the cartoonist reflect the data graphics shown in the previous page?

National political parties

Democracies that follow a federal system all over the world tend to have two kinds of political parties: parties that are present in only one of the federal units and parties that are present in several or all units of the federation. This is the case in India as well. There are some country-wide parties, which are called 'national parties'. These parties have their units in various states. But by and large all these units follow the same policies, programmes and strategy that is decided at the national level.

Every party in the country has to register with the Election Commission. While the Commission treats all parties equally, it offers some special facilities to large and established parties. These parties are given a unique symbol – only the official candidates of that party can use that election symbol. Parties that get this privilege and some other special facilities are 'recognised' by the Election Commission for this purpose. That is why these parties are called, 'recognised political parties'. The Election Commission has laid down detailed criteria of the proportion of votes and seats that a party must get in order to be a recognised party. A party that secures at least 6 per cent of the total votes in an election to the Legislative Assembly of a State and wins at least two seats is recognised as a State party. A party that secures at least six per cent of total votes in Lok Sabha elections or Assembly elections in four States and wins at least four seats in the Lok Sabha is recognised as a national party.

According to this classification, there were six national recognised parties in the country in 2006. Let us learn something about each of these parties.

Indian National Congress (INC): Popularly known as the Congress Party. One of the oldest parties of the world. Founded in 1885 and has experienced many splits. Played a dominant role in Indian politics at the national and state level for several decades after India's Independence. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the party sought to build a modern secular democratic republic in India. Ruling party at the centre till 1977 and then from 1980 to 1989. After 1989, its support declined, but it continues to be present throughout the country, cutting across social divisions. A centrist party (neither rightist nor leftist) in its ideological orientation, the party espouses secularism and welfare of weaker sections and minorities. Supports new economic reforms but with a human face. Emerged as the largest party with 145 members in the Lok Sabha elections held in 2004. Currently leads the ruling United Progressive Alliance coalition government at the Centre.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP): Founded in 1980 by reviving the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh. Wants to build a strong and modern India by drawing inspiration from India's ancient culture and values. Cultural nationalism (or 'Hindutva') is an important element in its conception of Indian nationhood and politics. Wants full territorial and political integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India, a uniform civil code for all people living in the country irrespective of religion, and ban on religious conversions. Its support base increased substantially in the 1990s. Earlier limited to north and west and to urban areas, the party expanded its support in the south, east, the north-east and to rural areas. Came to power in 1998 as the leader of the National Democratic Alliance including several state and regional parties. Lost elections in 2004 and is the principal opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP): Formed in 1984 under the leadership of Kanshi Ram. Seeks to represent and secure power for the bahujan samaj which includes the *dalits*, *adivasis*, OBCs and religious minorities. Draws inspiration from the ideas and teachings of Sahu Maharaj, Mahatma Phule, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker and Babasaheb Ambedkar. Stands for the cause of securing the interests and welfare of the *dalits* and oppressed people. It has its main base in the state of Uttar Pradesh and substantial presence in neighbouring states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Punjab. Formed government in Uttar Pradesh several times by taking the support of different parties at different times. In the Lok Sabha elections held in 2004, it polled about 5 per cent votes and secured 19 seats in the Lok Sabha.

Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPI-M): Founded in 1964. Believes in Marxism-Leninism. Supports socialism, secularism and democracy and opposes imperialism and communalism. Accepts democratic elections as a useful and helpful means for securing the objective of socio-economic justice in India. Enjoys strong support in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, especially among the poor,

factory workers, farmers, agricultural labourers and the intelligentsia. Critical of the new economic policies that allow free flow of foreign capital and goods into the country. Has been in power in West Bengal without a break for 30 years. In 2004 elections, it won about 6 per cent of votes and 43 seats in the Lok Sabha. Currently supports the UPA government from outside, without joining the government.

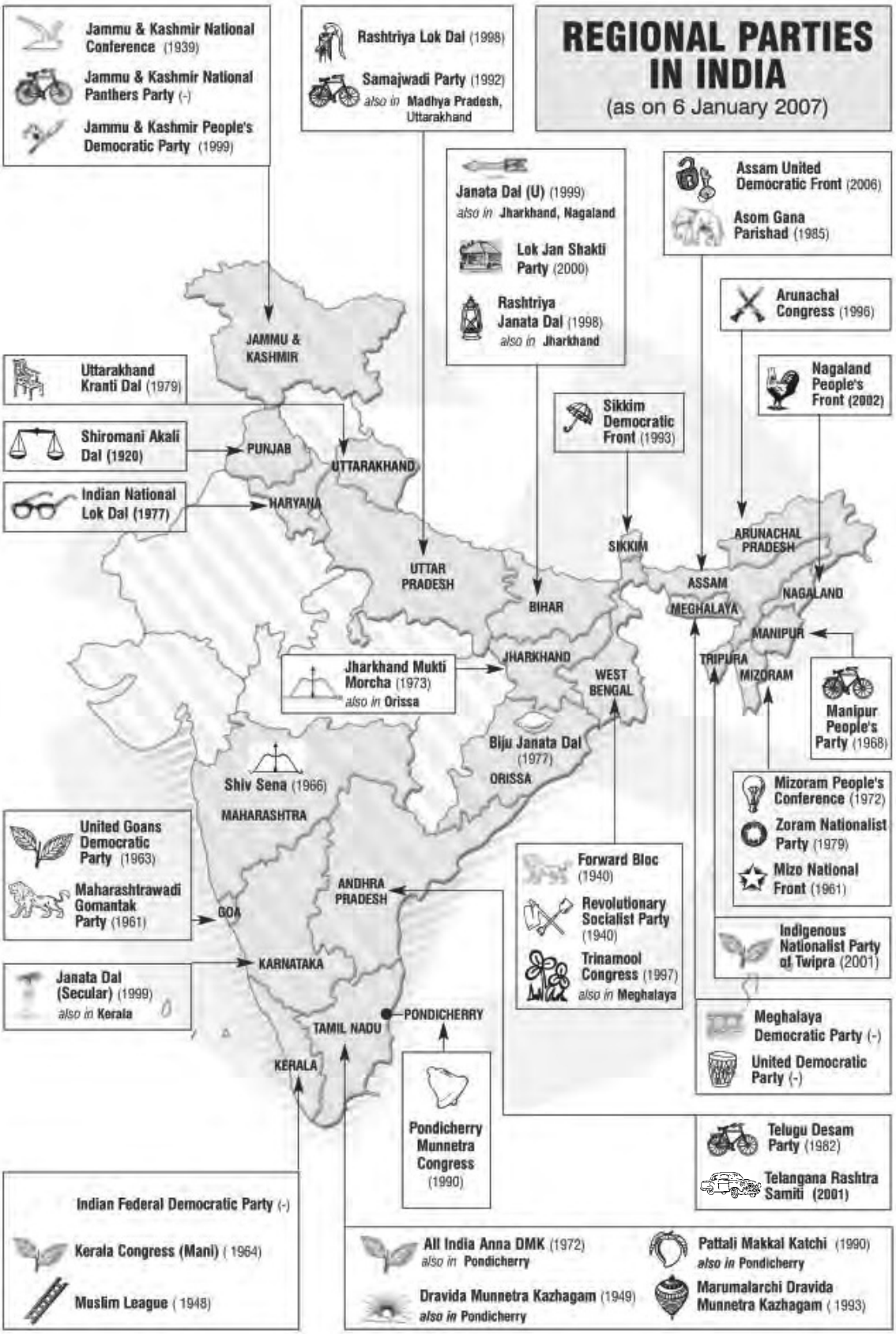
Communist Party of India (CPI): Formed in 1925. Believes in Marxism-Leninism, secularism and democracy. Opposed to the forces of secessionism and communalism. Accepts parliamentary democracy as a means of promoting the interests of the working class, farmers and the poor. Became weak after the split in the party in 1964 that led to the formation of the CPI(M). Significant presence in the states of Kerala, West Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Its support base had gradually declined over the years. It secured about 1.4 per cent votes and 10 seats in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. Advocates the coming together of all left parties to build a strong left front. Currently supports UPA government from outside.

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP): Formed in 1999 following a split in the Congress party. Espouses democracy, Gandhian secularism, equity, social justice and federalism. Wants that high offices in government be confined to natural born citizens of the country. A major party in Maharashtra and has a significant presence in Meghalaya, Manipur and Assam. A coalition partner in the state of Maharashtra in alliance with the Congress. Since 2004, a member of the United Progressive Alliance.

State parties

Other than these six parties, most of the major parties of the country are classified by the Election Commission as 'State parties'. These are commonly referred to as regional parties. Yet these parties need not be regional in their ideology or outlook. Some of these parties are all India parties that happen to have succeeded only in some states. Parties like the Samajwadi Party, Samata Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal have national level political organisation with units in several states. Some of these parties like Biju Janata Dal, Sikkim Democratic Front and Mizo National Front are conscious about their State identity.

Over the last three decades, the number and strength of these parties has expanded. This made the Parliament of India politically more and more diverse. No one national party is able to secure on its own a majority in Lok Sabha. As a result, the national parties are compelled to form alliances with State parties. Since 1996, nearly every one of the State parties has got an opportunity to be a part of one or the other national level coalition government. This has contributed to the strengthening of federalism and democracy in our country. (See the map on the next page for details of these parties).


REGIONAL PARTIES IN INDIA
(as on 6 January 2007)
Jammu & Kashmir National Conference (1939)
Jammu & Kashmir National Panthers Party (-)
Jammu & Kashmir People's Democratic Party (1999)
Rashtriya Lok Dal (1998)
Samajwadi Party (1992) also in Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand
Janata Dal (U) (1999) also in Jharkhand, Nagaland
Lok Jan Shakti Party (2000)
Rashtriya Janata Dal (1998) also in Jharkhand
Assam United Democratic Front (2006)
Asom Gana Parishad (1985)
Arunachal Congress (1996)
Nagaland People's Front (2002)
Sikkim Democratic Front (1993)
Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (1979)
Shiromani Akali Dal (1920)
Indian National Lok Dal (1977)
JAMMU & KASHMIR
PUNJAB
UTTARAKHAND
HARYANA
UTTAR PRADESH
BIHAR
SIKKIM
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
ASSAM
NAGALAND
MEGHALAYA
MANIPUR
TRIPURA
MIZORAM
JHARKHAND
WEST BENGAL
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (1973) also in Orissa
Manipur People's Party (1968)
Biju Janata Dal (1977)
ORISSA
Shiv Sena (1966)
MAHARASHTRA
Mizoram People's Conference (1972)
Zoram Nationalist Party (1979)
Mizo National Front (1961)
United Goans Democratic Party (1963)
Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (1961)
GOA
ANDHRA PRADESH
Forward Bloc (1940)
Revolutionary Socialist Party (1940)
Trinamool Congress (1997) also in Meghalaya
Indigenous Nationalist Party of Twipra (2001)
Janata Dal (Secular) (1999) also in Kerala
KARNATAKA
TAMIL NADU
PONDICHERRY
KERALA
Meghalaya Democratic Party (-)
United Democratic Party (-)
Pondicherry Munnetra Congress (1990)
Telugu Desam Party (1982)
Telangana Rashtra Samiti (2001)
Indian Federal Democratic Party (-)
Kerala Congress (Mani) (1964)
Muslim League (1948)
All India Anna DMK (1972) also in Pondicherry
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (1949) also in Pondicherry
Pattali Makkal Katchi (1990) also in Pondicherry
Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (1993)

Challenges to political parties

We have seen how crucial political parties are for the working of democracy. Since parties are the most visible face of democracy, it is natural that people blame parties for whatever is wrong with the working of democracy. All over the world, people express strong dissatisfaction with the failure of political parties to perform their functions well. This is the case in our country too. Popular dissatisfaction and criticism has focussed on four problem areas in the working of political parties. Political parties need to face and overcome these challenges in order to remain effective instruments of democracy.

The first challenge is **lack of internal democracy** within parties. All over the world there is a tendency in political parties towards the concentration of power in one or few leaders at the top. Parties do not keep membership registers, do not hold organisational meetings, and do not conduct internal elections regularly. Ordinary members of the party do not get sufficient information on what happens inside the party. They do not have the means or the connections needed to influence the decisions. As a result the leaders assume greater power to make decisions in the name of the party. Since one or few leaders exercise paramount power in the party, those who disagree with the leadership find it

Berlusconi Puppet Theatre

© Riber Hansson - *Svenska Dagbladet*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Berlusconi was the Prime Minister of Italy. He is also one of the top business man in Italy. He is the leader of the Forza Italia founded in 1993. His company owns TV channels, the most important publishing company, a foot ball club (AC Milan) and a bank. This cartoon was made during the last elections.

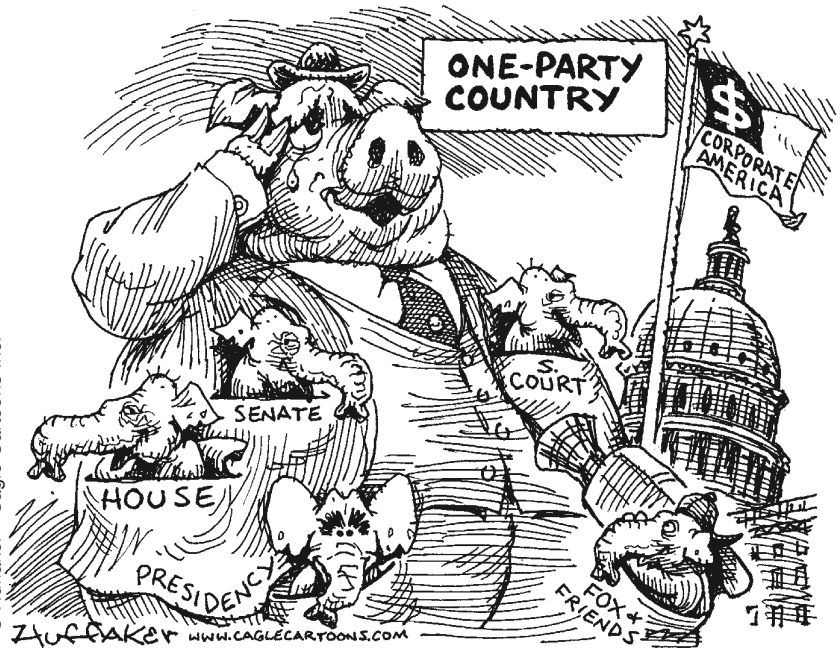
Why don't parties give enough tickets to women? Is that also due to lack of internal democracy?

difficult to continue in the party. More than loyalty to party principles and policies, personal loyalty to the leader becomes more important.

The second challenge of dynastic succession is related to the first one. Since most political parties do not practice open and transparent procedures for their functioning, there are very few ways for an ordinary worker to rise to the top in a party. Those who happen to be the leaders are in a position of unfair advantage to favour people close to them or even their family members. In many parties, the top positions are always controlled by members of one family. This is unfair to other members of that party. This is also bad for democracy, since people who do not have adequate experience or popular support come to occupy positions of power. This tendency is present in some measure all over the world, including in some of the older democracies.

The third challenge is about the growing role of **money and muscle power** in parties, especially during elections. Since parties are focussed only on winning elections, they tend to use short-cuts to win elections. They tend to nominate those candidates who have or can raise lots of money. Rich people and companies who give funds to the parties tend to have influence on the policies and decisions of the party. In some cases, parties support criminals who can win elections. Democrats all over the world are worried about the increasing role of rich people and big companies in democratic politics.

The fourth challenge is that very often parties do not seem to offer a **meaningful choice** to the voters. In order to offer meaningful choice, parties must be significantly different. In recent years there has been a decline in the ideological differences among parties in most parts of the world. For example, the difference between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party in Britain is very little. They agree on more fundamental aspects but differ only in details on how policies are to be framed and implemented. In our country too, the differences among all the major parties on the economic policies have reduced. Those who want really different policies have no option available to them. Sometimes people cannot even elect very different leaders either, because the same set of leaders keep shifting from one party to another.



© Huffaker - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

You already have so much money. Why do you want to contest the elections?

He is guarding the defected MLAs

© Manjul - *DNA*

Most cartoons caricature politicians. From the cartoons (on page 83 to 85), can you identify which of the challenges described in this section is being highlighted in these cartoons. They relate to Italy, US and India.

How can parties be reformed?

In order to face these challenges, political parties need to be reformed. The question is: Are political parties willing to reform? If they are willing, what has prevented them from reforming so far? If they are not willing, is it possible to force them to reform? Citizens all over the world face this question. This is not a simple question to answer. In a democracy, the final decision is made by leaders who represent political parties. People can replace them, but only by another set of party leaders. If all of them do not wish to reform, how can anyone force them to change?

Let us look at some of the recent efforts and suggestions in our country to reform political parties and its leaders:

- The Constitution was amended to prevent elected MLAs and MPs from changing parties. This was done because many elected representatives were indulging in DEFECTION in order to become ministers or for cash rewards. Now the law says that if any MLA or

Defection: Changing party allegiance from the party on which a person got elected (to a legislative body) to a different party.

© Keshav - The Hindu

Do you agree that this form of reforming political parties will be acceptable to them?

MP changes parties, he or she will lose the seat in the legislature. This new law has helped bring defection down. At the same time this has made any dissent even more difficult. MPs and MLAs have to accept whatever the party leaders decide.

- The Supreme Court passed an order to reduce the influence of money and criminals. Now, it is mandatory for every candidate who contests elections to file an AFFIDAVIT giving details of his property and criminal cases pending against him. The new system has made a lot of information available to the public. But there is no system of check if the information given by the candidates is true. As yet we do not know if it has led to decline in the influence of the rich and the criminals.

- The Election Commission passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organisational elections and file their income tax returns. The parties have started doing so but sometimes it is mere formality. It is not clear if this step has led to greater internal democracy in political parties.

Besides these, many suggestions are often made to reform political parties:

- A law should be made to regulate the internal affairs of political parties. It should be made compulsory for political parties to maintain a register of its members, to follow its own constitution, to have an independent authority, to act as a judge in case of party disputes, to hold open elections to the highest posts.

- It should be made mandatory for political parties to give a minimum number of tickets, about one-third, to women candidates. Similarly, there should be a quota for women in the decision making bodies of the party.

- There should be state funding of elections. The government should give parties money to support their election expenses. This support could be given in kind: petrol, paper, telephone etc. Or it could be given in cash on the basis of the votes secured by the party in the last election.

These suggestions have not yet been accepted by political parties. If and when these are accepted these could lead to some improvement. But we must be very careful about legal solutions to political problems. Over-regulation of political parties can be counter-productive. This would force all parties to find ways to cheat the law. Besides, political parties will not agree to pass a law that they do not like.

There are two other ways in which political parties can be reformed. One, people can put pressure on political parties. This can be done through petitions, publicity and agitations.

GlOssary

Affidavit: A signed document submitted to an officer, where a person makes a sworn statement regarding her personal information.

Ordinary citizens, pressure groups and movements and the media can play an important role in this. If political parties feel that they would lose public support by not taking up reforms, they would become more serious about reforms. Two, political parties can improve if those who want this join political parties.

The quality of democracy depends on the degree of public participation. It is difficult to reform politics if ordinary citizens do not take part in it and simply criticise it from the outside. The problem of bad politics can be solved by more and better politics. We shall return to this theme in the final chapter.

Exercises

1. State the various functions political parties perform in a democracy.
2. What are the various challenges faced by political parties?
3. Suggest some reforms to strengthen parties so that they perform their functions well?
4. What is a political party?
5. What are the characteristics of a political party?
6. A group of people who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government is called a _____.
7. Match List I (organisations and struggles) with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

	List I	**List II**
1.	Congress Party	A. National Democratic Alliance
2.	Bharatiya Janata Party	B. State party
3.	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	C. United Progressive Alliance
4.	Telugu Desam Party	D. Left Front

	1	2	3	4
(a)	C	A	B	D
(b)	C	D	A	B
(c)	C	A	D	B
(d)	D	C	A	B

8. Who among the following is the founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party?
   A. Kanshi Ram
   B. Sahu Maharaj
   C. B.R. Ambedker
   D. Jotiba Phule
9. What is the guiding philosophy of the Bharatiya Janata Party?
   A. Bahujan Samaj
   B. Revolutionary democracy
   C. Integral humanism
   D. Modernity

10. Consider the following statements on parties.

A. Political parties do not enjoy much trust among the people.

B. Parties are often rocked by scandals involving top party leaders.

C. Parties are not necessary to run governments.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) A, B, and C (b) A and B (c) B and C (d) A and C

11. Read the following passage and answer the questions given below:

Muhammad Yunus is a famous economist of Bangladesh. He received several international honours for his efforts to promote economic and social development for the benefit of the poor. He and the Grameen Bank he started jointly, received the Nobel Peace Prize for the 2006. In February 2007, he decided to launch a political party and contest in the parliamentary elections. His objective was to foster proper leadership, good governance and build a new Bangladesh. He felt that only a political party different from the traditional ones would bring about new political culture. His party would be democratic from the grassroots level.

The launching of the new party, called Nagarik Shakti (Citizens' Power), has caused a stir among the Bangladeshis. While many welcomed his decision, some did not like it. "Now I think Bangladesh will have a chance to choose between good and bad and eventually have a good government," said Shahedul Islam, a government official. "That government, we hope, would not only keep itself away from corruption but also make fighting corruption and black money a top priority."

But leaders of traditional political parties who dominated the country's politics for decades were apprehensive. "There was no debate (over him) winning the Nobel, but politics is different – very challenging and often controversial," said a senior leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Some others were highly critical. They asked why he was rushing into politics. "Is he being planted in politics by mentors from outside the country," asked one political observer.

Do you think Yunus made a right decision to float a new political party?

Do you agree with the statements and fears expressed by various people? How do you want this new party organised to make it different from other parties? If you were the one to begin this political party how would you defend it?

Outcomes of Democracy

Chapter 7

Overview

As we begin to wind up our tour of democracy, it is time to move beyond our discussion of specific themes and ask a general set of questions: What does democracy do? Or, what outcomes can we reasonably expect of democracy? Also, does democracy fulfil these expectations in real life? We begin by thinking about how to assess the outcomes of democracy. After some clarity on how to think on this subject, we proceed to look at the expected and actual outcomes of democracy in various respects: quality of government, economic well-being, inequality, social differences and conflict and finally freedom and dignity. Our final verdict – positive but qualified – leads us to think about the challenges to democracy in the next and final chapter.

How do we assess democracy's outcomes?

Did we reach these conclusions in Madam Lyngdoh's class? I loved that class because students were not being dictated any conclusions.

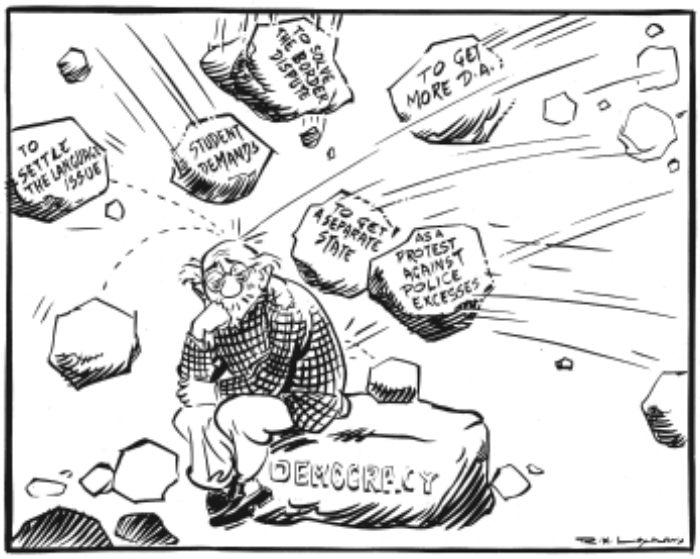
Do you remember how students in Madam Lyngdoh's class argued about democracy? This was in Chapter 2 of Class IX textbook. It emerged from that conversation that democracy is a better form of government when compared with dictatorship or any other alternative. We felt that democracy was better because it:

- Promotes equality among citizens;
- Enhances the dignity of the individual;
- Improves the quality of decision-making;
- Provides a method to resolve conflicts; and
- Allows room to correct mistakes.

Are these expectations realised under democracies? When we talk to people around us, most of them support democracy against other alternatives, such as rule by a monarch or military or religious leaders. But not so many of them would be satisfied with the democracy in practice. So we face a dilemma: democracy is seen to be good in principle, but felt to be not so good in its practice. This dilemma invites us to think hard about the outcomes of democracy. Do we prefer democracy only for moral reasons? Or are there some prudential reasons to support democracy too?

Over a hundred countries of the world today claim and practice some kind of democratic politics: they have formal constitutions, they hold elections, they have parties and they guarantee rights of citizens. While these features are common to most of them, these democracies are very much different from each other in terms of their social situations, their economic achievements and their cultures. Clearly, what may be achieved or not achieved under each of these democracies will be very different. But is there something that we can expect from every democracy, just because it is democracy?

Our interest in and fascination for democracy often pushes us into taking a position that democracy can address all socio-economic and political problems. If some of our expectations are not met, we start blaming the idea of democracy. Or, we start doubting if we are living in a democracy. The first step towards thinking carefully about the outcomes of democracy is to recognise that democracy is just a form of government. It can only create conditions for achieving something. The citizens have to take advantage of those conditions and achieve those goals. Let us examine some of the things we can reasonably expect from democracy and examine the record of democracy.



© RK Laxman - *Brushing up the years*

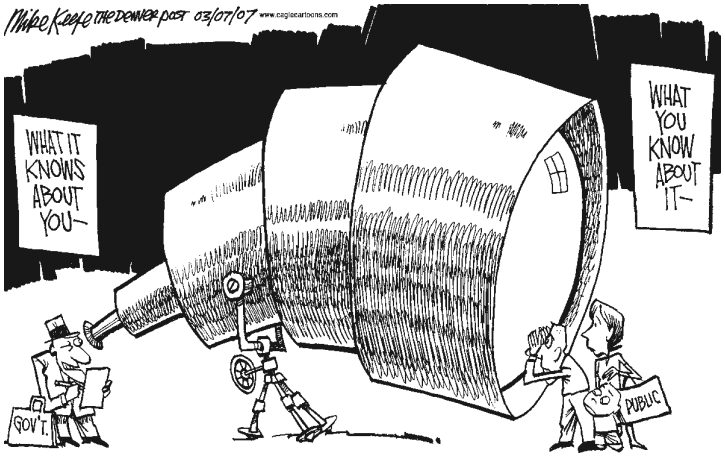
Accountable, responsive and legitimate government

There are some things that democracy must provide. In a democracy, we are most concerned with ensuring that people will have the right to choose their rulers and people will have control over the rulers. Whenever possible and necessary, citizens should be able to participate in decision making, that affects them all. Therefore, the most basic outcome of democracy should be that it produces a government that is accountable to the citizens, and responsive to the needs and expectations of the citizens.

Before we go into this question, we face another common question: Is the democratic government efficient? Is it effective? Some people think that democracy produces less effective government. It is, of course, true that non-democratic rulers do not have to bother about deliberation in assemblies or worry about majorities and public opinion. So, they can be very quick and efficient in decision making and implementation. Democracy is based on the idea of deliberation and negotiation. So, some delay is bound to take place. Does that make democratic government inefficient?

Let us think in terms of costs. Imagine a government that may take decisions very fast. But it may take decisions that are not accepted by the people and may therefore face problems. In contrast, the democratic government will take more time to follow procedures before arriving at a decision. But because it has followed procedures, its decisions may be both more acceptable to the people and more effective. So, the cost of time that democracy pays is perhaps worth it.

Governmental Secrecy

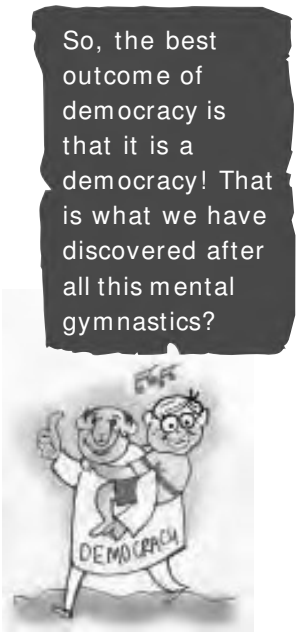


© Mike Keefe - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Now look at the other side – democracy ensures that decision making will be based on norms and procedures. So, a citizen who wants to know if a decision was taken through the correct procedures can find this out. She has the right and the means to examine the process of decision making. This is known as transparency. This factor is often missing from a non-democratic government. Therefore, when we are trying to find out the outcomes of democracy, it is right to expect democracy to produce a government that follows procedures and is accountable to the people. We can also expect that the democratic government develops mechanisms for citizens to hold the government accountable and mechanisms for citizens to take part in decision making whenever they think fit.

If you wanted to measure democracies on the basis of this expected outcome, you would look for the following practices and institutions: regular, free and fair elections; open public debate on major policies and

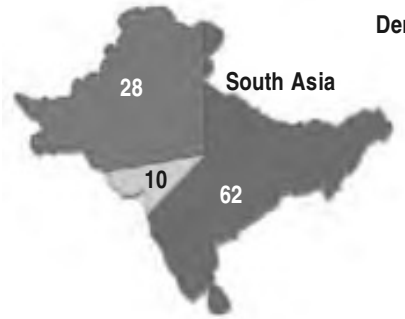
Can you think of what and how the government knows about you and your family (for example ration cards and voter identity cards)? What are the sources of information for you about the government?



legislations; and citizens' right to information about the government and its functioning. The actual performance of democracies shows a mixed record on this. Democracies have had greater success in setting up regular and free elections and in setting up conditions for open public debate. But most democracies fall short of elections that provide a fair chance to everyone and in subjecting every decision to public debate. Democratic governments do not have a very good record when it comes to sharing information with citizens. All one can say in favour of democratic regimes is that they are much better than any non-democratic regime in these respects.

In substantive terms it may be reasonable to expect from democracy a government that is attentive to the needs and demands of the people and is largely free of corruption. The record of democracies is not impressive on these two counts. Democracies often frustrate the needs of the people and often ignore the demands of a majority of its population. The routine tales of corruption are enough to convince us that democracy is not free of this evil. At the same time, there is nothing to show that non-democracies are less corrupt or more sensitive to the people.

There is one respect in which democratic government is certainly better than its alternatives: democratic government is legitimate government. It may be slow, less efficient, not always very responsive or clean. But a democratic government is people's own government. That is why there is an overwhelming support for the idea of democracy all over the world. As the accompanying evidence from South Asia shows, the support exists in countries with democratic regimes as well as countries without democratic regimes. People wish to be ruled by representatives elected by them. They also believe that democracy is suitable for their country. Democracy's ability to generate its own support is itself an outcome that cannot be ignored.



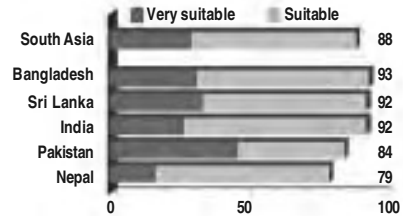
Democracy is preferred over dictatorship everywhere except Pakistan

Those who agree with one of the statements

	Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Democracy is preferable	69	70	62	37	71
Sometimes dictatorship is better	6	9	10	14	11
Doesn't matter to me	25	21	28	49	18

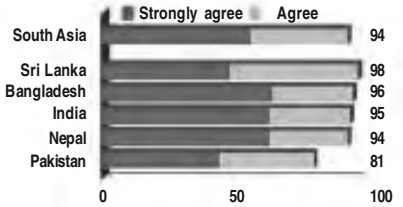
Very few doubt the suitability of democracy for their own country

How suitable is democracy for your country?



Overwhelming support for democracy

Those who agree with the rule of leaders elected by the people



Source: SDSA Team, *State of Democracy in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007

Economic growth and development

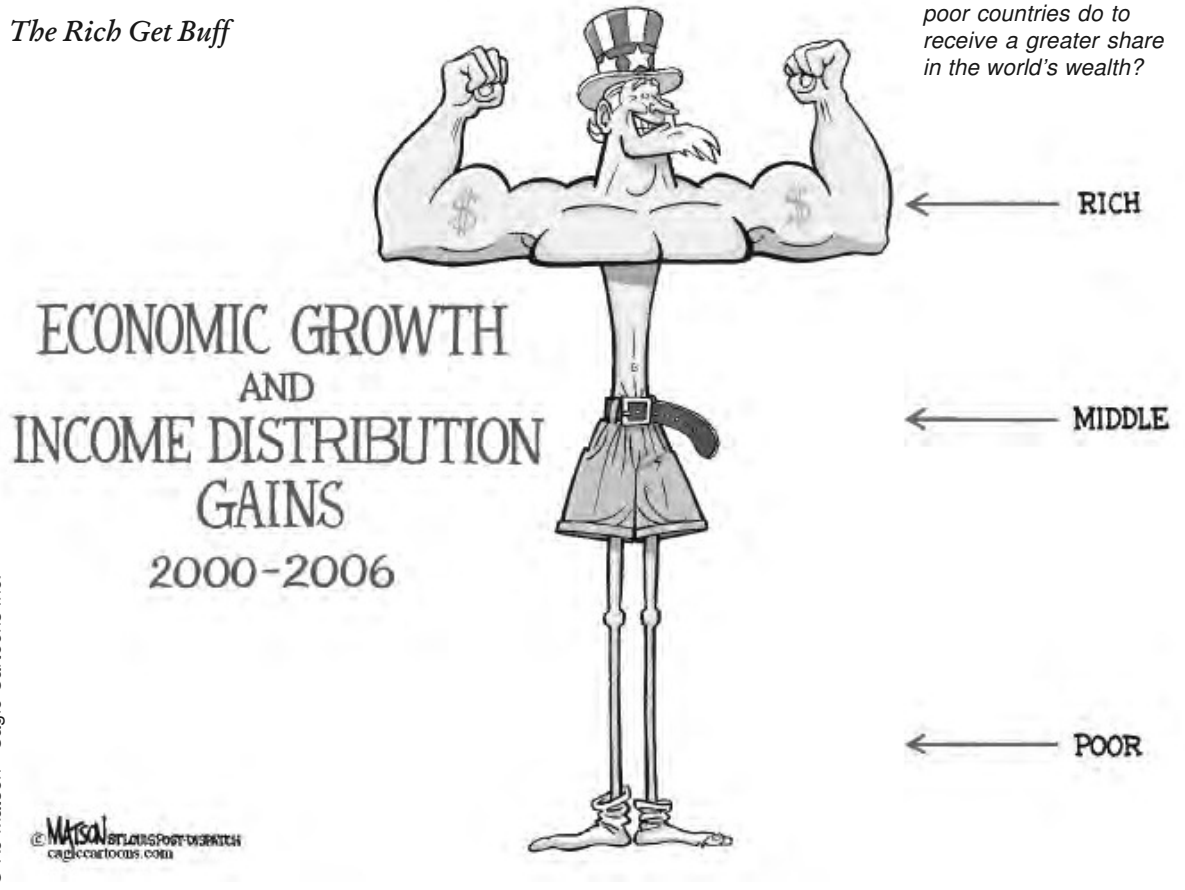
If democracies are expected to produce good governments, then is it not fair to expect that they would also produce development? Evidence shows that in practice many democracies did not fulfil this expectation.

If you consider all democracies and all dictatorships for the fifty years between 1950 and 2000, dictatorships have slightly higher rate of economic growth. The inability of democracy to achieve higher economic development worries us. But this alone cannot be reason to reject democracy. As you have already studied in economics, economic development depends on several factors: country's population size, global situation, cooperation from other countries, economic priorities adopted by the country, etc. However, the difference in the rates of economic development between less developed countries with dictatorships and democracies is negligible. Overall, we cannot say that democracy is a guarantee of economic development. But we can expect democracy not to lag behind dictatorships in this respect.

When we find such significant difference in the rates of economic growth between countries under dictatorship and democracy, it is better to prefer democracy as it has several other positive outcomes.

Cartoon on this page and next three pages tell us about the disparities between the rich and poor. Should the gains of economic growth be evenly distributed? How can the poor get a voice for a better share in a nation? What can the poor countries do to receive a greater share in the world's wealth?

The Rich Get Buff

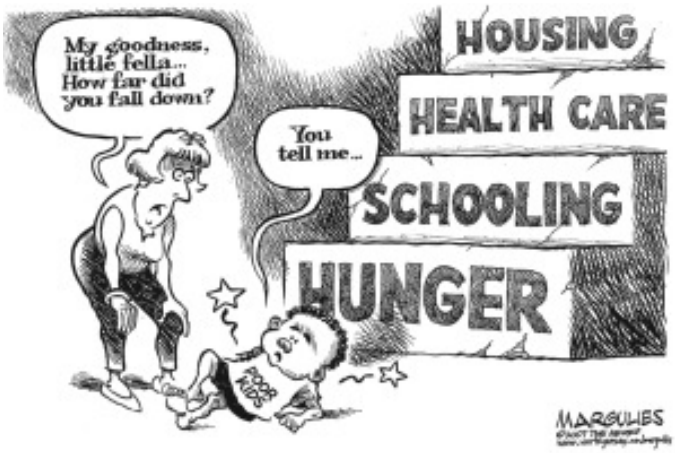


© RJ Matson - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Economic outcomes of democracy

Arguments about democracy tend to be very passionate. This is how it should be, for democracy appeals to some of our deep values. These debates cannot be resolved in a simple manner. But some debates about democracy can and should be resolved by referring to some facts and figures. The debate about the economic outcomes of democracy is one such debate. Over the years many students of democracy have gathered careful evidence to see what the relationship of democracy with economic growth and economic inequalities is. The tables and the cartoon here present some of the evidences:

Poor Kids



© Jimmy Margulies - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

- Table 1 shows that on an average dictatorial regimes have had a slightly better record of economic growth. But when we compare their record only in poor countries, there is virtually no difference.
- Table 2 shows that within democracies there can be very high degree of inequalities. In democratic countries like South Africa and Brazil, the top 20 per cent people take away more than 60 per cent of the national income, leaving less than 3 per cent for the bottom 20 per cent population. Countries like Denmark and Hungary are much better in this respect.
- You can see in the cartoon, there is often inequality of opportunities available to the poorer sections.

What would be your verdict on democracy if you had to base it purely on economic performance of democratic regimes in terms of growth and equal distribution?

Table 1

Rates of economic growth for different countries, 1950-2000

Type of regimes and countries	Growth Rate
All democratic regimes	3.95
All dictatorial regimes	4.42
Poor countries under dictatorship	4.34
Poor countries under democracy	4.28

Source: A Przeworski, M E Alvarez, J A Cheibub and F Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Table 2

Inequality of income in selected countries

Name of the Countries	% share of national income	
	Top 20 %	Bottom 20 %
South Africa	64.8	2.9
Brazil	63.0	2.6
Russia	53.7	4.4
USA	50.0	4.0
United Kingdom	45.0	6.0
Denmark	34.5	9.6
Hungary	34.4	10.0

Reduction of inequality and poverty

Perhaps more than development, it is reasonable to expect democracies to reduce economic disparities. Even when a country achieves economic growth, will wealth be distributed in such a way that all citizens of the country will have a share and lead a better life? Is economic growth in democracies accompanied by increased inequalities among the people? Or do democracies lead to a just distribution of goods and opportunities?

Voice of the Poor

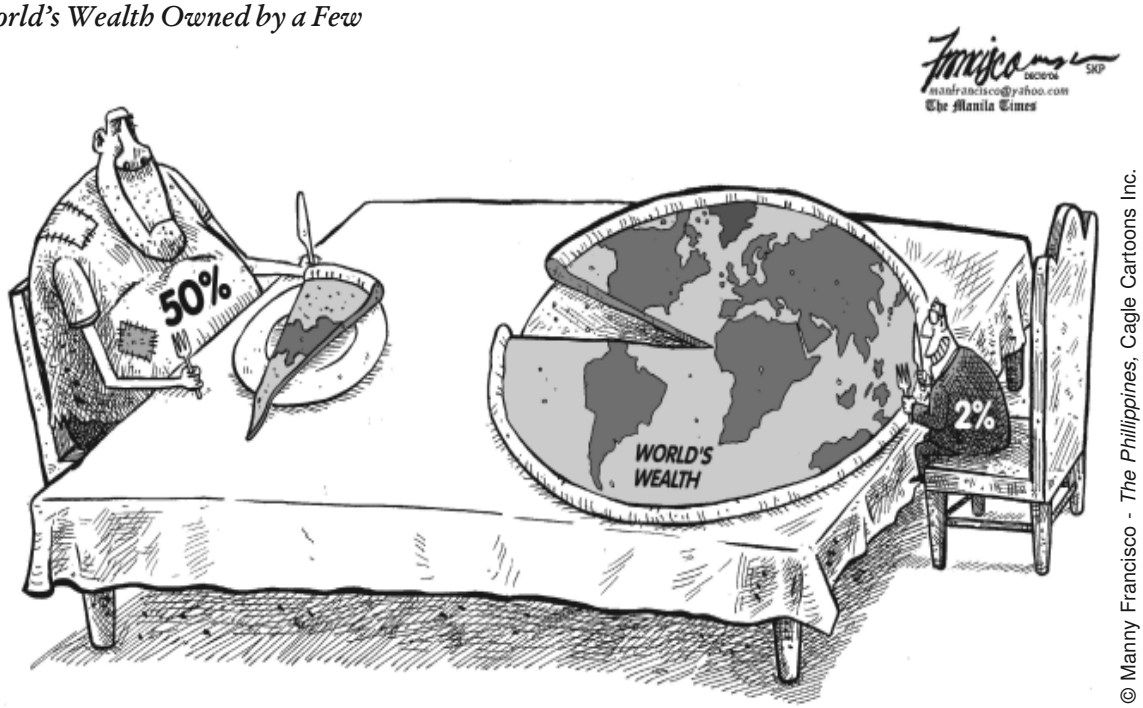
© Ares - *Best of Latin America*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Democracies are based on political equality. All individuals have equal weight in electing representatives. Parallel to the process of bringing individuals into the political arena on an equal footing, we find growing economic inequalities. A small number of ultra-rich enjoy a highly disproportionate share of wealth and incomes. Not only that, their share in the total income of the country has been increasing. Those at the bottom of the society have very little to depend upon. Their incomes have been declining. Sometimes they find it difficult to meet their basic needs of life, such as food, clothing, house, education and health.

In actual life, democracies do not appear to be very successful in reducing economic inequalities. In Class IX Economics textbook, you have already studied about poverty in India. The poor constitute a large proportion of our voters and no party will like to lose their votes. Yet democratically elected governments do not appear to be as keen to address the question of poverty as you would expect them to. The situation is much worse in some other countries. In Bangladesh, more than half of its population lives in poverty. People in several poor countries are now dependent on the rich countries even for food supplies.

Democracy is a rule of the majority. The poor are in majority. So democracy must be a rule of the poor. How can this not be the case?

World's Wealth Owned by a Few



© Manny Francisco - *The Philippines*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Accommodation of social diversity

Do democracies lead to peaceful and harmonious life among citizens? It will be a fair expectation that democracy should produce a harmonious social life. We have seen in the earlier chapters how democracies accommodate various social divisions. We saw in the first chapter how Belgium has successfully negotiated differences among ethnic populations. Democracies usually develop a procedure to conduct their competition. This reduces the possibility of these tensions becoming explosive or violent.

No society can fully and permanently resolve conflicts among different groups. But we can certainly learn to respect these differences and we can also evolve mechanisms to negotiate the differences. Democracy is best suited to produce this outcome. Non-democratic regimes often turn a blind eye to or suppress internal social differences. Ability to handle social differences, divisions and conflicts is thus a definite plus point of democratic regimes. But the example of Sri Lanka reminds us that a democracy must fulfil two conditions in order to achieve this outcome:

- It is necessary to understand that democracy is not simply rule by majority opinion. The majority always needs to work with the minority so that governments function to represent the general view. Majority and minority opinions are not permanent.
- It is also necessary that rule by majority does not become rule by majority community in terms of religion or race or linguistic group, etc. Rule by majority means that in case of every decision or in case of every election, different persons and groups may and

All you are saying is that democracy ensures that people do not break each other's head. This is not harmony. Should we be happy about it?

can form a majority. Democracy remains democracy only as long as every citizen has a chance of being in majority at some point of time. If someone is barred from being in majority on the basis of birth, then the democratic rule ceases to be accommodative for that person or group.

Enemies

Greeting

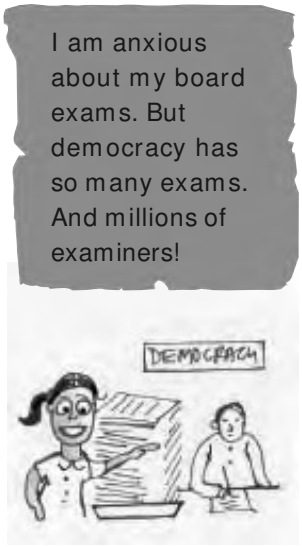
The two images depict two different kinds of effects democratic politics can have on social divisions. Take one example for each image and write a paragraph each on the outcome of democratic politics in both situations.

© Ares - *Best of Latin America*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Dignity and freedom of the citizens

Democracy stands much superior to any other form of government in promoting dignity and freedom of the individual. Every individual wants to receive respect from fellow beings. Often conflicts arise among individuals because some feel that they are not treated with due respect. The passion for respect and freedom are the basis of democracy. Democracies throughout the world have recognised this, at least in principle. This has been achieved in various degrees in various democracies. For societies which have been built for long on the basis of subordination and domination, it is not a simple matter to recognize that all individuals are equal.

Take the case of dignity of women. Most societies across the world were historically male dominated societies. Long struggles by women have created some sensitivity today that respect to and

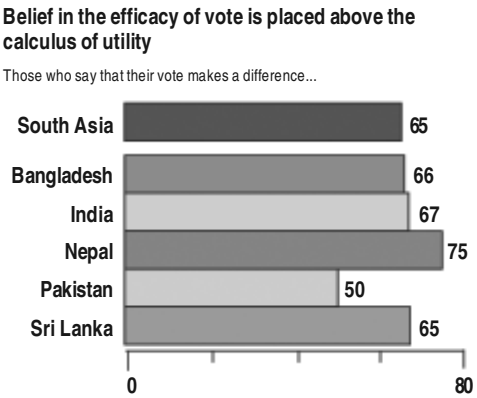


equal treatment of women are necessary ingredients of a democratic society. That does not mean that women are actually always treated with respect. But once the principle is recognised, it becomes easier for women to wage a struggle against what is now unacceptable legally and morally. In a non-democratic set up, this unacceptability would not have legal basis because the principle of individual freedom and dignity would not have the legal and moral force there. The same is true of caste inequalities. Democracy in India has strengthened the claims of the disadvantaged and discriminated castes for equal status and equal opportunity. There are instances still of caste-based inequalities and atrocities, but these lack the moral and legal foundations. Perhaps it is the recognition that makes ordinary citizens value their democratic rights.

Expectations from democracy also function as the criteria for judging any democratic country. What is most distinctive about democracy is that its examination never gets over. As democracy passes one test, it produces another test. As people get some benefits of democracy, they ask for more and want to make democracy even better. That is why when we ask people about the way democracy functions, they will always come up with more expectations, and many complaints. The fact that people are complaining is itself a testimony to the success of democracy: it shows that people have developed awareness and the ability to expect and to look critically at power holders and the high and the mighty. A public expression of dissatisfaction with democracy shows the success of the democratic project: it transforms people from the status of a subject into that of a citizen. Most individuals today believe that their vote makes a difference to the way the government is run and to their own self-interest.

Rosa Still Inspires

© Pat Bagley - Cagle Cartoons Inc.



Source: SDSA Team, *State of Democracy in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007.

The above cartoon and graph. Illustrates a point made in this section (Dignity and freedom of the citizens). Underline the sentences from this section which connect to the cartoon or graph.

Exercises

1. How does democracy produce an accountable, responsive and legitimate government?
2. What are the conditions under which democracies accommodate social diversities?
3. Give arguments to support or oppose the following assertions:
   - Industrialised countries can afford democracy but the poor need dictatorship to become rich.
   - Democracy can't reduce inequality of incomes between different citizens.
   - Government in poor countries should spend less on poverty reduction, health, education and spend more on industries and infrastructure.
   - In democracy all citizens have one vote, which means that there is absence of any domination and conflict.
4. Identify the challenges to democracy in the following descriptions. Also suggest policy/institutional mechanism to deepen democracy in the given situations:
   - Following a High Court directive a temple in Orissa that had separate entry doors for *dalits* and non-*dalits* allowed entry for all from the same door.
   - A large number of farmers are committing suicide in different states of India.
   - Following allegation of killing of three civilians in Gandwara in a fake encounter by Jammu and Kashmir police, an enquiry has been ordered.
5. In the context of democracies, which of the following ideas is correct – democracies have successfully eliminated:
   A. conflicts among people
   B. economic inequalities among people
   C. differences of opinion about how marginalised sections are to be treated
   D. the idea of political inequality
6. In the context of assessing democracy which among the following is odd one out. Democracies need to ensure:
   A. free and fair elections
   B. dignity of the individual
   C. majority rule
   D. equal treatment before law
7. Studies on political and social inequalities in democracy show that
   A. democracy and development go together.
   B. inequalities exist in democracies .
   C. inequalities do not exist under dictatorship.
   D. dictatorship is better than democracy.

8. Read the passage below:

   Nannu is a daily wage earner. He lives in Welcome Mazdoor Colony, a slum habitation in East Delhi. He lost his ration card and applied for a duplicate one in January 2004. He made several rounds to the local Food & Civil Supplies office for the next three months. But the clerks and officials would not even look at him, leave alone do his job or bother to tell him the status of his application. Ultimately, he filed an application under the Right to Information Act asking for the daily progress made on his application, names of the officials, who were supposed to act on his application and what action would be taken against these officials for their inaction. Within a week of filing application under the Right to Information Act, he was visited by an inspector from the Food Department, who informed him that the card had been made and he could collect it from the office. When Nannu went to collect his card next day, he was given a very warm treatment by the Food & Supply Officer (FSO), who is the head of a Circle. The FSO offered him tea and requested him to withdraw his application under the Right to Information, since his work had already been done.

   What does Nannu's example show? What impact did Nannu's action have on officials? Ask your parents their experiences when they approach government officials to attend to their problems.

Challenges to Democracy

Chapter 8

Overview

This concluding chapter draws upon all that you have learnt in the last two years so as to address the fundamental questions of democratic politics : What are the challenges that democracy faces in our country and elsewhere? What can be done to reform democratic politics? How can our democracy become more democratic in its practice and outcomes? This chapter does not answer these questions. It only makes some suggestions about the way in which we can approach the questions of challenges and reforms. It invites you to think on your own and come up with your own reading of the challenges, your recipe of how to overcome these and your own definition of democracy.

Thinking about challenges

Do you remember the first chapter of your Political Science textbook of Class IX? There we tracked the expansion of democracy all over the world in the last hundred years. Our reading thereafter has confirmed our initial impression: democracy is the dominant form of government in the contemporary world. It does not face a serious challenger or rival. Yet our exploration of the various dimensions of democratic politics has shown us something else as well. The promise of democracy is far from realised anywhere in the world. Democracy does not have a challenger, but that does not mean that it does not face any challenges.

At different points in this tour of democracy, we have noted the serious challenges that democracy faces all over the world. A challenge is not just any problem. We usually call only those difficulties a 'challenge' which are significant and which can be overcome. A challenge is a difficulty that carries within it an opportunity for progress. Once we overcome a challenge we go up to a higher level than before.

Different countries face different kinds of challenges. Can you recall the map of democratic governments in the year 2000 that was included in your textbook? At least one fourth of the globe is still not under democratic government. The challenge for democracy in these parts of the world is very stark. These countries face the **foundational challenge** of making the transition to democracy and then instituting democratic government. This involves bringing down the existing non-democratic regime, keeping military away from controlling government and establishing a sovereign and functional state.

Most of the established democracies face the **challenge of expansion.** This involves applying the basic principle of democratic government across all the regions, different social groups and various institutions. Ensuring greater power to local governments, extension of federal principle to all the units of the federation, inclusion of women and minority groups, etc., falls under this challenge. This also means that less and less decisions should remain outside the arena of democratic control. Most countries including India and other democracies like the US face this challenge.

The third challenge of **deepening of democracy** is faced by every democracy in one form or another. This involves strengthening of the institutions and practices of democracy. This should happen in such a way that people can realise their expectations of democracy. But ordinary people have different expectations from democracy in different societies. Therefore, this challenge takes different meanings and paths in different parts of the world. In general terms, it usually means strengthening those institutions that help people's participation and control. This requires an attempt to bring down the control and influence of the rich and powerful people in making governmental decision.

We have noted or hinted at these challenges in all the various examples and stories that we studied in our textbook of Class IX and in the earlier chapters of this book. Let us go back to all the major stops in our tour of democracy, refresh our memory and note down the challenges that democracy faces in each of these.

Different contexts, different challenges

Each of these cartoons represents a challenge to democracy. Please describe what that challenge is. Also place it in one of the three categories mentioned in the first section.

Mubarak Re-elected

© Patrick Chappatte - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Seeing the democracy

© Ares - Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Liberal Gender Equality

© Tab - *The Calgary Sun*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Campaign Money

© Ares - *Best Latin America*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Case and context	Your description of the challenges for democracy in that situation
Chile: General Pinochet's government defeated, but military still in control of many institutions	[Example] Establishing civilian control over all governmental institutions, holding the first multi-party elections, recalling all political leaders from exile.
Poland: After the first success of Solidarity, the government imposed martial law and banned solidarity	
Ghana: Just attained independence, Nkrumah elected president	
Myanmar: Suu Kyi under house arrest for more than 15 years, army rulers getting global acceptance	
International organisations: US as the only super power disregards the UN and takes unilateral action	
Mexico: Second free election after the defeat of PRI in 2000; defeated candidate alleges rigging	
China: Communist Party adopts economic reforms but maintains monopoly over political power	
Pakistan: General Musharraf holds referendum, allegations of fraud in voters' list	
Iraq: Widespread sectarian violence as the new government fails to establish its authority	
South Africa: Mandela retires from active politics, pressure on his successor Mbeki to withdraw some concessions given to White minority	

Case and context	Your description of the challenges for democracy in that situation
US, Guantanamo Bay: UN Secretary General calls this a violation of international law, US refused to respond	
Saudi Arabia: Women not allowed to take part in public activities, no freedom of religion for minorities	
Yugoslavia: Ethnic tension between Serbs and Albanians on the rise in the province of Kosovo. Yugoslavia disintergrated	
Belgium: One round of constitutional change taken place, but the Dutch speakers not satisfied; they want more autonomy	
Sri Lanka: The peace talks between the government and the LTTE break down, renewed violence	
US, Civil Rights: Blacks have won equal rights, but are still poor, less educated and marginalised	
Northern Ireland: The civil war has ended but Catholics and Protestants yet to develop trust	
Nepal: Constituent Assembly about to be elected, unrest in Terai areas, Maoists have not surrendered arms	
Bolivia: Morales, a supporter of water struggle, becomes Prime Minister, MNCs threaten to leave the country	

Different types of challenges

Now that you have noted down all these challenges, let us group these together into some broad categories. Given below are some spheres or sites of democratic politics. You may place against each of these the specific challenges that you noted for one or more countries or cartoons in the previous section. In addition to that write one item for India for each of these spheres. In case you find that some challenges do not fit into any of the categories given below, you can create new categories and put some items under that.

Constitutional design	
Democratic rights	
Working of institutions	
Elections	
Federalism, decentralisation	
Accommodation of diversity	
Political organisations	
_____ _____ Any other category	
_____ _____ Any other category	

Let us group these again, this time by the nature of these challenges as per the classification suggested in the first section. For each of these categories, find at least one example from India as well.

Foundational challenge	
Challenge of expansion	
Challenge of deepening	

Now let us think only about India. Think of all the challenges that democracy faces in contemporary India. List those five that should be addressed first of all. The listing should be in order of priority, i.e, the challenge you find most important or pressing should be mentioned at number 1, and so on. Give one example of that challenge and your reasons for assigning it the priority.

Priority	Challenges to democracy	Example	Reasons for preference
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Thinking about political reforms

Each of these challenges is linked to the possibility of reforms. As mentioned above, we discuss challenges only because we think these can be overcome. Generally all the suggestions or proposals about overcoming various challenges to democracy are called 'democracy reform' or 'political reform'. We are not going to give here a list of desirable political reforms, for there cannot be any such list. If all the countries do not have the same challenges, it follows that everyone cannot follow the same recipe of political reforms. We cannot prescribe a procedure for car repair without knowing which model the car is, what the defect is and what tools are available, where the car has broken down, etc.

Can we at least have a list of such reforms for our country in today's context? We can develop some proposals for reforms at the national level. But the real challenge of reforms may not lie at the national level. Some of the crucial questions need to be thought at the State or local level. Besides, such a list may become irrelevant after some time. So, instead of that let us think of some broad guidelines that can be kept in mind while devising ways and means for political reforms in India:

- It is very tempting to think of legal ways of reforming politics, to think of new laws to ban undesirable things. But this temptation needs to be resisted. No doubt, law has an important role to play in political reform. Carefully devised changes in law can help to discourage wrong political practices and encourage good ones. But legal-constitutional changes by themselves cannot overcome challenges to democracy. This is like the rules of cricket. A change in rules for LBW decisions helped to reduce negative batting tactics. But no one would ever think that the quality of cricket could be improved mainly through changes in the rules. This is to be done mainly by the players, coaches and administrators. Similarly, democratic reforms are to be carried out mainly by political activists, parties, movements and politically conscious citizens.
- Any legal change must carefully look at what results it will have on politics. Sometimes the results may be counter-productive. For example, many states have banned people who have more than two children from contesting panchayat elections. This has resulted in denial of democratic opportunity to many poor and women, which was not intended. Generally, laws that seek to ban something are not very successful in politics. Laws that give political actors incentives to do good things have more chances of working. The best laws are those which empower people to carry out democratic reforms. The Right to Information Act is a good example of a law that empowers the people to find out what is happening in government and act as watchdogs of democracy. Such a law helps to control corruption and supplements the existing laws that banned corruption and imposed strict penalties.
- Democratic reforms are to be brought about principally through political practice. Therefore, the main focus of political reforms should be on ways to strengthen democratic practice. As we discussed in the chapter on political parties, the most important concern should be to increase and improve the quality of political participation by ordinary citizens.
- Any proposal for political reforms should think not only about what is a good solution but also about who will implement it and how. It is not very wise to think that the legislatures will pass legislations that go against the interest of all the political parties and MPs. But measures that rely on democratic movements, citizens' organisations and the media are likely to succeed.

Let us keep these general guidelines in mind and look at some specific instances of challenges to democracy that require some measure of reform. Let us try to come up with some concrete proposals of reform.

Here are some challenges that require political reforms. Discuss these challenges in detail study the reform options offered here and give your preferred solution with reasons. Remember that none of the options offered here is 'right' or 'wrong'. You can opt for a mix of more than one options, or come up with something that is not offered here. But you must give your solution in details and offer reasons for your choice.

Doctors' absenteeism

Challenge:

Uttar Pradesh government got a survey done and found out that most of the doctors posted in the rural primary health centres are simply not there. They live in a town, carry out private practice and visit the village where they are posted only once or twice in the entire month. Villagers have to travel to towns and pay very high fee to private doctors even for common ailments.

Reform proposals:

- The government should make it compulsory for the doctors to live in the village where they are posted, otherwise their service should be terminated.
- District administration and police should carry out surprise raids to check the attendance of the doctors.
- Village panchayat should be given the power to write the annual report of the doctor which should be read out in the gram sabha meeting.
- Problems like this can be solved only if Uttar Pradesh is split into several smaller states which can be administered more efficiently.

Political funding

Challenge:

On an average, every candidate who contested the last Lok Sabha elections owned a property of more than Rs one crore. There is a fear that only wealthy people or those with their support can afford to fight elections. Most of the political parties are dependent on money given by big business houses. The worry is that the role of money in politics will reduce whatever little voice the poor have in our democracy.

Reform proposals:

- The financial accounts of every political party should be made public. These accounts should be examined by government auditors.
- There should be state funding of elections. Parties should be given some money by the government to meet their election expenditure.
- Citizens should be encouraged to give more donations to parties and to political workers. Such donations should be exempt from income tax.

Any other problem of your choice

Challenge:

Reform proposals:

-
-
-

Reforming politicians

Rose managed to catch Madam Lyngdoh outside the classroom, something she had been planning to do for some time. "Ma'am! I really liked that Canadian cartoon". Rose needed something to open the conversation. "Which one?" Madam Lyngdoh could not recall. "Ma'am, the one which says 98% Canadians want all the politicians to be locked in the trunk of a car and thrown into Niagara falls. I was thinking of our politicians. We would need a bigger vehicle and a river as mighty as Brahmaputra!"

Lyngdoh Ma'am smiled at Rose. Like most Indians, she is also very much unhappy with the way politicians of the country have been behaving and running the parties and governments. But she wanted Rose to appreciate the complexity of the problem: "Do you think our problems will be solved if we get rid of our politicians?," she asked.

"Yes, Ma'am. Aren't these mean politicians responsible for all the problems in our country? I mean corruption, defection, casteism, communal violence, criminality...everything."

Lyngdoh Madam: "So, all we need is to get rid of the current lot. Are you sure that those who replace them will not do these things?"

Rose: "Well, I had not thought of it, but may be not. May be we will get leaders of better character".

Lyngdoh Madam: "I agree with you that the situation will change if people show more care and alertness to reject corrupt and bad politicians and elect the right ones. And, maybe, all politicians are not corrupt..."

"How can you say that Ma'am" interrupted Rose.

Lyngdoh Madam: "I did not say that politicians are not corrupt. Maybe when you think of politicians you think of these big people whose photos appear in newspapers. I think of political leaders that I have known. I don't think that the political leaders I know are more corrupt than my own colleagues, government officials, contractors or other middle class professionals that I know. The corruption of the politician is more visible and we get the impression that all politicians are corrupt. Some of them are and some of them are not."

Rose did not give up. "Ma'am, what I meant is that there should be strict laws to curb corruption and wrong practices like appeals to caste and community.

Lyngdoh Madam: "I am not sure Rose. For one thing there is already a law banning any appeal to caste and religion in politics. Politicians find a way to bypass that. Laws can have little impact unless people resist attempts to mislead and divide people in the name of caste and religion. You cannot have democracy in a real sense unless people and politicians overcome the barriers of caste and religion.

Redefining democracy

We began this tour of democracy last year with a minimal definition of democracy. Do you remember that? This is what Chapter 2 of your textbook said last year: democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people. We then looked at many cases and expanded the definition slightly to add some qualifications:

- the rulers elected by the people must take all the major decisions;
- elections must offer a choice and fair opportunity to the people to change the current rulers;
- this choice and opportunity should be available to all the people on an equal basis; and
- the exercise of this choice must lead to a government limited by basic rules of the constitution and citizens' rights.

You may have felt disappointed that the definition did not refer to any high ideals that we associate with democracy. But in operational terms, we deliberately started with a minimalist but clear definition of democracy. It allowed us to make a clear distinction between democratic and non-democratic regimes.

You may have noticed that in the course of our discussions of various aspects of democratic government and politics, we have gone beyond that definition:

- We discussed democratic rights at length and noted that these rights are not limited to the right to vote, stand in elections and form political organisations. We discussed some social and economic rights that a democracy should offer to its citizens.
- We have taken up power sharing as the spirit of democracy and discussed how power sharing between governments and social groups is necessary in a democracy.
- We saw how democracy cannot be the brute rule of majority and how a respect for minority voice is necessary for democracy.
- Our discussion of democracy has gone beyond the government and its activities. We discussed how eliminating discrimination based on caste, religion and gender is important in a democracy.
- Finally, we have had some discussion about some outcomes that one can expect from a democracy.

In doing so, we have not gone against the definition of democracy offered last year. We began then with a definition of what is the minimum a country must have to be called a democracy. In the course of our discussion we moved to the set of desirable conditions that a democracy should have. We have moved from the definition of democracy to the description of a good democracy.

How do we define a good democracy? What are its features? Which are the features a democracy must have to be called a good democracy? And what must not take place in a democracy if it is a good democracy? You decide that.

Reading between the Lines

© Ares - *Best Latin America*, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Here is your space for writing your own definition of good democracy.

(Write your name here) _____ **'s definition of good democracy** *(not more than 50 words)*:

Features *(use only as many points as you want. Try to compress it in as few points as possible)*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

How did you like this exercise? Was it enjoyable? Very demanding? A little frustrating? And a little scary? Are you a little resentful that the textbook did not help you in this crucial task? Are you worried that your definition may not be 'correct'?

Here then is your last lesson in thinking about democracy: there is no fixed definition of good democracy. A good democracy is what we think it is and what we wish to make it. This may sound strange. Yet, think of it: is it democratic for someone to dictate to us what a good democracy is?