BLOCK 5
IDENTITY POLITICS

BLOCK 5   INTRODUCTION

Markers of identity such as caste, region, ethnicity, gender, etc., have been source identity politics in India like in any democratic system marked by diversity. The units in this block discuss identity politics with reference to some markers of identity. Unit 12 discusses relationship between caste-based identity (OBCs and Dalits), women and politics. Unit 13 deals with linguistic and ethnic groups. Unit 14 discusses identity politics with reference to regions and tribes. And unit 15 is about new social groups such as fisherfolks, enrvironmental groups and LGBTQs.

UNIT 12 DALITS, OBCS AND WOMEN*

Structure

12.0 OBJECTIVES

The central aim of this unit is to introduce the learners to two markers of identity politics – caste and gender. Especially, with reference to identity politics about the caste, it refers to the Dalits and the OBCs, and with reference to gender and politics, it is about the women. After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meanings of the concepts of Dalits and OBCs;

- Identify their principal issues, and features of their mobilisation;

- Discuss the issues concerning women; and

- Explain the extent of their empowerment in India.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

It would be nearly impossible to imagine Indian society and polity without these identities of caste and gender, especially the Dalits, the OBCs, and the women. It is therefore, necessary to understand that each of these categories not only influences economic, social and political life in India, they also belong to the marginalised sections of the society. In the past some years, there has been a growth in the level of their political consciousness and political mobilization. In response to their political mobilisation, the state has responded with some policy formulations. This has led to their empowerment to a considerable extent. However, despite the relative improvement in their conditions in the post-Independence period, the Dalits, OBCs, and women still remain marginalised groups in India. And their political mobilisation is an ongoing process.

12.2 WHO ARE DALITS?

The term Dalit is of Marathi origins which literally means 'broken' or 'dilapidated'. Dalit became popular with the emergence of the Dalit literary

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movement in the late 1960s and with the formation of a the Dalit organisation in Maharashtra known as Dalit Panthers in the early 1970s. The Dalit Panthers' manifesto attempted to define the word Dalit as an umbrella term that sought to include diverse marginalised social groups such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Neo-Buddhists, poor peasants, working class and women. The term got wider recognition in the 1990s at all India level.

However, the popular usage of this term by political activists, academicians as well as media, its eventual meaning got restricted to mean a group of people belonging to the Scheduled Castes only. And henceforth, Dalits came to be specifically referred to as SCs in cultural, political and even academic discourse. Thus, 'scheduled caste' and 'Dalits' are generally used interchangeably. But there are inherent differences between the two. While Dalit represents a social and political category; the Scheduled Cates is more of an administrative and legal category.

The SCs are not only placed in the lowest hierarchy of the social ladder, but they also have experienced untouchability. The category of SCs entitles them to avail of the state policies about protective discrimination or affirmative action as mandated in the Indian Constitution. The Government of India Act, 1935 introduced the category of 'Scheduled Castes' for all official purposes replacing the category of the 'depressed classes'. With the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1950, as per Article 17, the practice of untouchability was legally banned and was declared a criminal offence if anybody practiced it. Dalits have been participating in the democratic process through mobilisation on social, cultural, political, and economic issues.

12.3 MOBILISATION OF DALITS

As socially discriminated and poor groups, Dalits have faced multiple problems in Indian society. These include humiliation, untouchability, harassment of women, etc. Although there has been a change in their social, economic, and political conditions, their problems continue in varying degrees. Political parties and Dalit social organisations have sought to mobilise them on questions of recognition of their social and cultural symbols, political empowerment, and economic opportunities. This section is about mobilisation of Dalits in some of the Indian states.

Pre-Independence Period

The contemporary Dalit movement has its legacy in colonial Dalit mobilizations of various kinds in different parts of the colonial state. Gail Omvedt's book *Dalit and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India* is an important testimony which deals with such movements. There are four important mobilisations which deserve special mention. First, in Maharashtra Satysodhak movement led by Jyotirao Phule, who advocated the performance of marriage ceremonies and other religious rituals according to peasant traditions without the presence of Brahmin priests. Savitribai Phule started the first school for girls in modern India and promoted education for the untouchable and Muslim girls and stressed on 'equality of genders'. Second, E V Ramasamy Naicker, popularly known as Periyar, led a Self-Respect movement in Madras presidency. His movement had far reaching consequences in terms of building an anti-caste consciousness in southern India. Third, the Namashudra

(earlier known as *chandala*) movement of Bengal presidency sought to unite the castes in the lower social order (*chhotolok*) against the disparities between them and the privileged elite castes (*bhadrolok*) of Bengali society. Fourth, Adi-Dharm movement in Punjab envisioned creating a distinct identity for the untouchables irrespective of their religious affiliations, such as a Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. All these movements had a common ingredient of attacking caste-based inequalities.

Since the mid-1920s B.R. Ambedkar consistently provided intellectual, social and political leadership on the concerns of the untouchables or depressed classes or Scheduled Castes as Dalits were known in the pre-independence period. In terms of his political involvement, a significant contribution was his representation in the Round Table Conference, where he pushed for separate electorates for the depressed classes, which the colonial government had agreed to. But as a result of the Poona-Pact signed between Gandhi and Ambedkar in 1932, a provision of joint electoral constituencies came into existence. This provided SCs STs with a representation in the state assemblies and the central parliament. In 1936 Ambedkar founded Independent Labour Party (ILP) to unite the labouring classes belonging to different castes. In 1942, he founded the All India Scheduled Caste Federation (AISCF). Later, just before his death on 6th December 1956, he had announced the formation of a new political party named the Republican Party of India (RPI). It was only after Ambedkar's demise that his followers founded RPI in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

12.3.1 Dalit Movement in Post-Colonial India

The questions about the identity of Dalits have become central to their political mobilisation in different states of India. The extent and patterns of their mobilization have been uneven. The first most important examples of Dalit mobilisation in the post-Independence period are those of the RPI in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, of the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra during the late 1950s-early 1970s. The rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh in the 1980s and its role in the politics of the state later, mobilisation against the violence of Dalits in some other states such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar or Karnataka are among the examples of Dalit mobilisation during the 1990s. This section deals with such mobilisations.

The RPI and the Dalit Panthers

After the death of Ambedkar in 1956, those inspired by him, established a political party in 1957 known as the Republican Party of India (RPI). The RPI was formed after dissolving the AISCF which was earlier founded by Ambedkar. The RPI had a strong support base among the Dalits and other marginalised castes in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. It addressed both fighting caste-based injustices and advocating introduction of land reforms. Its leadership and activists largely belonged to first generation educated among the marginalised communities. In UP, the RPI worked in tandem with the opposition parties to mobilise people against price rise, food shortage, and other problems faced by common people. The RPI had emerged as an influential political party in Uttar Pradesh, especially its western region during the late 1950s-1960s. However, the RPI almost ceased to exist in the 1970s. The principal reason for this was that its main leader, B.P. Maurya in Uttar Pradesh was coopted into the Congress Party.

In Maharashtra, the first generation educated and informed Dalit youths, were dissatisfied with the Dalit leadership, particularly the one belonging to the Congress and Republican Party of India. A cultural and literary movement had begun among the Dalits in Maharashtra with a literary magazine titled *Ashmitadarsh* (mirror of identity). This magazine published radical poems, life stories related to caste-atrocities, and autobiographical sketches which became effective media of mobilisation in the literary circles. All such writings were inspired by the life and ideas of Ambedkar. Noted Marathi literary figures like, Baburao Bagul and Gangadhar Pantawane played crucial roles in shaping this movement. Young poets like, Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale, J.V. Pawar, Arjun Dangle, Arun Kamble etc. to name a few, taking inspiration from Ambedkar and the Black Panther Party for Self Defense of the USA, formed Dalit Panthers in 1972. Though short-lived, Dalit panthers can be called as one of the most radical strands of the Dalit movement in the post-Ambedkarite era. Both RPI and Dalit Panthers suffered from limitations. By the mid-1970s, the infighting and factionalism between the various Ambedkarite groups, particularly in Maharashtra, created a vacuum. As mentioned above, in UP, the cooption of the RPI leadership in the Congress was an additional reason for setback to the party concerned with the Dalit cause.

BAMCEF, DS4 and the BSP

Although political and cultural organisations of Dalits such as RPI and Dalit Panthers had declined by the mid-1970s, the process of social and cultural transformation continued among Dalit populace. This process is related to the impact of ideas and life of B.R. Ambedkar, and it has rightly been conceptualised as Ambedkarisation (Singh 1998). A large number of Dalit activists and intellectuals continued to educate Dalits on the need to change society in the light of the ideas and life of Ambedkar. They needed to form a party led by Dalits with social justice and social transformation as its main agenda. The formation of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on April 14, 1984 by Kanshi Ram was the political culmination of the social and cultural change which occurred among Dalits.

The founder of this party, Kanshi Ram, belonged to Punjab, and he started his political activities in Maharashtra. Initially, he founded BAMCEF (Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation). The BAMCEF focused on the mobilisation of central government employees belonging to backward and minority communities. Later, it was transformed to DS4 (Dalit Shoshit Sangharsh Samiti). And finally, in 1984, Kanshi Ram founded the BSP, a political party. It is meant to empower the Bahujan Samaj (majority population) by capturing power through the electoral process.

In BSP's definition, Bahujan Samaj consists of majority social groups – Dalits, OBCs, religious minorities, and it excludes the so called high castes such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The BSP in UP represented an example of a most successful political party with a strong support base among Dalits. Having entered electoral politics in 1985, the BSP became one of the most effective parties from the 1990s until the early 2010s. The BSP had major share in the governments formed in alliance with the SP once, and in alliance with the BJP four times. Mayawati, the BSP leader, became chief minister of Uttar Pradesh four times. Different BSP governments introduced policies for the welfare of Dalits, especially in Ambedkar villages. It constructed monuments in the memory

of icons associated with social justice. Although participation of Dalit on electoral politics and social and cultural activities has increased over the years, it has not shown a uniform pattern throughout the country. But there are instances of Dalits mobilisations around the protection of their social and cultural identities, and human rights across different states of India.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the Space given below for your answer.

ii)   Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1)   Discuss the features of Dalit movement in the Pre-Independence period.

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2)   What is the difference between BAMCEF, DS4 and the BSP?

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12.4   WHO ARE THE OBCS?

In the earlier section, you have read that the terms Dalits and the Scheduled Castes are used interchangeably. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) consist of the castes which have experienced untouchability and are marginalized in different aspects of life. The backward social groups other than the SCs are known as the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The OBCs have not experienced untouchability, but they are backward in social and educational [Art. 15 (4), 16(4)] terms an under-represented in governmental positions. Thus, OBCs are socially and educationally backward classes. The OBCs are heterogeneous groups that consist of multiple castes which are placed in the graded social hierarchy and have been traditionally engaged in different caste based occupations. In terms of such hierarchy, the OBCs consist of castes situated in the middle of the social hierarchy. Thus class in OBC represents nothing but a group of several castes.

Above them are placed the high castes, and below them are placed castes providing services to other castes as per the Jajmani system. The traditional occupations of the middle castes have been related to land cultivaions, and those castes below them have largely been to provide traditional services to the middle and higher castes. As you will read in this section, the OBCs can be divided into the land owning castes or upper OBCs, and the Most Backward Classes (MBCs) or

Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs). In some states, the socially and educationally more backward classes are demanding that they be officially recognised as the MBCs. While some states have already recognized them as the MBCs; a similar demand for their recognition is often made in other states.

Thus, in terms of occupational and social composition, the castes which are addressed by the generic category OBCs, consist of middle castes owning and cultivating land, and the castes are placed lower than them in the social hierarchy. Most belonging to latter are related to traditional occupations defined by the Jajmani system i.e. service castes such as barbers, carpenters, potters, water carriers etc. Their caste names and numbers vary from state to state. It is important to note that while the castes placed in the lower social hierarchy are generally placed in the OBC category in various states, not all middle castes having ownership of land and involved in cultivation are recognised as OBCs at the central level. The middle castes land owning or land cultivating caste such as Yadavs, Gujars, Rajasthan, Koeris, Kurmis, Jats in north Indian states like Delhi, UP, Bihar, Rajasthan; Vokaliggas and Lingayats in Karnataka are examples of land owning middle castes being recognized as OBCs. The caste groups like Kappus in Andhra Pradesh, Patels in Gujarat or Marathas in Maharashtra have been demanding that they be recognized as the OBCs.

Different caste groups that form a broad category of OBCs have been impacted by the state policies and changes within these castes. Since the 1950s, the middle castes or the OBCs have been the beneficiaries of land reforms, especially due to the abolition of intermediaries that had existed between them and the state machinery under the zamindari system. Although the land reforms did not have a uniform impact on them in all states, but an impact of land reforms on a class of land-owning middle castes were evident in different states of India. In some other states, these castes was also the beneficiaries of the Green Revolution.

By the 1970s, the land-owing middle castes emerged as an articulate and politically vocal class. They came to be addressed by different names in academic and political discourse like - middle peasants, rich farmers, kulaks or 'bullock capitalists'. As the OBCs in general belong to middle and lower castes and classes, these groups have been focus of mobilisation by the socialist groups, generally inspired by Ram Manohar Lohia. One of the principal objectives of the socialist mobilisation was to empower the OBCs. And one of the devices of empowering them was to give them representation in the public institution through reservation. Along with the socialists, farmer leader and an intellectual, Charan Singh advocated reservation for the backward classes, many of whom happened to be cultivators.

Issues of the OBCs

The main issues concerning the OBCs are relating to the demand for new caste groups to be included in the OBC category; the demand of sub-division of OBC quota into two groups – the MBCs or the EBCs; demand of some MBCs or OBCs to be recognised by the government as the SC or ST communities; demand for recognition of cultural symbols of castes or seeking awards like those of 'Bharat-Ratna' for their own caste heroes or declaration of public holidays in the memory of their caste icons, symbols or heroes (Singh 2021). Some of the instances of such demands include: demand of Marathas in Maharashtra, Patels in Gujarat, Jats of in Rajasthan (till 1999 when they became the OBCs) and of Haryana, Kappus in Andhra Pradesh, Marathas in Maharashtra to be identified

in the OBC list in their respective states. The Gujars of Rajasthan demand their inclusion in the ST list in the state. Especially in UP, the MBCs demanded subdivision of OBC quota as per the Karpoori Thakur formula. Karpoori Thakur Formula is named after Karpoori Thakur during his tenure of Bihar chief minister (1977-1979). According to this formula, the OBC reservation quota in Bihar was divided between the dominant OBCs and marginalized castes, among them known as Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs).

The governments have responded to such demands in different ways. Here are some examples of the responses of some of the state governments. The Jats were included in the state OBC list in 1999 in Rajasthan (except in Dholpur and Bharatpur regions) and in 2000 in Delhi and UP. In 2014, the Maharashtra government granted OBC status to the Maratha community, but it has been stayed by the Supreme Court as of now (2021). Regarding the sub-division of the OBC quota, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, the Congress government appointed Chhedi Lal Sathi Commission in 1975; the BJP government led by Rajnath Singh appointed Hukum Singh Committee in 2001. Different governments in UP – led by Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav, and Yogi Adityanath sought to include some MBCs in the SC or ST lists. However, because of legal or political reasons a final decision on this question has not been taken. In Rajasthan, although the Gujars have not been included in the ST list, they along with five other castes, have been recognised as Special Backward classes (SBCs) in the state. This entitles them to get a specific percentage of quota within the OBC category. In Tamil Nadu, some castes have been recognised as the MBCs.

The Mandal Commission Report

It is important to note that the mobilisation of the OBCs started in southern India much before it began in northern India. Although the reservation for the OBCs in the public institutions in the states was introduced at different times in different states up to the late 1970s, the first attempt to do so at all India level happened after the Mandal Commission Report was introduced by the V.P. Singh government in 1990. Indeed, the implementation of the Mandal Commission took place after more than a decade of submission of the Mandal Report in 1980. The Mandal Commission was appointed by the Janata Party government (1977-1979) with Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. As the Janata Party had effective representation of the supporters of the cause of the OBCs, the appointment of Mandal Commission was a result of their efforts. In real sense, the Mandal Commission Report was the first report which led to introduction of reservation for the OBCs at the all-India level.

With the Indian Constitution coming into force on 26th January 1950, Article 340 mandated the President of India to appoint a Commission towards identification and investigation of socially and educationally backward classes. As per the first amendment of the Indian Constitution that came in force in 1951, Article 15(4) envisioned that state shall make necessary provisions for the advancement of the backward classes in addition to similar provisions that already existed for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The First Backward Classes Commission was appointed in 1953 under the chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar, a Gandhian belonging to Congress Party. Kalelkar Commission submitted its report in 1955 and identified more than 3000 communities as socially and educationally backward classes in India. But the central government did not accept the report on the Kalelkar Commission. The ground for rejection cited was that it did not

adopt objective criteria for identifying socially and educationally backward classes.

Second Backward Classes Commission headed by P.P. Mandal, identified close to 4000 castes the backward classes and recommended 27% reservation for the OBCs at all India level. But the decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report was challenged in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court of India in the *Indira Sawhney v/s. Union of India* judgement ruled in favour of this implementation and held that the 'creamy-layer' be excluded from the benefit of OBC reservation. The 'creamy-layer' meant those individuals belonging to OBC caste but whose parent's income should not cross as mandated by the state, which keeps changing from time to time. In 2005, with the Ninety Third Amendement to the Indian Constitution, an additional clause was appended to Article 15. In accordance with consequent Article 15(5), the UPA-I government led by Manmohan Singh announced the reservations for the OBCs in higher educational institutions.

12.5   WOMEN

While both the identities of Dalit and OBC discussed above in this unit are specific to the Indian context, women are essentially a universal category present across population throughout the world. As a marginalised section of society in India, women largely face discrimination in terms of denial of right to inherit property, gender-based inequality, lack of equability or freedom to make a choice of jobs, marriage or way to lead life, inadequate or lack of representation in political institution. Although a lot of changes have taken place in women's status in India in terms of improvement in educational attainment, employment, political representation especially in the institutions of local governance following the 73rd and 74the Constitutional Amendments, still women remain a largely disadvantaged section of society.

The issues relating to women's rights have become a focus of academic and political debate in India in the past few decades. Several leaders and organizations are involved in articulating women's issues in India. Efforts towards addressing women's concerns can be traced the pre-Independence period. In the nineteenth century, women's issues were addressed by social reformers. The social reformers fought against ill social practices which violated women's rights such the practice of sati, practice of child marriage and prohibition on widow-remarriage. Apart from the men, several women had played a crucial role in fighting the social odds that violated women's rights. It was despite the dominance of patriarchal values in society. Among these women leaders were Savitri Bai Phule, Fatima Sheikh, Pandita Rama Bai, to name a few. In the post-Independence period, several civil society organizations, the general public and individuals took up issues relating to women's rights.

The 1970s saw an increased consciousness about women's issues in the country. The emerging consciousness about women's issues reflected a general trend of mobilization on the rise of different sections and aspects of society, like the environment, Dalits, OBCs, farmers. Movements relating to these issues came to be known as new social movements. The new social movements were identified by certain features – their apolitical nature (in terms of not having affiliation with a political party), new kinds of issues, and newly emerged social groups.

Among the women's issues were included - subordination and exploitation; women's reservation in the Parliament and legislative assemblies, and also rape, punishment by a *Khap*, Sati, child marriage, domestic violence, etc.

Here are some important examples of mobilisation which have largely been related to women or which saw participation of women. Women's organization along with the organisations of other social groups had participated in environmental movement like Chipko Andolan or Anti-Alcohol or Anti-price-rise etc. These movements also challenged the patriarchy-based inequality. According to Radha Kumar, the conflict between the desire for equality against gender-based discrimination and gender-based celebration characterise the feminist movement in India. In 2012, there was a massive mobilisation in Delhi against the gang rape of a student, who came to be known as Nirbhaya (not her real name). The nationwide protest against the rape in the Nirbhaya case led to the appointment of Justice Verma Committee to suggest ways to end such heinous crimes against women.

Justice Verma's committee made ten recommendations to end such crimes. Some of these recommendations were: making voyeurism, stalking, and unintended touching an offence; imprisonment for a ten years term for raping a minor; making gang rape as a penal crime punishable at least with twenty years of imprisonment; minimum of twenty years imprisonment for death caused by rape, and making marital rape an offence. In 1987, in a case of Sati, committed by a woman on the funeral pyre of her husband in a village of Rajasthan, there was a massive protest by various women organisations, and other civil society organisations. As a consequence of the protest, the Rajasthan High Court had directed the Rajasthan government to follow the Sati Act of 1987 to stop the practice of Annual Sati Melas (Mathur 2004). In response to the women's movement in India, the Indian parliament passed the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, ensuring justice for women facing crime, for the crime faced by a married at the hands of her husband or the male partner in a live-in relationship.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal) Act 2013 sought to ensure a safer working space for women. The 73rd and the 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts to the Constitution have already provided for the reservation of one third of the total number of seats for women in panchayats in the villages and municipalities in the cities. These provisions have resulted in the empowerment of women and the generation of self-confidence and political consciousness among them. However, there are some practical limitations of women's empowerment in the local institutions of governance, especially villages Panchayats. In most cases, although the elected members in the seats reserved in the local self-governance institutions are women, in reality, the male member of the women representative act as if they are the elected representative. Elected women representatives virtually become proxies in such circumstances.

Another significant step towards providing reservation to women in the elected bodies was taken in 1996 with the introduction of the Women Reservation Bill in the parliament by the United Front led by H. D. Deve Gowda. The bill aimed at reserving one third of seats for women in central parliament as well as all the state assemblies. Despite the reintroduction of the bill several times, it is yet to become an Act. In 2010, the bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha, but it failed the majority mark in the Lok Sabha. The political parties which opposed this bill,

aiming at social justice, sought quota within quota for women belonging to disadvantaged groups like, Adivasi, Dalit or OBCs. However, the reservation in these legislative bodies exists for the SCs and STs; it means that they are reserved for women in these bodies as members of their respective communities, but not as a woman.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the Space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Who are the OBCs and What is their Composition?

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2) What is the significance of the Mandal Commission?

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3) Identify the main issues relating to Women.

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12.7   LET US SUM UP

Dalits, OBCs and women belong to the marginalised sections of society. They are among the politically conscious sections. While the Dalits and OBCs are caste-specific categories, women are universal groups belonging to all castes, religions and other sections of the society. Dalits, OBCs, and women as marginalised groups have some common issues and some group-specific issues. The common issues are related to equality, freedom, social discrimination, self-respect, social justice, etc. The specific issues include: in case of Dalits and OBCs, the injustice arising from caste inequalities; in the case of women, their problems stemming from gender-based or patriarchy-based inequalities. Specifically, these are women's discrimination and violence against them in family, public sphere and work places; rape; denial of rights because of gender, etc. All three groups have seen a rise in their political consciousness, their mobilisation by civil society organisations and political parties. This has resulted in their empowerment to a considerable extent. However, discrimination and inequality based on caste and gender continue to exist, so make the efforts to mobilise and empower these groups.

12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE

Check Your Progress 1

1. The Dalit movement in the pre-independence period emphasised on the abolition of caste-based discrimination, providing self-respect and dignity to Dalits and other marginalised communities. The lead in the Dalit movement was taken by social reformers, including women identified with the cause of Dalits and other marginalised communities.

2. BAMCEF (Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation) was an organisation confined to the membership of the government employees belonging to the SCs, OBCs and minority communities. The scope of DS4 (Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti) it sought to mobilise all sections marginalised communities along with the government employees. The BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) aimed to empower entire bahujan samaj (majority section of society), excluding the high castes, by forming government through electoral process.

Check Your Progress 2

1. The OBCs (Other Backward Classes) are those castes that are socially and educationally backward. They are heterogeneous which consists of castes placed in the middle of the social hierarchy and traditionally engaged in agricultural occupations, and the castes which placed lower than them in the social hierarchy. The latter mostly have been associated with the Jajmani system.

2. The Mandal Commission was the first commission that recommended the introduction of reservation for the OBCs at all India level in the jobs in the central government offices.

3. Principal issues of women arise from the patriarchal system. They are generally related to humiliation and harassment in public places, homes, and offices; right to equality in terms of inheritance, and freedom; rape; violation of self-respect and dignity.

UNIT 13 LINGUISTIC AND ETHNIC GROUPS*

Structure

13.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to acquaint the students with the linguistic and ethnic groups in the state politics in India. After reading this unit, you will be to;

- Explain to meaning of linguistic and ethnic groups;
- Underline differences between them; and
- Discuss politics of linguistic and ethnic groups.

13.1   INTRODUCTION

The linguistic and ethnic groups occupy a significant place in a democracy. Their empowerment in terms of participation in political processes, ability to avail of the distributive justice, security, freedom, equality, etc. is indicative of level of success of a democracy. In a multicultural and diverse society like India, the multiple identities based on the diverse factors - caste, language, religion, race, culture, traditions, customs, etc., play a significant role in impacting their place in democracy. Mobilisation, patronage and discrimination in society and politics based on these markers form a significant aspect of a democratic system.

13.2   WHAT ARE THE LINGUISTIC AND ETHNIC GROUPS?

Before proceeding further, let us understand what a linguistic and an ethnic group mean. Both are group identities. A linguistic group is a group of people who feel

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that they share a common language. Similarly, an ethnic group is a group of people who think that they share similarities in several aspects of life such as religion, language, culture, customs, traditions, caste, race, economy, etc. We can thus see linguistic group is formed on the basis of single factor or marker, i.e., language, and an ethnic group is formed on the basis multiple factors or markers. It is important to note that some scholars consider both kinds of groups – those based on single marker as well as those based on multiple markers as ethnic groups. Generally, Indian scholars based in Indian institutions and the scholars based in American and European institutions allude to group identity from single and multiple factors in slightly different ways. The scholars based in Indian institutions identify a group formed on the basis of a single factor as single-factor group; for example, a linguistic group - the Tamil, the Telugu, and the Hindi or Maithili formed on the basis of language as a single marker, or caste/caste group-based identity such as Dalits, OBCs, high castes, or Brahmin or Rajput identity formed on the basis of caste or caste group as a single factor. And they refer to ethnic group to the group which formed based on multiple factors. For example, Naga or Mizo group identity formed on the basis of several markers – culture, language, customs, history, geography, clan, etc. denote ethnic identity of Nagas or Mizos. Unlike them, the scholars based in American and European institutions do not distinguish between groups formed on single and multiple factors. For them, both groups formed from single marker as well as multiple markers are ethnic groups. In this unit, you will read about the linguistic group as an identity based on a single marker and ethnic group as an identity formed on multiple markers.

13.3 LINGIUSTIC GROPUS

There could be two levels of identification of the linguistic groups- national and state/Union Territories. At all India level the linguistic majority consists of Hindi speakers, and other linguistic groups are linguistic minorities. But several linguistic groups which are minority linguistic groups at the all-India level are linguistic majorities in various states or in the regions within the states. The groups within the states which do not speak the language of the majority are linguistic minorities. All states of India have more than one linguistic group.

13.3.1 Linguistic Groups in India

In India, languages can be classified into different categories: mother tongues, dialects, and official languages. Mother tongue is the language which a person learns from his or her childhood. Dialect denotes mother tongue spoken by a particular community or groups of communities generally living in a particular geographical area. Official languages are those mother tongues or dialects which have got official recognition for official works and medium of instruction in educational institutions. There are different official languages in different states. The groups identified based on languages spoken by them are known as linguistic groups, for instance, Telugu, Punjabi, or Kannada speaking people. At all India level, Hindi is the official language. It means that all official work pertaining to the central government offices is transacted in Hindi as an official language. Similarly, the official work in a state is carried out in its official language. Some states have more than one official language. Asha Sarangi in the book edited by her *Language and Politics* in India (2009) discusses the relationship between language and politics. She highlights that the first survey to identify and classify

languages was done by Geogre Grierson during colonial India between 1903 and 1923. The reports of the survey were published in twelve volumes entitled *Linguistic Survey of India* (LSI). The LSI identified179 languages and 544 dialects in India. According to Asha Sarangi Grierson's survey was used by census commissioners to compile data in the subsequent linguistic surveys. Since 1881, the number of mother tongues in India has been varying. In the 1991census, there were 1,652 languages which were grouped into 114 mother tongues. In 1951 census, several dialects were referred as dialects of Hindi – Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magadhi. Even Maithili was included in Hindi in 1961 and 1971 censuses (Asha Sarangi 2009; pp.14-15). Official languages in India are placed in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution. There are 22 languages in India which are recognized as official languages are placed in the VIII Schedule. These are languages are as follows: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati*,* Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Manipuri, Maithili, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. From these languages Hindi is expected to "draw" its vocabulary wherever necessary and primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages. Many communities in India demand inclusion of their dialects and languages in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution. Their inclusion in VIII Schedule depends on the political factors. There are safeguards (Arts. 29-30) in Indian Constitution to protect the linguistic and cultural interests of the linguistic groups.

13.3.2   Three-language Formula

As each state in India has multiple languages, the main challenge in the country has been as to how to enable school children to interact with each other across diverse linguistic groups across states. Introduction of three-language formula is such a device conceived by policy makers associated with education in India. The three-language formula suggests that in states children should be made to learn three languages upto (VI-VIII) standard: apart from Hindi and English, a modern Indian language be taught; the modern Indian language in the Hindi speaking-speaking states could preferably be a language spoken in south India. In non-Hindi speaking states, (except in Tamul Nadu that followed two-language formula), three-languages to be taught include – English and Hindi along with a regional language. Since language is a state subject, which languages to be included in three-language formula fall under the jurisdiction of states. The suggestion to introduce three-language formula first made in the meeting of the Central Board of Education (CABE) the 1950s. Following the recommendations of the National Commission on Education (1964-66) known as Kothari Commission, three-language formula was included in national education policy in 1968. The New Education Policy 2020 suggested that at least upto grade 5 the medium of instruction should be mothor tounge, and wherever possible it should be any of the following - mother tongue, home language, local language or regional language upto grade 8.

13.3.3   Linguistic Groups and Politics in India

The significance of language as the basis of identity in India was recognised in the early twentieth century when Congress had organised itself on the linguistic lines. But after independence, the Congress had shown its reluctance to organise states on the linguistic basis till the State Reorganisation Commission made its recommendation for linguistic organisation of states. This happened in the wake

of the death of a Gandhian, P. Sriramulu, in 1953 following his hunger strike demanding a Telugu state out of then Madras state. In several states, there are sections who speak languages which are different from the languages spoken by majority of people in such states. They are known as linguistic minorities. The reorganisation of the states on the linguistic basis in 1956, however, did not resolve the language question. This gave rise to the language- based conflicts within the states. In India, on several occasions language has become an issue of political contest This demand has impacted the politics of several linguistic groups in India. Such politics or the linguistic politics has been impacted by the following factors: perception of linguistic of themselves and of the linguistic majorities; the linguistic majorities' perception of the linguistic minorities; and the attitude of the linguistic majorities towards linguistic minorities. The linguistic majorities in several states demand that the other linguistic groups accept the language of the majorities as medium of instruction in educational institutions, and as the official language. Several linguistic groups demand for recognition of language as an official language or its inclusion in the VIII Schedule and their recognition as official language. Such demand is generally made by the linguistic groups along with other demands relating to them such economic development, employment, protection of their cultural identities and political autonomy. In this respect the demands of the linguistic groups are also their demands as those of ethnic groups. You will read about the ethnic group in section 13.4 of this unit. The linguistic minorities demand protection of their own languages by asking for opening the educational institutions where the medium of instruction could be their mother tongue rather than that of the linguistic majority. The differences between linguistic groups in a state often lead to linguistic conflicts. There are innumerable examples of linguistic conflicts in states in India. This section discusses some cases concerning relationships between the linguistic groups and politics.

Let us start with the northeast India. There are many linguistic groups in state of the northeast India. The linguistic groups in these states can generally be linked to the ethnic groups. The latter belong to two groups of ethnic communities – the indigenous groups that have not migrated from outside a state and have been living in their areas for generations, and those who have migrated from other regions in search of employment or any other purpose and settled there over the years. Both the indigenous and migrant groups also consist of several linguistic groups each. Assam is among the northeastern states where the linguistic minorities groups resisted the attempts of the linguistic majority to make its language, the Assamese, as official and court language of all. In Assam, the principal linguistic conflict has been between the Assamese and the non-Assamese languages. When Assam was a composite state, i.e., before other states were carved of Assam, the Assamese and the non-Assamese languages were sources of linguistic conflict. The latter included the Bengali, tribal languages, etc. The Assamese-Bengali linguistic conflict in Assam can be traced back to the colonial policies. Within a few years of the occupation of Assam, the British made the Bengali as the official language. The Assamese had alleged that the British did so under the pressure of the Bengalis and it was discriminatory to them. They demanded that the Assamese be declared as an official and court language in Assam. This gave birth to a debate between the intellectuals of two linguistic groups. The Bengalis argued that there was no need for a separate court language for Assam, as Assamese was a dialect of the Assamese. The Assamese intellectuals on the other hand argued that Assamese was not a dialect of Bengali; it was an

independent language with its own script and history. The Bengalis should be replaced with the Assamese as an official language. The British in fact declared Assamese as official language of Assam in 1873. Since then, the conflict between the two linguistic groups continued in one or the other form. Bengalis are a minority linguistic group in Brahmputra Valley and while the Assamese are a minority linguistic group in Barak Valley. In the 1960s, the Assamese government attempted to make Assamese compulsory as medium of instructions in the institutions in the areas where non-Assamese were spoken by most people. This was resisted in these areas resulting in violent clashes in the Hills and Barak valley. Bengalis feared that introduction of Assamese as the official language would hamper the progress of Bengalis in Brahmputra Valley. It also resulted in demand for a tribal state in the Khasi dominated part of Assam. All non-Assamese communities including Bengalis, other non- tribals and tribal groups launched an agitation in the Khasi, Jaintia , and Garo hills for the formation of a separate state. The new state of Meghalaya was formed in 1972. In another example, as discussed by Sanjib Baruha in *India Against Itself*, after the signing of the Assam Accord in 1986, the Bodos underlined that their identity was different from Assamese, and Bodo was their language. They demanded recognition of Bodo as an official language, which was later given this status by its inclusion in the VIII Schedule.

Linguistic groups in two south Indian states- Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were involved in fierce language-based riott in 1992. The riot was not directly related to language. It was a fall out of the conflict which took place between the two states over sharing of Cauvery water. The Tamil speaking community was targeted by the Kannada speakers in Karnataka causing damage to their property and lives. The minority Tamil linguistic groups in Karnataka demanded the introduction of special measures for the protection of their language and property. Paul R Brass argues that the state governments introduced discriminatory policies against the minority languages and the central government did not provide protection to them. The central government's attitude towards Urdu and Mithila spoken in north Bihar is among such examples. Besides, Urdu which is spoken several parts of the country, and is the single largest minority language in U P, has been subject to controversy by the communal forces. Any attempt to give Urdu as a status of official language is met with the criticism by certain groups and is viewed as appeasement of Muslims. But the Urdu speaking section of society consider the opposition to Urdu as an attempt to discriminate against the linguistic minorities. In Punjab, the linguistic issue got linked with the communal divide between Hindus and Sikhs during the Punjabi Suba movement of the 1960s. The Arya Samaj impacted the vision of non-Sikh Punjabis, who declared as Hindi their language in the census enumeration, though in practice it was Punjabi. Hindus in Punjab apprehended that creation of separate states of Punjab would reduce the Hindus to a minority community in Punjab. Among the most crucial example of language politics is the case of Hindi language in South India, especially Tamil Nadu. In the 1960s, there was an agitation against adoption of Hindi as an official language following the decision. Hindi was adopted as an official language in the Constituent Assembly in the light of an official resolution which was passed by the Congress legislative party. After Independence, Hindi was adopted as an official language with English as a shared language for a transition period of fifteen years. The decision to introduce Hindi as an official language was opposed in south India. This resulted in protest in Madras Province (Tamil Nadu). The protest was led by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK),

which was earlier known as Munnetra Kazhagam (DK). The DMK argued that introduction of Hindi as an official language was an attempt to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking people.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the Space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the linguistic and ethnic groups?

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2) What is Three –Language Formula according to 1968 education policy?

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13.4   ETHNIC GROUPS

13.4.1   Ethnic Groups in India

As explained earlier, ethnic groups can be identified by certain markers. As to which markers, and how many markers form an ethnic identity depends on an analysis of ethnic politics. For instance, as mentioned earlier, some scholars consider groups form on single marker such as language, caste, or religion as ethnic groups. But the other scholars consider an ethnic group which is formed on the basis of multiple factors – language, caste, race, culture, custom, religion, etc. It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of ethnic groups in India. However, we can identify them according to different criterion – social, linguistic, cultural, etc. Politics of ethnic groups revolves around issues of social and cultural identities, political representation and autonomy and economic opportunities or development. The extent of the roles of these issues varies from case to case. Sometimes one or two issues such as language, religion or regional autonomy or development affect the politics of ethnic groups; at another time, the demand for getting political autonomy within a state or formation of a state or Union territory out of one or more states becomes political issue. The relative impact of these factors in politics depends on the political context and mobilization by political leaders or non-party organisations. As ethnic politics involves different ethnic groups which have conflicting claims and interests, it sometimes results in ethnic violence between ethnic groups or between ethnic groups and state machinery

such as police or government. In literature on identity formation, one question is relevant, i.e., are ethnic identities constructed or natural, given or inherited? One approach argues that ethnic identities are artificial or constructed by elite. This is known as instrumentalist approach. It means that the political elite construct ethnic identities and use them in politics to fulfil their goals. Another approach argues that ethnic identities are natural or primordial. It means differences between different ethnic groups are natural. They are not constructed.

Region-wise principal ethnic groups in India are as follows:

13.4.2   Ethnic Groups and Politics

As mentioned earlier, in the Indian context, the ethnic identity is based on multiple factors - customs. culture, language, religion, hisrtory, etc., unlike the linguistic identity, caste or communal identity which is based on a single attribute. Since ethnic identity is about relationships, the politics of one ethnic group is formed in the light of the politics of another ethnic group. Again, ethnic politics to a large extent depends on the real and imagined factors. All states of India have several ethnic groups whose numbers vary. But it is generally in the states which have witnessed the political movements for self-determination movements, autonomy movements, secessionist movements, insurgencies, that their ethnic politics assumes special significance. Several states have witnessed such movements from time to time. Sometimes ethnic politics leads to violence between different ethnic groups. In India, among other regions, the northeast India, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir (which was converted from a state into two Union Territories – Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on August 5, 2019) provide examples of ethnic politics. Atul Kohli argues (Chapter 2, *Democracy and Development: From Socialism to Pro-Business*) ethnic mobilsation, which include self-determination movements, is expected in multicultural democracies. Giving examples of three ethnic movements in India, i.e., those of Tamils in Tamil Nadu in the 1950s-1960s; of Sikhs in Punjab during the 1980s, of Muslims in Kashmir in the 1990s, Kohli argues that self-determination movements follow the following trajectory: they first start and reach their peak in due course; then they continue in the position of peak for sometimes; and finally, they decline. This journey of self-determination movements or ethnic mobilization been described by Kohli as "an inverse 'U' curve". This section deals with the relationship between politics and ethnic groups in some regions of India.

In the northeast Indian states, there are two types of ethnic groups: one, those who have been living there since centuries known as indigenous people; two, those who have settled there because of migration from different parts of the country from the nineteenth century, and who continue to immigrate into the region. In several instances, there exist differences within indigenous and migrant groups each. It means that there exist several indigenous groups and migrant groups within a single state. Each of the ethnic group has distinct characteristics in terms of culture, language, customs, history, etc. These characterizes could be real or imagines or both. The immigrant settlers are be identified based on states from where they migrated. It is possible that in times of conflict the internal differences within the indigenous ethnic groups and within the migrant ethnic groups get blurred, and they tend to behave two opposite blocks of ethnic groups. Sometime even the groups which have ethnic similarities get divided in the times of conflict and competition between them. Some examples of ethnic groups in

northeast India are as follows: Kukis and Nagas in Nagaland and Manipur, Meities in Manipur, and tribes such as Bodos, Santhals, Karbis and non-tribals in Assam, and the non-tribals – Bengalis, Nepalese, and tribes such as Khasis, Jaintias and Garos in Meghalaya. Sometime, ethnic groups which generally have conflictual relationships ally with each other in a common goal. But after achievement of such goal, differences emerge within them. The smaller ethnic group allege that dominant ethnic groups do not give fair recognition to their concern after the achievement of goal which they achieved by allying with each other. This gives them a feeling of neglect and discrimination. As a result, they also demand autonomy for their ethnic group. The example of Bodos tribe of Assam is relevant in this context. The Bodos participated in the six years agitation against the foreigners in Assam led by the All Assam Students Union (AASU). But when the Asom Gana Parisad (AGP) formed the government, the Bodos underlined that their problems were neglected by the AGP government which was dominated by the larger ethnic groups of Assam. As a result, the Bodo started an agitation demanding creation of a Bodoland.

The politics of ethnic groups is decided by the course of the politics of ethnic majorities. Let us take the example of the ethnic majorities in case of Meghalaya. The ethnic groups there are three local tribes Khasis, Garos and Jaintias. The principal ethnic majorities are Bengalis, Nepalis, Biharis and Rajasthanis/ Marwaris. Both groups of these ethnic communities joined together to demand a separate state of Meghalaya to be carved out of the then Assam in the 1960s. One of the principal reasons of their demand for a separate was their common grievance against making Assamese an official language, which they resisted as the ethnic majorities in Assam. The relations between them at that time were marked by ethnic harmony. But in the wake of formation of Meghalaya in 1972, the relations between ethnic groups and majorities were characterised by ethnic conflict. The conflict revolved around the issues such as protection of identity, traditions, and culture of the indigenous communities, and of their economic opportunities and property rights. The indigenous ethnic communities defend special measures given by the state for them as special right as enshrined in the VI Schedule of the Constitution. The indigenous ethnic groups argue that if special measures are not introduced for them, the migrant ethnic would encroach upon their rights. This will result in extinction of their identity. The claims of indigenous communities are often disputed the non-indigenous communities. In certain politics context – competition among politician, political parties or elections the claims and counter-claims of ethnic communities result in ethnic violence.

Jammu and Kashmir had existed as a state till August 5, 2019 when it was divided in two Union Territories following the annulment of special status to it under Article 370. Until Jammu and Kashmir had existed as state, there were three regions in it – Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. After the division of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories – Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir regions consist of Hindus and Muslims as majority communities respectively, and Ladakh has majority of Buddhist community with smaller number of Muslims. Even though these ethnic groups play significant role in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh as Union Territories, the patterns of ethnic politics of these groups can adequately be seen in a period when Jammu and Kashmir had existed as a state. The foundation of ethnic in Jammu and Kashmir before it was converted into two union territories was lay in factors of religion, region and region. Repercussion of ethnic politics could be seen in the

demand for the status of Union Territory to the Ladakh region and for a separate state for the Jammu region in Jammu and Kashmir prior to its division into two union territories.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the Space given below for your answer.

ii)   Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1)   What do mean by ethnic politics?

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2)   What are the features of ethnic politics in North-east India?

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13.5   REFERENCES

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13.6   LET US SUM UP

Different markers of identity such as caste, language, region, customs, tradition, economy, etc. play important role in politics of democratic country. Realisation in a group of people that they share common characteristics is indication of group identity formation. Group identity formation can take place on the basis of multiple factors. It can also take place on the basis single factor. When a group is formed on the basis of language, it is called linguistic group. But when a group is formed

on the basis of multiple factors, it is known as an ethnic group. Some scholars consider a group as ethnic group even if is formed on the basis of single marker. Politics of linguistic and ethnic groups revolves around the protection of social and cultural identities, political representation and empowerment, and economic opportunities and development. On several occasions, ethnic politics result in violence between different ethnic groups or ethnic groups and the state institutions. Different states in India are witness to ethnic politics.

13.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR EXERCISE

Check Your Exercise 1

1) Linguistic groups are those groups which are formed on the basis of language. Members of a linguistic group speak a common language. Ethnic groups are those groups whose group formation takes place because of realisation that its members share multiple features – culture, race, religion, custom, etc. Some scholars do not differentiate between the groups formed on the basis of single marker such as language, and the groups formed on the basis of multiple markers. For them, all kinds of group formations are ethnic groups.

2) According to national education policy of 1968, three-language formula suggests that children in school from VI-VIII grade in Indian states will be taught three languages – Hindi, English and a modern Indian language. In the Hindi-speaking states, modern Indian language would include a language spoken in south India. In the non-Hindi Indian states (except Tamil Nadu that followed two-language formula), a modern Indian language could be any regional labguage.

Check Your Exercise 2

1) Ethnic politics is about political mobilization of ethnic groups on issues concerning them. These issues are related to cultural and social identities, political representation and empowerment, and economic opportunities.

2) All states of North-east India have multiple ethnic groups. They can be broadly categorised into two groups – indigenous and migrants people. Ethnic politics in North-east India is related to the protection of identities of ethnic groups, autonomy movements, and economic opportunities. On several occasions, ethnic politics culminated into ethnic conflict and violence. The violence can occur between ethnic groups or between ethnic groups and the state agencies such as police.

UNIT 14   REGIONS AND TRIBES*

Structure

14.0   OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the significance of the relationship between regions and the tribes;

- Discuss the regional distribution of the tribes in India;

- Identify their characteristics; and

- Interpret the patterns of political mobilisation of the tribes in different regions of the country.

14.1   INTRODUCTION

Region and tribe are among the markers such as caste, language, gender of identity politics in India. You have read about the identity politics relating to other markers in the other units of this block. In this unit, you will read about the relationships between regions and tribes in the country, and their reflection in politics in the areas inhabited by the tribes. One of the significant challenges that politics in India has been faced with since independence is the achievement of developmental goals that is sensitive to the requirements of an immensely diverse society spread across different regions. In the post-independence period, India has witnessed uneven development and huge socio-economic disparities among regions and groups. Most regions in Indian inhabited by tribes are also marked by such unevenness and disparities. This is especially so in relation to the states having a tribal population, which belongs to the marginalised sections. In this context, identification of tribes in India, i.e., in different regions, became an administrative exercise. This Unit will try to provide an understanding of the nature of politics that emerged across different regions of India with respect to its varied tribal population.

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Before discussing the relationship between the tribals and regions, and political mobilisation, it will in order to explain the meaning of tribes and their characteristics. Thus, in section 14.2 the unit deals with the meaning and characteristics of tribes to be followed by discussion on politics of the tribes in section 14.4.

14.2   WHO ARE THE TRIBES?

Tribes have been defined on the basis of several characteristics. Some of their importance are: living in close proximity to nature; dependence on forests and natural resources; distinct cultural practices and customs, e.g. food habits, songs, dress patterns, marriage customs, gender relations; the significance of traditional chief or headmen, etc. These are some of the features that distinguish the tribal identity from others, like caste and class. In comparison to the non-tribal communities, tribes have more gender and social equalities. The features are being impacted because of social and economic transformation within the tribal societies. The tribal population in India is a heterogeneous category. Tribes in northeast India are different from those in other parts of the country. There are differences among them even in the same region. The identification of tribal population in India rests on two notions of tribe: – one, the notion of the British colonial state; and the other, that of the post-independence Indian state. The former was an isolationist view of tribes. It considered the tribes as distinct category in terms of the way of life and being outside the mainstream society. The latter is a developmental perspective. According to this view, the tribes are viewed as communities that lag behind other sections of the society – generally alluded to as "the mainstream" in terms of development that needed assimilation with "the mainstream" in order to develop. After independence, the Indian state identified the tribes in India as an administrative and legal category. As per the Constitution of India, they have been categorised as Scheduled Tribes (STs). The Fifth and the Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution designate the areas with majority of tribal populations as the Scheduled Areas. These are delineated in Articles 244 (1) and 244(2) of the Constitution, respectively. Article 366(25) of the Constitution defines Scheduled Tribes as "tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities" that are deemed to be Scheduled Tribes ("STs") under Article 342 of the Constitution. The Constitution of India also provides for the reservation of 7% of seats in government funded educational institutions and government jobs. Apart from the constitutional provisions, various legal and administrative provisions were undertaken taken for the welfare of the tribal populations in independent India.

14.2.1   The Scheduled Tribes in India

There are more than 700 tribes in different regions of India who constitute around 9 percent of India's population. The special provisions entitle them to avail of affirmative policies for their social and economic development, and protection of cultural identity. Despite such provisions and affirmative policies for their welfare, tribal populations of India continue to remain marginalised in terms of most of the development indicators. The large parts of the areas inhabited by the tribal populations are underdeveloped. In most regions of India, their condition is characterised by widespread poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy and lack of access to health and other services. According to the data of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2016-17), 47.1% of the ST population lives below poverty line in rural

areas as compared to the national average 33.8%. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs records 9.4% of the ST population as landless whereas the national average of population of landless is 7.4%. The child mortality rate of the STs is as high as 35.8 per thousand live births as against the national average which is 18.4 per 1000 live births. The average literacy rate for the STs is 59 %, whereas the national average is 73%. The ST population also constitute 40% of the displaced population in the country between 1951 and 1990. The displacement has been largely caused because of unsustainable development in the country involving construction of dams, industries, mining, creation of wildlife sanctuaries, etc. Only a little more than half of the displaced population was able to be rehabilitated. According to the NSSO 2010, the workforce participation rate (WFPR) of the Scheduled tribes is 60 which is more than the national rate of 53 However, most of it is in the unorganised sector without having any security of employment. It is important to note these data project a broad picture about the conditions of the tribals in India. As they are spread in different regions and states, they are differences in indicators of development.

14.3   REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBES IN INDIA

In terms of its geographical composition, India has several regions. Tribes are not found in all states of India. Different regions in India can be differentiated base on levels of development and composition of social, cultural or linguistic factors. Again, there are regions or sub-regions within the States. Especially, on the basis of their levels of development, regions can be identified as developed and backward or less developed regions. Similarly, regions within the regions, regions can be distinguished as developed or backward regions. According to some, less developed regions have been described as "internal colonies" of the developed regions within the country; or the less developed regions within the same state have been described as the colonies of the more developed regions within the same state or in the country. The level of development of a region where a state is located, indicates the level of development of the state. In India, some states are located in developed, and some in the backward regions. With special reference to the tribes, most areas of tribes are located in regions which are either less developed or are located on geographical peripheries.

According to the census of India (2001) the states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Union Territories of Lakshadweep Dadra & Nagar Haveli, have a majority of Scheduled Tribes population with more than 60% of their total population. Given the diversity of the tribal population in India, many scholars have classified them around different parameters like economy, occupation, language, culture etc. One such classification that tries to explore their spread across different regions is given by the anthropologist B.S. Guha, who provided a framework to understand the geographical distribution of the tribal population in India. He has classified the regional distribution of tribes into three broad zones:

The north and north-eastern zone: This zone comprises of the tribal population including Khasis, Garos, Nagas, Lepchas of Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura in eastern India. The region also includes tribal communities of eastern Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, northern Uttar Pradesh and eastern Punjab located in the northern region. The tribal communities of this region are mostly engaged in agricultural activities.

The central zone: The central zone is also called the middle zone which is separated from the north-eastern zone by the space between the Garo hills and the Rajmahal hills, consisting of tribes from the states of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Orissa, as well as from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, northern Maharashtra and southern Rajasthan. The Gonds, the Bhils, the Santhals, the Khond Bhumjis, the Bhiyas, and the Mundas are some of the tribal groups belonging to this region. These tribes are also engaged in agricultural and associated occupations.

The southern zone: The tribal communities of the southern zone belong to parts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Cochin. The tribal population in this region comprises of the Todas, the Chenchus, , the Irulas, the Paniyans, the Yeruvas, , and the Kurumbas, etc. These populations are largely engaged in activities like hunting and fishing. Some of the primitive tribes such as the Kadar, the Malvadan, the Kanikkar, and the Malakuravan living in forests along the ranges in Travancore and some other parts are some of the most economically backward communities in the world.

Apart from this classification, another region is that of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where the tribal population comprises of the Andamanis, the Nicobaris, the Jarawas and the Onges. As stated earlier, the V and VI Schedules of the Constitution, provide special provisions for the protection of cultural identities, customs and political autonomy of the tribals. The Distribution of tribals in regions covered by the V Schedule is shown in the table below.

Areas covered under Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India

State	Areas
Andhra Pradesh and Telangana	Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Adilabad,Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Mahboobnagar, Prakasam (only some mandals are scheduled mandals)
Jharkhand	Dumka, Godda, Devgarh, Sahabgunj, Pakur, Ranchi, Singhbhum (East&West), Gumla, Simdega, Lohardaga, Palamu, Garwa, (some districts are only partly tribal blocks)
Chattisgarh	Sarbhuja, Bastar, Raigad, Raipur, Rajnandgaon, Durg, Bilaspur, Sehdol, Chindwada, Kanker
Himachal Pradesh	Lahaul and Spiti districts, Kinnaur, Pangi tehsil and Bharmour sub-tehsil in Chamba district
Madhya Pradesh	Jhabua, Mandla, Dhar, Khargone, East Nimar (khandwa), Sailana tehsil in Ratlam district, Betul, Seoni, Balaghat, Morena
Gujarat	Surat, Bharauch, Dangs, Valsad, Panchmahl, Sadodara, Sabarkanta (partsof these districts only)
Maharashtra	Thane, Nasik, Dhule, Ahmednagar, Pune, Nanded, Amravati, Yavatmal, Gadchiroli, Chandrapur (parts of these districts only)
Orissa	Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Koraput (fully scheduled

	area in these threedistricts), Raigada, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Boudhkondmals, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Balasor (parts of these districts only)
Rajasthan	Banswara, Dungarpur (fully tribal districts), Udaipur, Chittaurgarh, Siroi (partly tribal areas)

Note: The North Eastern states such as Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram are covered by the Sixth Schedule and not included in the Fifth schedule.

Source: http://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/sectors/sj/List%20of%20Fifth%20Scheduled%20Area.doc

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the Space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the characteristics of tribes?

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2) Discuss the regional distributions of tribes.

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14.4 TRIBES AND POLITICS

As mentioned earlier, tribes in different regions have distinct characteristics of economic system, social and cultural life. These features have been affected by factors relating to development. This in turn has raised issues relating to depletion exploitation of natural resources such as minerals, mines, forests leading to displacement of tribals from their traditional habitat; changes in traditional customs and practices or tribal identities. This has generated a feeling of relative deprivation among tribals in different regions of the country: such feeling implies that in comparison to other regions, the tribal dominated regions remain deprived. In the post-Independence period, these issues have became focus of political mobilisation of tribes in different regions of India. The realisation of relative deprivation and of the changes in their distinct identities- customs, tradition, life pattern, etc has resulted in political mobilisation of tribals in different regions of India. They demand adequate measures should be taken to provide opportunities for their development. The levels of their mobilisation have varied from region

to region. There have been variations in the patterns of tribal mibilisation in terms of issues, features in different and timings in different regions of regions of the country.

14.4.1   Different Patterns of Mobilisation

The variations in the patterns/levels of mobilisation of the tribes in different regions occurred largely because, as mentioned earlier, the tribal population, like most of the communities in India, do not constitute a homogenous category. They are faced with different nature of issues, historical backgrounds across different regions. Some of the regions are more underdeveloped than others and therefore, the issues and concerns are expressed through different forms and levels of political mobilisations. Many of the tribal populations have expressed their concerns about their disadvantageous and backward position. There have also been mobilisations and movements in different regions such as Northeast region, Central India and other regions of India to highlight the adversities faced by the tribal populations living in these areas. Political parties, civil society organisations and students' organisations have been playing a leading role in their mobilisations. In order to understand the nature of the tribal movements in the post-Independence period, it is relevant to know the historical background or the legacy of tribal movements in different regions of India.

14.4.2   Legacy of the Tribal Movements

The legacy of tribal movements dates back to colonial times. The movements in post-independence India became more organised and larger in scale, forest alienation and economic deprivation being some of the key issues. During the colonial period, the tribal populations in various regions were mobilised into collective action in different regions. Historically the political movements of tribes have been against the oppression of the landlords, protection of tribal rights over the land and forests. K.S. Singh (1986) classified tribal movements in the pre-Independence period into four categories: agrarian, Sanskritisation, cultural and political. According to Singh the community consciousness in the tribal movements is very strong and they are both agrarian and forest based having an ethnic or cultural component. Starting with the Charsu rebellion in the mid 18th century in the Bihar state, there have been movements of Kol Ulgulan (1831-32), Santhal Hool (1855), resistance led by Birsa Munda (1895-1900), are some of the popular examples of tribal movements of India. During the British colonial times, the tribes fought against the colonial expansion and exploitation. There were many movements in the West Bengal. The tribal communities protested against the exploitation of money lenders and outsiders taking away the land of tribal communities. The Tana Bhagats of West Bengal led a nonviolent satyagraha against the British exploitation during the British colonial times. In several instances, the tribals in argued that their problems can be resolved that they need to have authority to govern themselves by having for themselves separate states or autonomy within the existing states. In this context, in 1930, a group of tribal politicians led by Jaipal Singh submitted a memorandum to Simon commission demanding a separate state for the tribals of the Chotanagpur and Santhal parghana region of South Bihar. The demand for a separate state continued even after independence. The tribal leaders continued to demand a separate autonomous province for the tribes of the region within constitutional framework of the Indian constitution. A tribal organisation, known as the Adivasi Mahasabha led by Jaipal

Singh, played a crucial role in articulating demands of the tribal groups. The formation of the Jharkhand Party in 1949 was a milestone in the tribal politics in the central region of India. The Jharkhand Party participated in the first general elections of India as a tribal party. It continued with the pre-independence demand of the separate state of Jharkhand. Formation of state such as Jharkhand in 2000 was a culmination of the movement which had started during the colonial period. In the Northeast India, Nagas' mobilisation for political autonomy was an important example in the region. In 1918, the Nagas founded Naga Club which was converted into National Council (NNC) in 1946. The Nagas sought to retain and protect their cultural identity and political autonomy which in their understanding would be eroded after Independence. The Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in which they demanded they should be given the option of self-determination after the departure of the British from India.

14.4.3 Tribal Movements in the Post-Independence Period

Ghanshyam Shah (2004) classifies the tribal movements in the recent past as having environmental, identity, political autonomy, self-management of resources, and displacement related components. In order to indentify broad patterns, we can broadly identify three kinds of issues in relation to tribal movements in the post-Independence period– economy, cultural identity and political autonomy. The relative weight of these issues in political mobilisation varies according to the regions. For example, the tribal mobilisation in northeast India has been more on questions of cultural identities and political autonomy. In other regions, it has been more on issues relating to the exploitation of natural resources and related issues than on the question of cultural identities.

Tribal Movements in Northeast India

Almost every state of northeast India has seen political mobilisation of tribes in varying degrees on questions of protection of cultural identities, getting or retaining political autonomy. These in turn get linked with their economic interests. Quite often their political mobilisation has resulted in insurgencies, ethnic conflict and violence. Some of the examples on the tribals' political mobilisation include demand for political autonomy in the areas dominated by Nagas, especially in Nagaland, and in Mizoram; for protection of Bodo language and getting territorial autonomy in Bodo-dominated areas, for the political autonomy in Karbi Anglong district or ethnic conflict between Nagas and Kukis in Manipur or between tribals and non-tribals in Meghalaya. S.M. Dubey (1982) classified the tribal movements in north-east India into the following categories: a) religious and social reform movements b) movements for separate statehood c) insurgent movements and d) cultural rights movements. As you have read above, the demand for political self-determination of the Nagas can be traced back to the colonial period, and in 1946 the Nagas had set up Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946. The NNC demanded formation of a separate state comprising of areas in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam inhabited by the Naga population. In 1947 (June 26-28), the NNC signed a 9-point Agreement with the Governor of Assam, a representative of the Government of India, Akbar Hydari. It came to be known as Naga-Hydari Accord. The Naga-Hydari Accord had nine points. The accord underlined that the right of Nagas to develop themselves freely according to their wishes be recognised. These points were mainly related to the primacy of Naga customary laws in relation to judiciary, executive and legislative aspects;

protection of tribal land from alienated to the non-Naga without the consent of the Naga Council. The Accord vested the Governor of Assam as the representative of Government of India with special responsibility to ensure that for period of 10 years the accord was observed; and at the end of 10 years, the Naga Council would be asked if they wanted to extend the Accord or wanted to sign a new agreement about the future of Nagas (IN_470628_Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord.pdf). In 1956, A.Z. Phizo, who represented a section of Nagas set up a government-in-exile in London seeking Independence for Nagas. This led to insurgency and armed clashes between the militant Nagas and the army. In 1975, an agreement was signed in Shillong between the NNC and the Government of India. It was known as Shillong Accord. According to the Shillong Accord, the militant Nagas accepted the Constitution of India, and the government released the Naga political prisoners, and promised to rehabilitate them. The signing of Shillong Accord was not welcome by a section of the Nagas (Phadnis 1989). In 1980, the differences within the Nagas on the Shillong Accord led to the formation of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980 by a Tangkhul Naga I. Muivah and Isak Swu. The NSCN raised two main demands creation of a sovereign state of Nagaland, *Nagalim* or "Greater Nagaland", to be formed out of several areas predominantly inhabited by Nagas across several states such as Nagaland, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. India In 1988 the NSCN was divided into two groups the NSCN (IM) and the NSCN (Kaplang). The two groups have differences over the creation of the *Nagalim* or "Greater Nagaland". These groups of NSCN have held several dialogues over the years on the question of *Nagalim*.

In Assam, two tribes, Bodos and Karbis, are among the tribes which saw political mobilisation from the late 1980s. Bodos mainly residing in Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalgarh districts in the plain areas of Assam and Karbis inhabiting the hills in Karbi Anlong district in the hilly areas of Assam are among the indigenous tribes of the state. The main issues of their political mobilisation are protection of cultural identities and grant of political autonomy. They argue that political autonomy can empower them to contribute to the development of their regions and the protection of their identities. The Bodos mobilisation for recognition of cultural and political autonomy had started in the late 1980s after the AASU-led anti-foreigners' movement was over. After the signing of Assam Accord between the AASU and the Government India, Bodos felt their problems were not addressed by the AASU leadership despite the fact that they had participated in the movement led by it. Sanjib Baruah in the book *India Against Itself* (1999) explained that the Bodos asserted that the Bodos have their own identity as "Bodos" different from the Assamese. They demanded a homeland for them - Bodoland. The All India Bodo Students Union (ABSU) presented a 92-point charter of demand to the government. The charter included demands for recognition of Bodo language and culture, for providing them opportunities for their educational and economic development. In response to the Bodos' demands, the Government of India sought to provide political autonomy to the Bodo-inhabited areas by signing three accords in 1993, 2003 and 2020. Although the Karibi tribes in Karbi Anglong district of Assam expressed concern about regional autonomy to them since the 1950s, they became more vocal in their demand for getting a state for themselves within the state of Assam, though already enjoy autonomy under the autonomous council.

Tribal Movements in Other regions than the Northeast India

There have been instances of political mobilisation in the regions other than the northeast India. The mobilisation generally stems from conflict between tribal way of life – social, cultural practices, and traditional economy and modernization. Modernisation has caused disruption of the tribal way of life including alienation of their land, and exploitation of natural resource. in different regions, the tribes' mobilisation has focused on issues such as displacement caused due to exploitation of natural resources, deforestation, regional backwardness, tribal identity or social justice. There are instances of such mobilisations in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Rajasthan, etc. In several cases, the tribes have demanded regional autonomy in terms of getting statehood within Indian federal structure. They argue that in the existing State structure, the regions inhabited by them remain backward because their natural resources are exploited to help developed regions or classes. The solution to their regional backward can be provided by giving them regional autonomy in terms of new States. As you have read in unit states of Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh were created in 2000 following political mobilisation, especially of the tribals, in the respective areas. For around three decades prior to the formation of the Jharkhand state in 2000, mobilisation for getting regional autonomy and protection of natural resources in the Jharkhand region was done by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). The JMM was founded by a Bengali Marxist trade unionist and Santhal tribal leader Shibhu Soren and Kurmi-Mahato leader Binod Bihari Mahato. They emphasised that the creation of a Jharkhand state would result in ending the backwardness of the region (Tillin 2013). In Chhattisgarh, Shankar Guha Niyogi founded Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha in 1978. Under the banner of this orgainsation, Niyogi mobilised people on the question of exploitation of the Chhattisgarh region. In the movement led by Chhattigarh Mukti Morcha, tribals had participated in substantial number along with the non-tribals. These among others included payment of minimum wages to the unorganised workers. In Madhya Pradesh, Gonds and Bhils tribes have agitated against the neglect of their region which remains backward poverty, hunger, unemployment among them. There have movements by the tribal population in Odisha around the issue of displacement and loss of livelihood with the advent of multinational companies for bauxite mining and processing in 1993. These are mostly located in the tribal people of Rayagada Koraput and Kalahandi districts of the state. In many regions of India, industrial projects faced protests from the tribal communities. Protests in the Niyamgiri district of Odisha against the Korean multinational company POSCO is one such example.

14.5 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE TRIBES- INHABITED REGIONS

In the regions inhabited by the tribes, the question of regional development is embedded with the question of tribal livelihood and development. On the one hand, there is a challenge of the development of tribal areas in terms of ensuring minimum standards of living and achieving higher human development. On the other hand, there is the question of the protection of tribal identity and customs. But there is a difference in the levels of these challenges in different regions of the country inhabited by the tribals. This dilemma of development and identity has produced distinct kinds of tribal politics in various regions of India. For instance, in case of the Northeast India as compared with the other regions inhabited by the tribes question of identity became a larger political issue than

the question of human development. However, even in the Northeast, the politics about identity gets linked with the question of regional development. The region has achieved significant development. Most of the states in the region are performing very well on various human development indicators. Mizoram and Nagaland are the two best performing states on various indicators of the HDI. Mizoram figures in the states with higher HDI. Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya figure in the medium human development states. The largest states with tribal a population like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand, and Chattisgarh are the states with poor human development. The government of India along with the state governments have been trying to find ways of mitigating possibilities of such clashes. For this purpose, new legislations have been adopted along with the provisions in the Indian constitution. In 2006 the government of India officially passed an act acknowledging the fact that the traditional rights of the tribal community over the forest land and its resources must be protected. Any conversion of the forest land with tribal population can be done only after the consent of the Gram Sabha of the concerned villages. In 1996 the parliament of India had enacted a law Panchayats (Extension in Scheduled Areas) Act also known as PESA, to extend provision of part ix of the Indian constitution to scheduled areas with few modifications and exceptions to the scheduled v areas of the Indian constitution. The objectives of this Act is to ensure self-governance of the tribal areas by tribal groups while ensuring customary resources, minor forest resources, minor minerals, minor water bodies.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the Space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the main challenges in the regions inhabited by the tribes?

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2) Identify the main patterns in politics of the tribes?

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14.6 REFERENCES

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14.7   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we discussed the question of tribes in India. This unit introduced some of the basic information about various regions with tribal populations. It also discussed the question of the underdevelopment of tribes in India. Tribal regions have also witnessed the emergence of politics based ethnicity – cultural and social identity. In the case of Northeastern states, the tribal politics is largely shaped by the question of identity politics political and political economy. In the states located in the areas other than the Northeast India, regional development, protection against exploitation of natural resources, and identity question impact tribal mobilisation in varying degrees. Besides, these regions also have a significant number of non-tribal populations. In some areas, especially in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh tribals and non-tribal jointly participated in movements for the development of their respective regions.

14.8   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1.   Some of their important characteristics of tribes include their habitat in close proximity to nature; dependence on forests and natural resources; distinct cultural practices and customs, e.g. food habits, songs, dress patterns, marriage customs, gender relations; the significance of traditional chief or headmen, etc.

2.   The population of tribes in India is distributed in different regions, which have been divided into zones by some scholars. In terms of their distribution according to the V and VI Schedules of the Constitution, most tribes in the hills of Northeast are governed by the VI Scheduled, and those residing the regions other than the northeast governed by the V Schedule.

Check Your Progress 2

1. The main challenges in the regions inhabited by the tribes are – exploitation of natural resources of their region for the purpose of development; their displacement from their traditional habitat; poverty and regional backwardness; and fear of threat to their identity and political autonomy.

2. The patterns of tribal politics can be identified on the basis of the regions. In the Northeast India, tribal politics has largely been related to the question of cultural identity, and political autonomy. This has gets linked to the economic aspect as well. In other regions than the Northeast, it has largely been related to the backwardness of the region, exploitation of natural resources, for political autonomy of the region. In some instances, it is also linked to the question of tribal identity.

UNIT 15   NEW SOCIAL GROUPS*

Structure

15.0   OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the characteristics of new social groups;

- Differentiate the new social groups from other groups;

- Explain the problems faced by the fisher folks and the nature of their political mobilisation;

- Discuss issues and politicization on environmental and ecological groups; and

- Discuss the issues of the LGBTQs.

15.1   INTRODUCTION

You have read about the identity politics of groups such as caste, region, ethnicity, women in other units of the block 5. In this unit, you will read about those social groups which do not strictly fall in the category of those groups. To differentiate these groups from the earlier ones, we may categorise them as new social groups. They are new social groups in one or more of the following senses. Some of them are a product of social and economic changes which have occurred due to the development of policies – such as the environmental and ecological groups; some of these groups always been in the existence but their issues became part of political and academic discourse much later than the issues of other social groups such as caste, religion or language. The fisher folks and the LGBTQs are such groups. The new social groups are generally mobilised into collective action by the NGOs, activists or leaders who are not formally members of a political

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* Sections 15.2 and sections 15.3 and 15.4 of the this unit are a dapted from units 15 and 16 of the course MPSE-007, section 15.5 is adapted from Unit 11 of the course BPSC-132.

party. They are considered apolitical in the sense that they are not formally linked to any political party.

15.2 FISHER FOLKS

Fisher folks belong to the communities which are economically and culturally associated with fishing and fishery. Involved in the fisheries – catching, selling, processing and marketing fish for centuries, fisher folks provide fish which form the staple of the people living in the coastal areas as well as of the non-vegetarian population living in other areas. They contribute enormously to the economy of the country, especially the states situated along the coastlines i.e., Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Goa, Andaman Nicobar, Pondicherry, Maharashtra, Gujarat, etc. Apart from the coastal regions, they are also found in other areas of the country involved in the fisheries, ponds and big tanks. Fisher folks are not homogenous groups. They consist of diverse social and cultural groups belonging to three major religions — Hindu, Islam and Christianity. And a large number of them belong to socially marinalised castes. They are also stratified on the basis of ownership of vessels and employment of labour. On this basis, the fisher folks can be divided into three groups: (1) fisher folks who own vessels and work with their families; (2) Those who own these and employ other fisher folks; and (3) those who do not own them but work on others' vessels. The number of fisher folks who own vessels is very small. Most of them own ordinary vessels which are traditional and of poor quality. Those who employ others own trawlers and big boats, better quality and modern vessels. The owners of trawlers and big boats also consist of the non-fisher folks, traders, politicians and moneylenders. The fishing activities depend on the weather conditions, which are mostly hostile. During the period of unfavourable weather conditions, the fisher folks get engaged in odd jobs on the harbour. Their close habitat and dependence on sea for the fisheries exposes the fisher folks to natural disasters like flood, typhoon and tsunami. These natural disasters affect the fisher folks the most. They are deprived of their houses, vessels and lives. The super cyclone in Orissa in 1999 had affected the fisher folks there. The tsunami of December 26, 2004 which affected the coastal regions of South Asia and South East Asia had the devastated their life and livelihood.

15.2.1 Mechanisation and Fisher Folks

Traditionally fishing was carried out by small, unpowered craft confined to shallow waters. Mechanisation in the fisheries in India began with the Indo-Norwegian Project in 1953. In this project, mechanised fishing equipments were permitted to catch fish indiscriminately. Its aim was to increase fish catches and augment the production of shrimps. Increasing demand for shrimps from advanced countries like Japan and USA created a further impetus to intensify fishing with the use of bottom trawlers. This led to the control on the coastal fishing belt by resourceful non-fishermen. The traditional fishermen who were unable to afford mechanised fishing equipments. Thus, the fisher folks began to face livelihood problems. The government also gave active support to private groups through preferential credit schemes. The beneficiaries of the new schemes were affluent traditional fishermen, who had turned entrepreneurs, and non-fishermen with resources. The impact of technological change in an already fragile ecological zone resulted in a decline in the fish stocks and a subsequent drop in the income of traditional fishermen. In addition, the ordinary fisher folks were placed in

unequal competition with those who were more resourceful modern technology of fisheries.

15.2.2 Political Mobilsation of the Fisher Folks

Their most organised and sustained mobilization has taken place in the state of Kerala. First attempts to form fisher folks' organisations at village, state and national levels in India were made in the 1960s and 1970s. The earliest union was formed in 1963 in Quilon district in Kerala. By the 1980s the unions were formed in Alleppey, Cochin, Trivendram and Malabar districts. In Kerala there was a direct linkage between the Roman Catholic church and the leadership of these organisations. But it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that these organisations mobilised fisher folks into a movement. There were fisher folks unions in other coastal states like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. But it was in Kerala where they were most assertive and articulate. The issues of their mobilisation have been as follows: demand for their participation in the fisheries management of; and protection from the competition with the machenised boats and travelers; sale and processing of harnessed catches; Opposition to the introduction of travelers; resource allocation in the fisheries; providing catamarans, boats, loans/grants', rehabilitation (in case of the natural disasters); ending exploitation by the agents, traders and moneylenders, etc. Their mobilisation has been possible due to efforts of their leadership and organisations. In 1977 several district levels unions merged together to form *Kerala Latheen Catholica Malsia Thozhilalee Federation* (KLCFF). Its state level leadership was principally a cleric leadership, though there were non-cleric leaders also. In order to seek support from the Muslim and Hindu fisher folks, it changed its name to *Akhil Kerala Swathantra Malsia Thozhilalee Federation* (AKSMTF) - the 'All-Kerala Independent Fishermen's Federation'. As another example, in 1978 the fisher folks' unions of Goa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and other sates formed a confederation, which came to be called as the National Fishermen's Forum (NFF). The leadership to the fisher folks, especially in Kerala, has largely been provided by the Church Fathers, nuns, social activists, intellectual-academic activists. Their collective actions have involved demonstrations, *dharnas* and hunger strikes. The government responded mainly with the appointment of commissions to look into the problems of the fisher folks.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the Space given below for your answer.

ii)   Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1)   What are the principles issues of the fisher folks?

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2) Discuss the nature of fisher folk mobilisation in India.

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15.3 ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

Like the fisher folks, the environmental and ecological groups belong to diverse groups. But unlike them, they are also found across geographical regions. Environmental and ecological movements became prominent in India since the 1970s. The concerns of these movements are not confined to any particular groups. They are all encompassing – the entire village and urban communities, women, tribals, peasants, middle classes and nature. The principal issues of the ecological and environmental movements are: protection of people's right to access of natural resources, prevention of land degradation, preventing commercialisation of natural resources and environmental pollution, maintenance of ecological balance, rehabilitation of displaced people, etc. These issues are also related to people's dignity, environmental rights and their decision-making rights on the issues concerning them. These issues largely are caused because of depletion of natural resource disturbing the ecological balance. Such unsustainable development adversely has affected the people in several parts of the country. The adverse impact of unsustainable development led to environmental and ecological movements the civil society organisations.

15.4 ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

The genesis of the environmental movement in India can be traced to the Chipko movement (1973) in Garhwal region in the hill region of Uttar Pradesh, which now stands as the state of Uttarakhand. Indeed, between 1970s and 1980s there were several struggles in India around issues of rights to forest and water. These raised larger ecological concerns like rights of communities over forest resources, sustainability of large scale environmental projects like dams, issues of displacement and rehabilitation, etc. The Indian environmental movement is critical of the model of development pursued by the post–colonial state. In the perspective of the environmental movements in India, the post–independent state failed to build up a development agenda based on the needs of the people. It continued to advocate the modern capitalist agenda which led to the destruction of environment resulting in poverty and marginalisation of rural communities. Gadgil and Guha (1998) identify four broad strands within the environmental movements in India based on vision, ideology and strategy. The first types are those which emphasise on the moral necessity to restrain overuse and ensure justice to the poor and marginalised. Mainly Gandhians belong to this strand. The second strand stresses on the need to dismantle the unjust social order through struggle. Marxists mostly follow this strand. The Third and fourth strands advocate

reconstruction, i.e. employing technologies appropriate to the given context and time. They reflect the concerns of the scientists or the spontaneous efforts of the communities at the village level who aim at protecting local community forests or the right to pursue environment-friendly agricultural practices. This section discusses some ecological and environmental movements in India: Chipko movement; Narmada Bachao Movement and; the anti pollution–movement include those which took place in Delhi.

15.4.1   The Chipko Movement

Chipko movement that took place in the 1970s in Uttarakhand (which was then part of Uttar Pradesh) is generally considered as the first example of modern environmentalism and environmental movements in India. The origin of 'Chipko' [*chipak jayenge* - to hug] took place during 1973. In the early 1973 the forest department refused to allot ash trees to the *Dashauli Gram Swarajya Sangha* (DGSS), a local cooperative organisation based in Chamoli district, for making agricultural implements. But the forest department allotted ash trees to a private company, i.e., Symonds Co. This incident provoked the DGSS to fight against this move of the forest department by lying down in front of timber trucks and burning resin and timber depots. When the method of protest was found unsatisfactory, Chandi Prasad Bhat - one of the leaders, suggested of embracing the trees and thus 'Chipko' was born. The movement came to be popularly known as Chipko movement internationally. The principal demands of Chipko movements were: complete stoppage of cutting trees for commercial purposes; the traditional rights should be recognised on the basis of minimum needs of the people; making the arid forest green by increasing people's participation in tree cultivation; formation of village committees to manage forests; development of the forest related home-based industries and making available the raw materials, money and technique for it; and giving priority to afforestation in the light of local conditions, requirements and varieties. This form of protest was instrumental in driving away the private company from felling the ash trees. With its success the movement spread to other neighbouring areas. The Chipko movement saw the involvement of women in the contribution to households' subsistence and the overwhelming support to anti-alcohol campaign have led to the overwhelming support of women which is unique to the Chipko movement. Simplicity, sincerity and charisma of the leaders like Sunderlal Bahuguna were effective in mobilising people in the Chipko movement.

15.4.2   Narmada Bachao Andolan

Narmada river project encompassing three major states of western India Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, is the most important example of the environmental movement. This movement in important aspect of politics of development model giving birth to the problems about ecology and environment. No other development project in India has brought into focus the intensity of magnitude of eco-development problems to such a level of informed debate, political mobilisation and grass root activism as this project. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) has contributed to the political discourse of alternative development in India. The Narmada Valley Project, with its two mega projects-Sardar Sarovar Project and Narmada Sagar Project in Madhya Pradesh, is the largest single river valley project with the objective of making the world's largest man–made lake.

The state government initiated the project as Gujarat was one of the worst water–starved regions in India and there was drastic shortage of water for domestic, commercial, agricultural and industrial needs. Further, the state of Gujarat had witnessed one of the worst droughts between 1985-88. This further reinforced neet for this project. However, according to the critics, it is seen as "the world's worst man–made ecological disaster" and it is considered unviable. According to the critics of the the project, consequences of the project will be harmful. They allege that reservoir will submerge 37,000 hectares of land of which 11,000 hectares are classified as forest. It will displace about one lakh persons of 248 villages- 19 of Gujarat, 36 of Maharashtra and 193 of Madhya Pradesh. It may be mentioned here that originally Narmada project was considered to be an irrigation project of a 161 feet high dam. Later, it was found that water could be technologically harnessed making it a multipurpose dam if its level is raised to 455 feet. Consequently, the state governments started looking for finances not only from the centre but also from the World Bank.

In 1988, the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) demanded formally the stoppage of all work on the Narmada Valley Development Projects. In September 1989, more than 50,000 people gathered in the valley from all over India to pledge to fight "destructive development." A year later, thousands of villagers walked and boated to a small town in Madhya Pradesh to reiterate their pledge to drown rather than agree to move from their homes. Under intense pressure, the World Bank was forced to create an independent review committee, the Morse Commission. It published its report in 1992. The report endorsed all the main concerns raised by the Andolan. Two months later, the Bank sent out the Pamela Cox Committee. It is also suggested exactly what the Morse Report advised against: "a sort of patchwork remedy to try and salvage the operation". Eventually, due to the international uproar created by the Report, the World Bank withdrew from the Sardar Sarovar Project. In response, the Gujarati government decided to raise $200 million and go ahead with the project. Many issues of the project are yet unresolved. However, what is more important is that the Movement has been successful to a considerable extent. The achievements of the movements include: exit of the World Bank from Sardar Sarovar in 1993; Halt of Sardar Sarovar construction 1994-99; and Withdrawal of foreign investors from Maheshwar dam 1999-2001

The NBA is unique in the sense that it underlined the importance of people's right to in formation which the authorities finally had to concede under media and popular pressure. It was successful not only in mobilising hundreds of thousands people from different walks of life to put pressure on the State government for its anti-people policies, affecting and displacing lakhs of tribals from their homes and livelihoods. It also received immense international support. Resorting to non–violent mode of protest and following the Gandhian vision of constructive work, NBA, as its popularly known is distinctive landmark in the history of environmentalism in India. However, in the face of recalcitrant attitude of the governments, the NBA continues with the involvement of effected people and civil society organisations.

15.4.3   City-based Environmental Movements

In the recent past, environmental pollution caused due to the industrialisation has become the focus of collective action by the civil society organisations, NGOs,

concerned individuals, especially lawyers, scientists, environmentalists and social activists. They sought the intervention of the judiciary and drew the attention of the state for showing concern to the pollution caused by the process of modernisation. However, the main focus of the collective action against pollution has been in the urban areas. Certain tragedies like gas leakage in Bhopal based Union Carbide MNC, Charnobyl in former Soviet Union where thousands of people were killed created worries among the people on the negative effect of the industrialisation. Though the 1990s have seen increased concern about the environmental pollution, awareness about the disastrous impact of the environmental pollution started growing in the 1960s. All the major cities of India are facing acute air, water and other kinds on environmental pollution. Continuous immigration of the people from rural areas into the cities, their habitat in the congested areas which exist along with the polluting small scale industries; an increasing number of vehicles; and unplanned expansion of cities, open drainage, etc. have created levels of environmental hazards. This pollution made people susceptible to multiple diseases.

The protection of the environment did not form a significant part of the policies of the state for several year following Independence. The Nehruvian model gave more emphasis to the industrialisation without showing much concern for the pollution it was going to create. However, in 1976 a Constitutional Amendment called upon the state "to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forest and wildlife of the country" and made the fundamental duty of every citizen "to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures". In the following decades, the state passed legislations like The Air Act of 1981 and Environmental Protection Act of 1986 to prevent air pollution and environmental protection. The judiciary has become the arbiter of people's rights which include their protection from the environmental protection also since the emergence of the device of the Public Interest Litigation (PIL). In the face of indifference of the executive and legislature about the people's problems, the PIL has become an effective weapon through which people seek the intervention of the state on these issues. The intervention of the judiciary forced the state to introduce some measures for the prevention of environmental pollution. Justice Krishna Iyer, Justice Kuldeep Singh and advocate MC Mehta have made remarkable contribution in the protection of the environment.

Delhi is one of the most polluted cities in the world. Three issues related to the environmental pollution have been focus of activities of some concerned of the civil society components in the recent past. These are air pollution caused due to the vehicular and industrial pollution and water pollution in the Yamuna river. The number of private and public vehicles has increased many folds in the recent past. This has polluted the environment and made people, especially children and old vulnerable to multiple diseases. Reacting to the court order which was result of a PIL, the government made it compulsory to introduce the CNG vehicles and make the pollution check mandatory for all private vehicles. The introduction of the CNG vehicles has resulted in the reduction of the environmental pollution in the city. Similarly, the Delhi government shifted the polluting industries out of the city and launch the Yamuna river cleaning operation. The closing down of the polluting factories and industries proved the labour unrest in the city. It resulted in the police firing, which killed one labourer. In fact, this is related to the unplanned development policy. The migration to the cities from the villages is

inevitable. Unless some measures are adopted to absorb the migrating population, and increasing usage of the vehicles is stopped, it seems the environmental pollution will remain.

15.5 THE LGBTQs

The LGBTQs (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender and Queers/who question their sexual identity) are among the marginalised sections whose status in society in viewed in terms of their sexual orientation. Until a few years ago, they were not the focus of political and academic discourse. According to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, a transgender person is "one who is—(a) neither wholly female or male; (b) a combination of female and male; or (c) neither female nor male. Such a person's gender does not match the gender assigned at birth, and includes trans-men and trans-women, persons with intersex variations and gender-queers". The Transgender persons face discrimination due to the status of their gender. They face social stigma, discrimination in getting employment in public or private institutions, and within their families. The LGBTQs in India have been mobilising themselves to influence the law makers to make laws to end their multiple discrimination and provide them dignity and self-respect. Right to self-Identification is among their main demands.

In response to their movement, Truchi Siva placed a Private Members Bill in Rajya Sabha on December 12, 2014. The Bill was passed unanimously. On August 2, 2016, Union Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot presented The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights Bill), 2016. The Bill prohibits discrimination against transgender persons including denial of service or unfair treatment in relation to education, employment, healthcare, access to, or enjoyment of goods, facilities, opportunities available to the public, right to movement, right to reside, rent, own or otherwise occupy property, opportunity to hold public or private office, and access to a government or private establishment in whose care or custody a transgender person is. It also sought to provide a right to self-identification to transgender persons. It will be left to a transgender person whether she/he wants to be identified as a man, woman or transgender. The Bill also suggested that the government should introduce some welfare measures for the transgender persons.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the Space given below for your answer.

   ii)   Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1)   Highlight the main issues and concerns of the environmental movements in India.

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2) What are the features of city-based environmental movements in India?

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3) Identify the features of the LGBTQs.

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15.7   LET US SUM UP

Some social groups in the society are known as new social groups. They different from other social groups formed on the basis of caste, language, religion or region. Some of the new social groups in India are – fisher folks, ecological and environment groups and LGBTQs. They are new in the in one or more of following senses: they have got political and academic recognition much later than other social groups such as caste, language, religion or language; they have emerged in the recent past because of the social and economic changes in the society. Some scholars categorise their collective action as a new social movement. The new social groups became focus of political mobilisation and intellectual debate from the 1990s, although some of them were mobilsed even earlier. In the coastal

regions of India, especially Kerala, the fisher folks resorted to political agitations. As most of them belong to marginalised sections, they are adversely impacted by mechanisation in fisheries, natural disaster and competition from the private companies involved in fisheries. The main demands in their agitations include: participation in the fishery management; removal of travelers; availability of resources and facilities in fishing; protection from moneylenders, middle men, natural disaster, etc. Environmental and ecological movements have mainly focused on the issues such as protection of people's right to access of natural resources, prevention of land degradation, preventing commercialisation of nature resources and environmental pollution, maintenance of ecological balance, rehabilitation of displaced people, etc. They have largely remained a political. Ecological and environmental movements have generally launched by the civil society organizations. The LGBTQs are also a marginalised group, whose social status is decided by their social orientation. In the recent past, they have become part of political and academic discourse.

15.8   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Principal issues of the fisher folks are: Participation of the fisher folks in fisheries and fishery management; sale and processing of their catches; opposition to the introduction of travelers; availability of resources in fishing; and protection from the exploitation by the agents, traders and moneylenders.

2. From the 1990s fisher folks' movements became common, especially in Kerala. They focused on the problems caused by mechanisation in fisheries, unequal competition and need for welfare measures for them. Fisher folks were mobilised by their leaders and organisations. The government often responded to the fisher folks' movements by appointing commissions with the purpose of suggesting measures to address their problems.

Check Your Progress 2

1. The issues in the environmental movements include prevention of exploitation and degradation of natural resources; protection of rights of people over natural resources; development with sustenance of natural resources; taking measures to prevent air pollution; prevention of commercialistion of natural resources; rehabilitation of people displaced for development; representation of people in policy-making relating to the protection of environment, etc.

2. The city-based environmental movements are caused by industrialisation and urnanisation. They are generally led by civil society organisations, lawyers, scientists and intellectuals. Their main aim is to prevent environmental pollution. Judiciary has played a decisive role in prevention of environmental pollution in cities.

3. As a marginalised social group in the society, the LGBTQs face social discrimination and stigma. Their social status is viewed in terms of their sexual orientation. Until recently, they were not part of academic and political debate. Due to their politicisation in the recent the past, the LGBTQs have become part of public policies.

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