
UNIT 4 DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

As most of the old certitudes of Indian politics gradually crumble in a 'transforming' India, it is the 'idea of democracy' that has survived and endured thus providing one powerful continuity in it. It is remarkable given the fact that very few post-colonial states of Asia and Africa including those who shared the same colonial legacy i.e. Pakistan have been able to remain 'actually existing democracies' despite emphasis on the processes of democratisation and localisation in the present era of globalisation.

The above may be considered not a mean achievement if we reflect about India- the largest and the most diverse democracy in the world- as it was at the time of decolonisation. India almost lacked all the ingredients that make a liberal democracy a success. India had low levels of literacy, industrialisation and democratic consciousness. Another obstacle in the pathway to democracy building was in the form of centuries old hierarchical social order that was 'almost deliberately designed to resist the idea of political equality'. The partition legacy in the form of the flared up cultural and religious distinctions was another hurdle.

How can we explain the survival and remarkable endurance of Indian democracy? Is it due to the limited exposure to the 'democratic' institutional politics provided to the nationalist leadership by the Britishers in the twentieth century? Or is it due to the translation of our traditional cultural values like pluralism, consensus, tolerance, inclusion and accommodation into modern political culture as an independent India experienced its first years?

The democracy in India in a significant way was prefigured in the form of the colonial legacy as the British introduced the representative legislative bodies albeit with limited power vide the Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935. Even though the grant of the voting rights was limited in nature, the sheer number of the voters i.e. 40 million was the second largest in the non-communist world at that time. The groups who were accorded political representation were identified as religious communities with immutable interests and collective rights.

creation of a nation out of the country's diverse social order. The political leadership of an independent India inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru emphasised over the responsibility of the nation-state to recognise and accommodate the enormous diversity of India. Values of tolerance, pluralism and inclusion were actively promoted and these became the foundational principle of the nation formation and state formation projects that were set in motion simultaneously. The pluralist form of Indian democracy in its procedural form has been evident in the form of federalism, three language policy, reorganisation of the states on linguistic basis, affirmative action in favour of the marginal groups and the decision to desist from imposing a uniform civil code, secular citizenship defined by civic and universalistic criteria - all have been among the significant constitutional measures, legislative enactment and government policies indicating the constitutional/ legal recognition to four specific categories- religion, language, region and caste.

Whether it is the above two or more reasons that explain the resilience of democracy in India, it remains an irrevocable fact that democracy remains deep-rooted in India. India continues to have parliaments and courts of law, rights and a free press. In the words of Sunil Khilnani: 'as an idea as well as a seductive and puzzling promise to bring history under the command of the will of a community of equals, democracy has irreversibly entered the Indian political imagination'.

The greatest signifier of the success of Indian democracy, however, has been in providing space for political contestation and creating an opportunity for the assertion of a variety of claims articulated by the different groups. In the process democratic politics has even begun to corrode the authority of the traditional social order in India.

4.2 TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF DEMOCRACY

What do we understand by democracy in political theory? Democracy has increasingly been viewed as a form of good governance that paves the way for arriving at decisions among a group of individuals organised as a polity. The essential value of democracy lies in its moral superiority over any other way of arriving at decisions which take every citizen's interests into account, and are equally binding on everyone. The core principles that underpin and justify democracy in this sense are twofold. First, the individuals are autonomous rational beings who are capable of deciding what is good for them. Second, all individuals should have equal say in the determination of collective decisions, which affects them all equally.

It has been argued that unanimity is generally impossible to achieve when collectivity makes an attempt to arrive at a commonly agreed upon decision. Thus the most plausible procedure for arriving at a commonly agreed upon decision is the principle of majority rule which is most practical and morally acceptable. Due to the large and complex societies it is not possible to gather together to make decisions on every issue [say like in the city-state of Athens], even in the advanced capitalist democracies as C B Macpherson visualised in his enunciation of the participatory model of democracy [Life and Times of Liberal democracy]. Modern democracy therefore works with a set of procedure and the representative institutions by which people can elect their representatives and hold them periodically accountable.

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If we see the democracy purely as a set of institutions- encompassing free and fair elections, legislative assemblies, general legal framework and constitutional governments, then we are essentially privileging the procedural form of democracy. However if we have an idea of a democracy being peopled by the truly equal citizens, who are politically engaged, tolerant of different opinions and ways of life and have an equal voice in choosing their rulers and holding them accountable, then we are privileging the substantive notion of democracy. In liberal political theory, these two contrasting models of democracy are referred to as procedural [or formal] and substantive [or informal] democracy respectively.

It follows that in the limited proceduralist view of democracy the level of the electoral participation, the frequency of elections and the peaceful change in political power are taken as indicators of the health of democracy. However such a view is endangered by the fallacy of electoralism, as the social and economic inequalities involving the ethno-cultural communities (including the minorities and women) make it difficult for them to participate effectively are largely ignored in such a perspective.

The proponents of the substantive form of democracy, on the other hand, argue that the democratic project is incomplete until the meaningful exercises of the equal rights of citizenship have been guaranteed to all. On this account, free and fair elections, freedom of speech and expression, and the rule of law and its protection to all are necessary, but by no means sufficient conditions for a democracy to be meaningful. The project of democracy is not accomplished by merely securing legal and political equality; it may be severely restricted by inequalities, which deny many from having a truly equal opportunity to influence government decisions (Social agenda of democratisation). In the contemporary post-industrial / information societies the concentration of expert knowledge, symbolised by the increasing influence of public policy specialists over government policy and public opinion is another limitation. The experts have made the economic policy making insulated from the democratic pressures.

4.3 DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

The present era of globalisation is characterised by an upsurge of market economy and political democracy. These are both considered as virtue and necessity: whether it is the East European post-Communist societies or the post-colonial Asian, African and Latin American societies. This can be explained in terms of the collapse of communism / socialism that inspired economies based on development planning in the form of excessive or inappropriate state intervention in market economies.

In social sciences a great degree of literature, rich - both in terms of range and depth - is available on the themes of economic development and political democracy. Unfortunately they remain divided into two different worlds of politics and economics with little interaction. What is needed is to theorise the nature of democracy in such a

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The theorists of political economy like Deepak Nayyar have drawn attention to the fact that there has always been an inherent tension between the economics of markets and politics of democracy. It is explained in terms of the exclusionary nature of markets as against the inclusionary nature of democracy.

That the notion of majoritarian democracy is preferable to monarchies or the oligarchies has been questioned on the basis that it leads to the tyranny of majority. At the same time the argument that the markets protect the interests of individuals and minorities is limited. It has been argued that the markets are indeed the tyranny of minorities. Now in the market people vote with their money whereas in political democracy every one has equal vote. Thus there is always an inherent tension between the two institutions.

Then can we say that the combination of democracy and markets is sufficient or say necessary to bring economic development of the masses? What about the egalitarian development in planned economies without political democracy in the erstwhile communist states of East Europe and also in the South East Asian countries that had market economies without political democracy? And then in the post-communist countries where we have both market economy and political democracy we have so far witnessed prosperity for very few and misery for the majority.

We must understand that the markets tend to exclude people as consumers if they do not have any income or sufficient income [entitlement for Amartya Sen]. Markets also exclude the people as producers or sellers if they have neither assets nor capabilities [natural talents, skills acquired through teaching, learning from experience, education] commanding a price and also demand in the market. And then market excludes both the consumers and producers if they do not accept, or conform to, the values of the market system i.e. tribal communities or the forest people. Economic exclusion further accentuates the social and political exclusion. So the lower classes would suffer if the marketisation of economies take place, as the roll back of the state from the social and economic sectors would mean dilution of social security for the disadvantaged. Moreover the people devoid of entitlement, assets, or capabilities would not have the resources to claim or the power to assert their rights. Thus to conclude this part of argument we may concur with Niraja Gopal Jayal that in this cruelly Schumpeterian political world, there is an almost complete disengagement between the lives and aspirations of ordinary men and women, on the one hand, and the world of important national issues often revolving around the interests of the advantaged ones on the other.

It follows that economic stratification is inevitable in the market economies and societies, which systematically integrate some and marginalise others to distribute the benefits of economic growth in ways that include a few and exclude others. In such a situation the institutional arrangements that mediate between the economic development on the one hand and social development on the other become critical. Otherwise the economic growth would lead to regional unevenness and class inequality.

4.4 DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE POSTCOLONIAL SOCIETIES

Democracies in the postcolonial societies have been distinct from their western counterparts due to their historical specificities. Colonialism, as Ralph Miliband argued in 'Marxism and Politics', distorted the social, economic and political structures, thus making them unique. It follows that the theoretical tools developed for the advanced capitalist societies cannot be transposed simply to these very different societies. That explains the ongoing debates in

democratic theory concerning the 'new' democracies. Most significant among these are the debates on democracy and development; democracy and diversity; and democracy, state and civil society. Thus there has been a debate as to whether democracy and development are compatible in the post-colonial states. The economic 'miracle' experienced in the East Asian states have thus been attributed to their 'soft authoritarian' regimes. Given the fact that the postcolonial societies are multicultural and are riven by racial and ethnic conflicts, serious apprehension has been expressed towards the need to recognise the diversity and the inequality arising out of the embedded discriminatory practices that undermine the post-colonial democracies. As for the relationship between the democracy, state and civil society, it has been debated whether there can be a democracy or a market (read effective exercise of citizenship rights as well as the social aspect of democracy) without an effective state in the postcolonial societies.

4.5 POLITICAL DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: 1947-1967

In the first years of independence the strategy of economic development was shaped by a political consensus. There was a long-term perspective in Nehruvian India. Congress accommodated the poor peoples under the rubric of socialism articulated effectively in the form of the Bombay Plan of 1944 and the new industrial policy resolution in 1948. Under this 'Nehru- Mahalanobis strategy', Indian state was to take responsibility for the provision of infrastructure as well as large and heavy industrial investment.

Democracy came to India neither as a response to an absolutist state nor as the realisation of an individualist conception of society. It also did not follow capitalist industrialisation and development. Hence there was a contrast with the experience in the advanced capitalist liberal societies of the West. The anti-colonial struggle was based more on the demand for an autonomous space for the nation than about individual freedom. Gandhian notion of a just state was premised on the idea that the collective interest must take precedence over individual interests. The nationalist leadership visualised a democratic republic with pledges to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for all its citizens. Universal franchise was thus granted in one go in a predominantly agrarian society lacking in terms of democratic consciousness.

In the above situation the state had an important role to play that was of a mediator between political democracy and economic democracy. Thus if the logic of the market meant exclusion of a significant proportion of people, particularly the poor, it was necessary for the state to ensure the inclusion of such people in the economic sphere.

As the colonial past and the nationalist present shaped the above strategy of economic development, conscious efforts were made to limit the degree of openness and of integration with the world economy, in pursuit of a more autonomous, if not self-reliant, development. It was a departure from the colonial era marked with open market and unregulated market that favoured metropolitan capital.

What were the objectives? They were to catch up with the industrialised world and to improve the living conditions of the people. It was believed that primacy of the market mechanism would lead to excess consumption by the rich and under-investment in sectors critical for development. At the same time, it was assumed that agriculture was subject to

diminishing returns so industrialisation should be preferred, as it was supposed to bring increasing returns and greater employment opportunities.

So the main inputs were: the lead role of public investment, industrialisation based on import substitution, the emphasis on the capital goods sector, industrial licensing to guide the investment in the private sector, relative neglect of agriculture, more emphasis on heavy industries than the traditionally small or cottage ones.

Large doses of public investment created a physical infrastructure and helped in setting up of intermediate goods industries, that reduced the cost of inputs used by the private sector and increased the demand for goods produced by the private sector. Import substitution was implemented through the market protectionism guaranteeing market for the domestic capitalists not for the present but for the future also as demand exceeded the supply as a result of import restrictions.

Due to its legacy of leading an anti-colonial struggle based on the core principles of nationalism and development, the Congress, became the ruling dominant party. There was a political consensus that industrialisation meant development and national interest was to be equated with people's interest. Redistribution as a policy was not encouraged, as redistribution could be only of poverty that would have harmed savings. The foreign capitalists and the Zamindars were excluded from the political economy of development. Land reforms could not be implemented as the lower level bureaucracy in alliance with the local landed politician lobby obstructed it. The glaring loopholes in the legislation did not help as also the position of the upper caste landlords. The net result was that the owners turned into cultivators. Community development programmes, Panchayati system, social legislation including reservations in the educational institutions and employment were subsequently introduced.

Let us make an appraisal of the development-planning model as it was implemented during this phase. What were the major gains? First, we can mention massive step up in terms of both industrial and agricultural growth. There was acceleration in the manufacturing industry in the 1950-1964 followed by deceleration until 1970s and again a renewed spurt led by an expansion of state expenditure. Second, there was a considerable diversification of industrial production as the capital goods sectors and other infant industries came up and achieved some level of production. Earlier only cotton, sugar and jute textiles existed. Third, domestic self-sufficiency in food production was achieved though food consumption remained low. It was a major achievement considering the fact that as late as in 1964-6, 12 percent of food grains required was imported.

As for the major criticism of the development-planning model, it was in terms of the failure of land reforms and the rise of a high cost industrial economy. The strategy of import substitution based on export pessimism also came under question. What emerged was a complex and wasteful system involving corruption in an institutionalised manner. Despite its phenomenal success the green revolution came to be criticised for being energy intensive and not labour intensive. Then dry land farming neglected. Urban-rural [India vs. Bharat] divide in economic terms got accentuated despite massive government expenditure.

In class terms a 'dominant coalition' comprising the proprietary classes namely the industrial

capitalist class, the land owning class and the bureaucracy, as Pranab Bardhan and Sudipta Kaviraj among others have argued, have benefited most from the ‘developmental’ policies under socialism like the grant of subsidies both to the rich farmers as well as the industrial capitalist classes. The governments became the ‘hospital’ for the sick industrial units as nationalisation took place in the name of helping out the working class. The professionals in the public sectors holding the ‘intellectual capital’ benefited from the institutionalised corruption as the state played the regulatory role in the economic arena.

In all fairness, however, there was always a conscious effort on the part of the Indian State to reconcile economic policies with the compulsions of the political process so that the conflicts in the interaction of economics and politics could be minimised. Politics of accommodation was followed. Welfarist policies were very much in place. That the sharing of the spoils was on agenda was evidenced in the form of the aim to have a socialistic pattern of society based on the twin objectives of eradication of poverty and equitable distribution of resources. Call for Industrial capitalism always combined with the radical rhetoric of a political democracy.

In sociological terms it was thought, very much under the influence of the post-war western liberal modernisation/ political development theory, that modernisation would reduce the linguistic diversities. Secularism would do away with the religious identities and affirmative actions would make caste wither away. Overall, welfarist policies were also to contribute in the homogenising agenda of nation building. Thus, in India, the ideal of social democracy and a welfare state along the non-capitalist path to development seemed achievable.

4.6 POLITICAL DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: 1967-1990

The above consensus about the nature of democracy and development was broken as qualitative change took place in the interaction between the politics of democracy and economics of welfarism. The social groups who were on the margin of the society and were lying dormant became empowered with political voice. They now started making economic claims on a state that has successfully mediated between the politics and economics of Indian democracy. The ensuing process of mediation and reconciliation on the part of the Indian State had long-term economic and political consequences.

The discordant voices were due to the non-fulfillment of the promises and expectations as there was a rise in the level of poverty. (34 percent in 1957 to 57 per cent in 1970-71) Crisis in the economy in the mid-1960s was evident in the form of food crisis, as India became a basket case having a ‘ship to mouth existence’. The devaluation of rupee followed and planning was to be suspended for three years as industrial sector as well as savings and investments suffered.

The consensus was also broken because the second generation of political leadership that emerged in the aftermath of the Kamraj plan was devoid of the legitimacy, acceptance and charisma of the nationalist leadership. Regionalisation and ruralisation of the Indian politics took place, as the Congress no longer remained the dominant party having declined in both organisational and ideological sense. In the words of Yogendra Yadav, a ‘second democratic

upsurge' took place in the form of a fundamental transformation in the terrain of politics which in turn is anchored in the process of social change. This transformation was a product of the change in the size, the composition and the self-definition of the voters as more and more citizens from the lower rungs of society participated in the electoral politics articulating and asserting their democratic rights.

There was also the rise of the dominant caste rich peasantry like Jats, Kammas, Kapus, Yadavas and Reddis in the face of the decline of semi-feudal landlords. These castes deserted the Congress to join or to create opposition parties. The newly entrant class of the rich peasantry asked for its due share of the benefits derived from the economic policies and sought an upward mobility in the political process. The response of the state was in the form of a strong, new, emphasis on agriculture in the form of green revolution. Thus for achieving food security 'betting on the strong' policy was adopted. Under the policy the better-endowed peasants and regions received extensive support. Though land reforms measures that had received partial success with the notable exception of the states like Kerala, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir were now not pursued, the Poverty alleviation programmes like DPAP, DWARKA were launched.

In the absence of serious programmatic efforts, the Congress under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, increasingly resorted to the Populist rhetoric in the form of the sloganeering, nationalisation of banks, abolition of privy purses. Dissent and regionalism in the Congress was met by a strategy of divide and rule by the 'high command' of the ruling Congress. The rich peasantry was co-opted into the dominant coalition as the majoritarianism under a representative democracy during the first phase gave way to authoritarianism. It all culminated into emergency that marked the overall failure of democracy in its procedural and substantive forms. In class terms the imposition of emergency can be also explained in the form of the lack of cohesion in the dominant coalition as the landed rich peasantry emerged in a big way being economically strong and numerically powerful. Political democracy had provided the institutional mechanisms to sustain the ruling coalition; lack of institutional mechanisms set in the crisis eventually.

Nevertheless the victory of the Janata Party not only reflected the sagacity of the Indian electorate but also proved conclusively that the democratic spirit had embedded in the political imagination of the Indian people.

The failure of Janata party government reflected the limitation of the coalition politics devoid of ideological unity and purpose. The return of a much chastened and insecure Indira Gandhi also saw the return of the politics of populism and patronage. Proliferation of subsidies resulted in massive state expenditure and loss of revenue, soft loans, loan waivers, sick firms being nationalised, cheap inputs being provided for the industrial capitalist class. In short, it was same regime under Indira Gandhi and later under Rajiv Gandhi in terms of its policies. The centralisation of political power, politics of nomination, marketisation of polity-all continued to remain the features of the period between 1980 to 1990. Massive allocation of funds was made under employment generating programmes like RLEGP, NREP, and IRDP. As Deepak Nayyar observes succinctly, there was hardly much interaction between the economics and democratic politics now unlike the Nehruvian India. The money and muscle factor entered into electoral arena now dominated by what Rajni Kothari called the vote contractor. Those with money gained in the battle of ballot, as suitcase politics became the order of the day. Caste, ethnicity and religion now played far more significant role as the identity politics asserted in

continuation with the colonial legacy as it was first the colonial state that recognised different castes and communities and introduced separate electorate.

4.7 POLITICAL DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: 1991 ONWARDS

The post 1991 India has been witness to an absence of consensus regarding its strategy of economic development as well as the evolving nature of its democracy. The long-term vision of political leadership of Nehru has been replaced by short-term strategies, as the adoption of the new economic policies of liberalisation and the emergent politics of empowerment seem to be moving the economy and polity in the opposite directions. What is of most significance is the unwillingness of the Indian State to mediate in order to effect the conflict resolution.

At this juncture it would be pertinent to address to the cause of a radical shift from the development-planning model to the model of economic liberalisation just after a minor economic crisis, when, despite decades of poverty, the mixed economy model continued unabated. And then, how come a minority government of Narasimha Rao could take such far-reaching policy change when the predecessor governments with the overwhelming majority like the Congress regime under Rajiv Gandhi were unable to do so despite apparent willingness?

The possible answer can be in the form of the immediate economic compulsion of crisis management. The political economists like Jayati Ghosh, Pranab Bardhan, Amit Bhaduri and Deepak Nayyar have referred to a combination of the national and international factors that explain that the shift was a crisis-driven and not a strategy-driven change in the economic policies.

These factors included the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the Communist regimes in the East European countries that were the biggest trading partners of India. The external debt crisis resulted as the short-term loans taken by Rajiv Gandhi administration could not be returned due to failure of the capital goods sector to export. Remittances from migrants in the gulf tapered off even as the oil prices increased in the aftermath of Gulf War. There was a flight of capital from the exchange market by the NRIs as they lost confidence in the social and political viability of the Indian State in the aftermath of the Mandal and Mandir controversy. Rise in consumerism indulged by the rising middle class, increased defence imports, inadequate resource mobilisation, competitive politics of populism were some of the immediate factors. And then the direct taxes were progressively reduced under the liberalising policies of Rajiv Gandhi regime while indirect taxes could not be raised.

The international factors included the conditionalities imposed from above by the international monetary institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. The Latin American and Sub – Saharan Africa examples along with the success stories of the South Asian countries were also put forward under the influence of rise of the neo-liberalism as the only viable model of ‘good governance’. It was argued that economic growth and economic efficiency could be achieved with the reduction in the role of the state. Fiscal discipline, access to foreign capital and foreign technology were other factors that led to a shift from the state led capitalism to market driven capitalism.

Do we have a future of the economic reforms in India? What are its implications for the democracy and development in India? It is very clear that the political instability in the present coalition era with frequent elections explains the prevalence of the short-term interests driven politics. Instead of taking hard measures to stabilise the economy and risking the adverse electoral verdict winning popular support in the elections, the continuation of populist measures have become the dominant factors in the policy making especially at the state level as a chief minister has an average of less than 3 years of tenure. Thus, the long-term perspective of the earlier phase is absent. In terms of democratic politics also, the consensus is gone. The corrupt and inefficient state level bureaucracy remains incompetent to carry out the reforms. Patronage, corruption and nepotism continue unabated. The nature of investment, whether foreign or domestic, remain suspect as most of the investments are in the consumer sector and not in the primary or capital goods sectors. Most of the investment, as Prabhat Patnaik argues, is in the form of 'Hot money' seeking quick returns. The rich state- poor state syndrome is also posing a challenge to the Indian federal democracy as the rich states, with their developed economic infrastructures, are acting as magnets where as the poorer states are being asked to fend for themselves without central assistance. Regionalism- an offshoot of colonialism and nationalism has been on rise as the regional imbalance increases. Initially it was the ethnic-cultural identity that was the basis for the reorganisation of the states but now the need for greater development and democratisation that is becoming the basis of the demand for separate statehood as was the case with the movements for the creation of Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Dialect communities are also joining the chorus as in the case of the demand for Bundelkhand and Ruhelkhand in UP. In the new economic regime, such demands are likely to receive impetus.

The withdrawal of the state from the social sector has been hitting the poor people as the whole notion of welfarism has come under question. In the name of fiscal discipline the state investment in the primary sectors of employment, health and education has been dwindling. New economic policies driven by the market laws of demand, supply and maximisation of profit are hardly concerned with the labour especially those employed in the informal sector. The competing federal states also tend to overlook the labour rights as they look for private investment.

There are other challenges to the success of the politics of economic reforms. The Gandhian values that still command influence among the masses are opposed to market economy as they emphasise on groups than individual interests. Profit making was not appreciated. The opposition to the economic reforms by the new political elite, failure to insulate the policy making from the populist politics, the contentious centre- state relations, competitiveness among the states are the other obstacles.

Thus the ongoing neo-liberal project of development based on the processes of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation has come to be questioned by the advocates of sustainable development strategies as well as by new social movements questioning the rationale of the prosperity of some social groups at the cost of others constituting majority.

4.8 SUMMARY

The above projects of social transformation arose out of deliberative legislation rather than the

participative democratic process. However they were products of a consensus negotiated and evolved in the course of the anti-colonial movement. They were to be realised within the framework of a democratic polity. The idea of democracy is expected to inform, inspire and cohere with the state's initiatives in the areas of welfare, secularism and development.

As discussed above, the traditional cultural values of pluralism and tolerance provided substance to the task of democracy building in India. The recognition of the diversities and accommodation of their concerns was the hallmark of the constitutional project of nation building involving the overarching goal of achieving development.

However the challenges before the Indian Democracy as of today remain formidable. The identities of caste and religion have bent the democratic idea to their own purpose. This is despite the fact that the social reforms and constitutional law have led to the dissolution of the oppressive bonds of caste and the social order and is no longer able to make the state redundant as in ancient past. As the social agenda of Indian democracy weakens due to the policies of economic liberalisation the challenge to the pluralist character of the Indian democracy from the ultra- rightist communal forces is coming up in the form of the demand to redefine democracy in emphatically majoritarian terms. Notwithstanding the upsurge of the new social movements taking up the issues relating to human rights, gender rights, backward classes and minority rights, environment, the civil Society in India is increasingly becoming the site of intense struggle involving the social groups. Ironically commitment to cultural rights for minority communities has been coming in the way of the principle of gender justice and also the Constitutionally guaranteed rights of equal citizenship as the simmering debate over the uniform civil code reveals.[refer Shah Bano case, 1986 and Supreme Court decisions most recent in 2003]. Identities have indeed been created through electoral politics leading to their empowerment but then the process has led to more conflict than competition. So new political entrants consider themselves as members of groups and communities, rather than liberal individuals.

As for the interface between the ideas of democracy and development is concerned, the challenge to create a more equal society remains formidable as the economic disparities continue to mount in the era of globalisation [refer the external pressure from the WTO regime; Need to legislate global regimes in the matters such as trade, environmental regulation and intellectual property and setting the global standard for 'good governance'].

To conclude, the economics of liberalisation and the politics of empowerment are going in opposite directions in the contemporary India. Willingness and ability of the Indian state as in the past to play the mediating role is simply not there. In such a situation there is a critical need to emphasise the role of the civil society and its citizens. For the politics of common goods and rights, it is imperative that the Indian State should adopt a strategy of selective globalisation that can enrich the pluralist character of the Indian democracy.

4.9 EXERCISES

- 1) Explain briefly the evolution of political democracy and economic development in India during the phase 1947-67.

- 2) Analyse the process of transformation in the terrain of politics in the post 1967 era.
- 3) 'The economics of liberalisation and the politics of empowerment are going in opposite directions in the contemporary India', comment.
- 4) Write short notes on (1) Democracy and Development in the post colonial societies (2) Democracy as a form of good governance.