
UNIT 16 STATELESS SOCIETIES

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Politics and Political Organisations
- 16.3 Political Institutions and Stateless Societies
 - 16.3.1 Sources of Data about Stateless Societies
 - 16.3.2 Types of Stateless Societies
 - 16.3.3 Kinship System as a Form of Political Control
- 16.4 Political Principles of Stateless Society
 - 16.4.1 An Example : The Tonga
 - 16.4.2 An Example : The Lozis
- 16.5 Stateless Tribes in India
 - 16.5.1 Political Organisation in Indian Tribes
 - 16.5.2 The Lineage System
 - 16.5.3 Conflict Regulation
 - 16.5.4 Crime and Punishment
- 16.6 Political Institutions and Development of Society
 - 16.6.1 Emergence of Simple Form of Government in Society
 - 16.6.2 Political Aspect of Religion in Simple Societies
- 16.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.8 Key Words
- 16.9 Further Readings
- 16.10 Model Answers to Check Your Progress

16.0 OBJECTIVES

By the time you have studied this unit you should be able to:

- describe the stateless societies;
- explain some key features of stateless societies;
- explain the distinction between the stateless society and a society with state; and
- discuss the functions of stateless society.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit in the block “Political Processes”. In this unit you are going to learn about politics and political organisation. You will learn about the stateless societies which generally lack a centralised system of authority. Here the significance of kinship organisation is dealt with in relation to political control. We have discussed here the

political principles which are present in stateless societies. We have also described the stateless tribes in India. Finally, we have discussed the emergence of government in stateless societies.

16.2 POLITICS AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Politics deals with the distribution of power in society. Political institutions refer to certain kinds of social relations which exist within a particular area. Thus, territorial area is an important aspect in the political process of any society. The territorial structure provides the framework not only for political organisation but for other forms of organisation as well. However, when we study political institutions we deal with the “maintenance and establishing of order within a territorial framework by the organised exercise of coercive authority through the use or possibility of use of physical force” (Fortes M. and Evans, Pritchard, E.E., 1949)

One of the important political institutions in society is state. It has been described as a human community which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory. State is different from government in the sense that government is the agency which carries out the orders of the state. Thus, we can say that political organisation consists of the combination and interrelationship of power and authority in the maintenance of public affairs.

In modern complex societies the police and the army are the instruments by which public order is maintained. Those who offend are punished by law. Law is one of the means by which the state carries out its function of social control.

There has been a progressive growth of political organisation in different societies. As societies have developed from the simple to modern industrial societies, all other aspects of social organisation, even political institutions have become more complex. There are stateless societies without any centralised authority. Unit 16 deals with such societies. Then there are those societies which have some form of centralised authority and administrative machinery. Unit 17 describes these traditional/pre-modern societies. In Units 18 and 19 are discussed developed forms of political institutions in modern societies.

16.3 POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND STATELESS SOCIETIES

Simple societies have very low population in comparison to modern societies. There exists a very indeterminate political community in these societies. Here, since face to face relation is possible no formal agency of social control exists. We are now going to discuss the political organisation in the stateless societies. In all types of stateless societies, however simple their organisation might be, they generally have an idea of their territorial rights. These rights are maintained through the notions of age, and social sanctions and social control.

Here, we must make it clear that we are talking generally about the African tribes. In these societies various forms of political institutions such as, councils, monarchies, chiefs, etc., exist. In the stateless societies power and authority are generally diffused in different groups in society. Political order is maintained through the ties of kinship and lineage systems.

A society is called stateless if it:

- has no rigid boundary or permanent physical territory,
- follows oral traditions, and the bureaucratic aspect is absent from it,
- has a single person holding several major powers of religious, economic and political offices within the society,
- there is no fixed rigidly spelt out ideology, and
- has simple economy

16.3.1 Sources of Data about Stateless Societies

There are three sources of knowledge about simple societies without government. It is from these that our information is derived:

- archaeological records about stateless societies,
- literature produced by missionaries, travellers and administrators, and
- monographs written by anthropologists.

The archaeological record is very important in the study of stateless societies. This leads to an important point. All the records of simple societies show that they have always been involved in a process of change, growth and development. We note here that there is no static simple society - they are all dynamic.

Anthropologists studying stateless societies have also used literature, produced by missionaries, travellers and colonial administrators. Last but not the least are the monographs written by anthropologists on stateless societies. These are our main sources of information, given in this unit.

16.3.2 Types of Stateless Societies

The stateless societies can be generally divided into four broad types of societies according to their socio-political organisations:

- i) First type of societies are those which usually live by hunting and gathering. Here the largest social units are the co-operating groups of families or close kin. There does not exist any other formal grouping besides this. There are no gradations or stratification's or even any separate institutions. No specific political organisation exists in this type of society. The authority rests with the senior members of these families. But this authority is very limited in scope. Some of the examples of these societies are the Bushmen of South Africa and some of the people of South East Asia, Jarwa of Andaman Islands etc.
- ii) Second type of society is that which is made up of village communities which are related to one another by various kinship and economic ties. They have formally appointed councils to maintain administration. In these councils the eligibility for membership varies from one society to another. Some of the criteria for eligibility are descent from either old family or reputed family etc. or any other social eminence such as economic power. Here we can see that there is an emergence of political order. Some of these types of societies are the Ibo and Yako of West Africa.
- iii) In the third type, the societies have political control vested in age-set systems. This is a common feature of the societies in East Africa. In these societies the allocation of authority is vested in the elders of the society. Thus age-set

organisation is based on the principle of seniority. An example of such a tribe is the Cheyenne of America and the Nuer of Africa.

- iv) Finally, the fourth type of societies are those in which political functions are performed through groups organised in terms of unilineal descent. The unilineal descent is traced along the line of either father or mother. In such societies there are no specific political offices. There are no political chiefs, but the elders of the society may exercise a limited authority. In this type of society the groups within the society may be in a state of balanced opposition. Some of the example of such type of societies are, the Nuer, the Dinka of Southern Sudan. This aspect will be explained later.

16.3.3 Kinship System as a Form of Political Control

Kinship system plays a very crucial role in the socio-political and economic organisation of simple societies. Its functions are extensive and overlapping with functions of the political and economic institutions. It takes up the task of maintaining order and balance in society. The principle of fission or conflict and fusion or cohesion works within the simple societies along the kinship and territorial lines. For example, the Nuer tribe is divided into segments. The primary sections or segment of the tribe is the largest and it occupies the largest territory, the secondary section is smaller than the primary and it occupies the next largest territory and finally the tertiary section, which is the smallest and occupies the smallest territory. This division of Nuer society is not just political or territorial but it is also a kinship distribution. In such a society conflict leads to alliances and opposition along the kinship and especially lineage lines.

Activity 1

Compare the Nuer society (as described here) with the socio-political order of your own society. Write a note on this comparison. Compare your note with other students at your study centre.

In all stateless societies where the society is segmented or divided into sections alliances take place along the lines of territory, residence, kinship, descent, heritage and marriage. Conflict leads to cohesion in such societies. For example, in case of conflict, all the members of a group, descended agnatically from a particular man, many see themselves as a unit against all the agnatic descendants of that man's enemy. The enemy might be a member of one's own lineage or another lineage. The segmentation of society maintains itself through the presence of actual or potential opposition to one another. This opposition is characteristically expressed in the institution of "blood feud" in these societies. If a person has killed a member of another section of the society, that other section will not be satisfied until the murderer or any member of his section is killed. However, these inter-lineage antagonisms are countered by other cross cutting ties like those of affinity and matrilineal kinship. Thus there are always people in opposing groups whose interest is to seek peaceful solution of disputes between lineage's.

Therefore, we can say that in stateless societies the kinship ties are performing political roles. The principles of **exogamy** - where a person marries only outside one's community, and **endogamy** - where a person marries within a particular community - play an important part. It is these principles which decide the nature of one's potential supporters or allies in case of conflict.

16.4 POLITICAL PRINCIPLES OF STATELESS SOCIETY

Stateless societies are very many, and their traditions have wide variation. Yet it is possible to distinguish some basic principles to which their organisation adheres. These principles seem to underlie and appear in all stateless societies:

- Society becomes united when different groups or segments unite. They initially owe loyalty to different groups but come together for some particular cause such as defence of territory or ‘blood feud’, etc.
- Authority, which is delegated or given to a subordinate, becomes independent. Thus juniors who are given power by seniors in a stateless society become powerful in their own right.
- Mystical symbols also ‘integrate’ and unify stateless societies. This is because the entire society regards these to be sacred and that which should be protected.

16.4.1 An Example: The Tonga

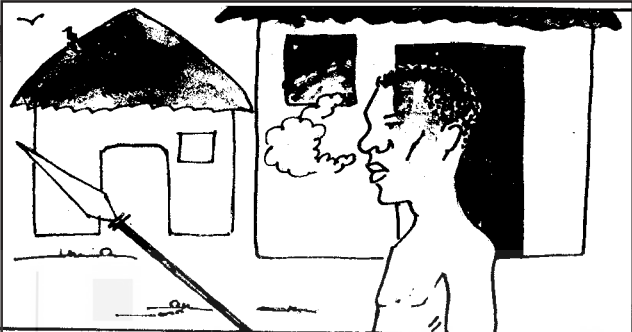
Let us take the **example** of the African tribe Tonga. The Tongas live in small villages in the hope of escaping raids upon them. These raids are performed by unfriendly tribes to steal food and valuables. In this tribe the headman has little power. This is one of the key features of stateless societies. This tribe is nomadic (moves its locations from time to time) due to agricultural needs. In doing so many new friendships are struck up and often old friendships break. Tongas belong to a matrilineally related kin group called the **mukowa**.

Now it is important to note that **no marriage may link up two mukowa**. This principle of exogamy is a primary mechanism for establishing the various alliances and linkages. A very interesting feature is that Tonga clans are related by what are called ‘joking relations’ between cross-cousins. A ‘joking relationship’ is where merriment is made into a ritual and is created perforce. The persons cannot talk normally but must joke and laugh. This institution is very important. Among the Tonga this joking has important political consequences.

This is because “clan joking” creates a large number of friendships, among all the people concerned. Further it provides the privileged go-betweens and judges of morals in a society an opportunity to intervene in the lives of people without looking authoritative. This is because during joking, ‘counselling’ and ‘warnings’ are allowed to be given as part of the jokes exchanged. Society functions without the mediations of political power and authority.

16.4.2 An Example: The Lozis

In some stateless societies there are institutions which protect the rights of all the members of society where food is scarce or limited. Since in these societies the concept of accumulation of property and food does not exist, there is always the problem of distribution. Amongst the Lozis of Africa there exists an institution called **kufunda**, which literally means legal theft. It is present in some other tribes also. Any person of the tribe can take any article or food from one’s kinsmen’s house. It solves the problem of hunger because one can always get food from one kinsman or the other. A person in these tribes has to share his or her food with the others. Thus kufunda or legal theft is a political institution and gives meaning to kinship and economic structures of the society.



HE SMELLS GOOD FOOD, BUT CANNOT ENTER THIS HOUSE, BECAUSE IT'S NOT HIS RELATIVES - FURTHERMORE IT WOULD BE CONSIDERED THEFT.



Kufunda : Legal Theft

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space below for your answer.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Explain what is meant by a stateless society? Use about five lines for your answer.

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- 2) Stateless societies are also called simple societies.
 - Yes
 - No
- 3) A 'blood feud' is a method of making group members donate blood.
 - Yes
 - No
- 4) What are the three sources of knowledge about stateless societies?
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)
- 5) A "joking relationship" is: (Tick the answer)
 - i) A meeting of humorists.
 - ii) Competitions of jokes.
 - iii) A form of institutionalised behaviour.
 - iv) To make fun of each other.

16.5 STATELESS TRIBES IN INDIA

This section would enable you to explain how the 'stateless' tribes of India function and organise themselves within the Indian nation. This section will show how in contemporary India certain tribes fit into the category of stateless societies. As you will see they have a rich and complex life and maintain order. Sociologically speaking, they have their own inner logic of functioning and to a large extent they still live by it. However, it should not be assumed that they have not changed with time. In fact, they are increasingly getting modernised and attempts are being made to help them to develop.

16.5.1 Political Organisation in Indian Tribes

Political institutions in Indian tribes are based on

- i) Clan and lineage
- ii) village unit and
- iii) group of villages.

Every clan has a common ancestor to which it can trace itself. Over time every clan "breaks" or "splits" up into several lineages.

Lineage segmentation or division into smaller sections is very important as a principle of political structure in stateless societies. Among the Bhils the lineage is structured with a depth of five to six generations as one unit.

16.5.2 The Lineage System

The political functioning and conflict in the lineage system among the Santal, Oraon and Bhil can be illustrated diagrammatically as follow:

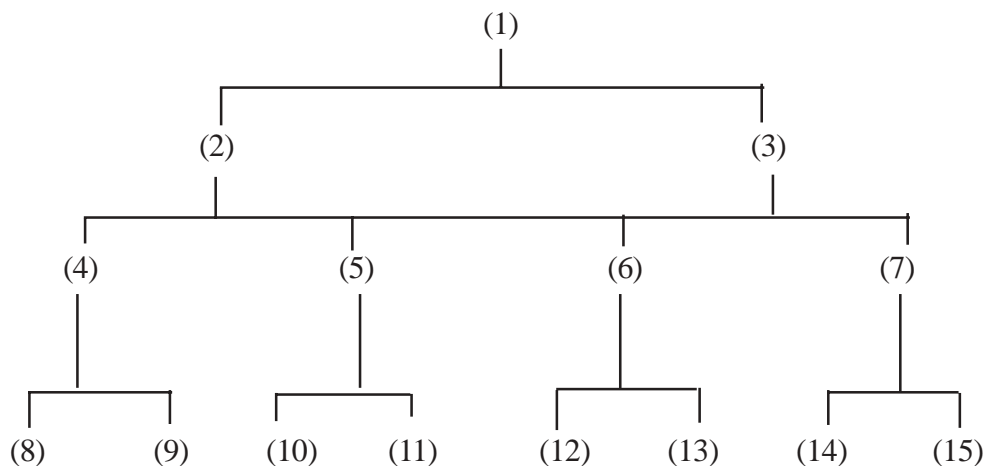


Diagram 1 : Political Functioning in Stateless Societies

In this diagram the members represent lineages of different orders. They all claim descent from (1) The male line goes down from (1) to (2) and (3) and two lineages are formed. After this the lines segment further into (4)–(5) and (6)–(7) respectively. In the next generation we find the lineage segmenting into (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15) respectively. This structure is very important for conflict regulation.

Now it often happens that there is enmity between members of (8) and (9) as per the diagram. In such a case all the members of (8) and all the members of (9) are potential enemies. All the other branches of the lineage such as (4), (5), (10), (11), (2), etc., are not involved. This is also true of (12), and (13). It is therefore a general principle in case of any conflict within a tribe which, apply to all segments.

Now consider carefully a different situation. If a member of (8) or (9) is engaged in conflict with a member of (10) or (11) then all (8) and (9) “fuse” (unite) or regard themselves as one group. Thus members of (8) and (9) will be pitted against the ‘fused’ group of (10) and (11).

At a yet higher level of consideration let us see what would happen if a member or members of (4) or (5) were engaged in hostilities with the members of (6) or (7). In such a case the whole lineage directly tracing descent from them will be united under them and be ready to fight for them. That is, lineage members of (8), (9), (10) and (11) will become enemies of lineage members of (12), (13), (14), and (15).

If there is a conflict at a still higher level between members of (2) and (3), all segments subsumed under them will become opposed to each other. Finally if clan (1) become opposed to another clan, all members of the clan (1) would fuse into one group for feuding with the opposing clan members.

When the hostility is over, then “fission” (division) or return to original position in the diagram takes place. This process is important not only in India but elsewhere as well most notably in Africa among the Nuer tribe, discussed in detail by Evans-Pritchard in his book, *The Nuer* (1940).

Activity 2

Try to find out from other members of your family or kinship network about a recent dispute. Write a note about this dispute in about two pages describing the various factors involved, the reason for the dispute and who all (i.e. their social status); were the people who managed to resolve the dispute.

Compare your answer with those of other students at your study centre.

16.5.3 Conflict Regulation

The territorial separateness prevents casual conflict occurring with other lineage which are bigger or of a different generation.

The tribal village is an active political unit. We find that the way of regulating the village goes downward in authority:

- village officer, and
- village administration.

The political mechanism functions through its officers who are known by different designations in various tribes. In minor tribes (Birhor, Juang) all these activities are in the hands of one man. Among major tribes (Santal, Bhil) authority is rested on two headmen. One is for secular and the other is for sacred purposes. Very often they have assistants.

Most tribes have a proper 'judicial' machinery to deal with breaches of peace and social offences. There is usually a village council or an assembly of elders. For example, among the Malers, the council of elders of the village is presided by Majhi. The **goriat** acts as the public prosecutor. The Panchayat is called at the instance of the **majhi** by the **goriat**.

Informal control over behaviour is done in the evening meetings. Here criticism is very pungent and effective. Public disapproval is also very effective in controlling or rectifying behaviour. This includes making clear what a member would suffer if he goes beyond the unwritten tribal laws. In short the evening meetings are called to keep those going out of line on line. In this way their problem does not become so severe as to call forth punishment.

16.5.4 Crime and Punishment

However there is no society which does not have criminal cases. These cause a severe disequilibrium in society. This has to be rectified by punishment.

The evidence that is called for, while deciding a criminal case, is:

- **Oath**, taken on a sacred deity, and
- **Ordeal**, undergone by tribal standards.

Among the Malers the **oath** taken is of loss of life. The suspect touches the knife at a sacred centre (holy spot etc.), and swears he will tell the truth or die. Here it is both society's pervasive influence as well as the person's own faith that produces a result. The result is almost always true and just.

In the case of **ordeal** the suspect is innocent if he remains unhurt by grasping a red hot axe or putting his hand in burning oil. Malers have the **saveli** ordeal, in which a red hot axe is to be grasped by the accused. In the **pochai** ordeal ritualistic rice beer is used. Only the innocent can grasp the axe or drink the ritualistic beer and get away unscathed. The guilty suffer burns or die of poisoning.

Oath and ordeal are both threatening alternatives as, they serve as a means of voluntary submission of the accused to law. The fine for the guilty depends upon the seriousness of the crime. The most serious punishment is excommunication. The tribals with beating of drums desecrate the house of the accused. They defile it with rubbish and may burn it down.

This symbolises their dislike and hatred for the crime and the criminal. **Bitlaha** (excommunication) occurs in cases where the crime is so severe that the very person

who has committed it would be intolerable. One of these crimes is that of marrying among the taboo or forbidden category of persons. Again a person who disrespects the tribal deity and attacks it, breaks it, spits on it, is liable to be excommunicated.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space below for your answer.

b) Compare your answers with those at the end of this unit.

1) Describe briefly the process of ‘fission’ and ‘fusion’ in stateless societies. Use about five lines for your answer.

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2) Give the names of three ‘stateless’ tribes of India.

i)
ii)
iii)

3) Describe briefly the method of ‘informal control’

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4) In the saveli ordeal the person is made to fast till death.

Yes No

5) Bitlaha is the name of the Santal God.

Yes No

16.6 POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY

Hunting and ‘food gathering’ societies can be divided into “easy” and “hard” hunters. The easy hunters live almost completely by gathering fruits, vermin, and insects. They live in temporary tenements of branches and leaves. Apart from the dog they have no domestic animals. The hard hunters are more evolved and go for larger animals. They use horses for travelling. Their sense of territory is much more definite. They keep domestic animals and have secondary arts such as spinning, weaving and pottery. In these societies we find that some form of complex centralised authority has emerged. We will examine this aspect now. Diagram 2 shows the levels of development of simple society.

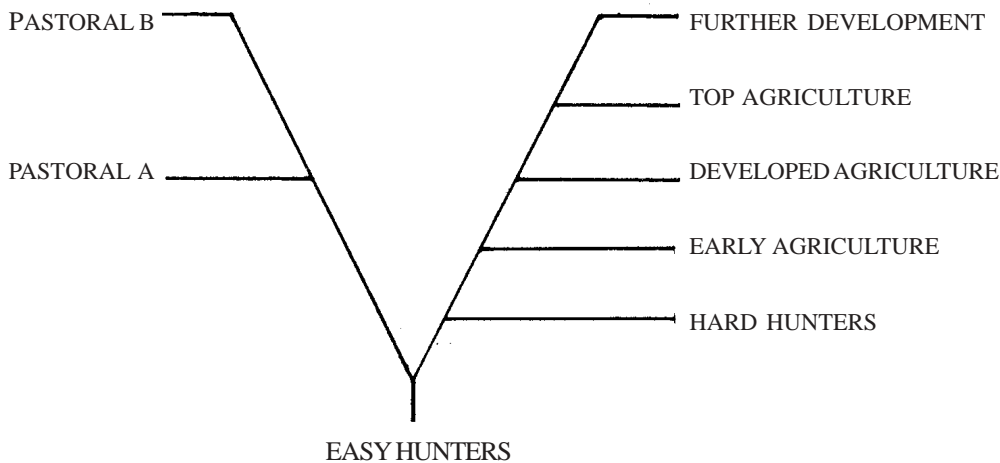


Diagram 2 : Levels of Development

We would like you to note three important facts. These are:

- the anthropologists' account and the information which comes from archaeology are in close agreement.
- there were no successive stages of pastoral and agricultural development. These were simultaneous and in different directions of growth from the social condition of the higher hunters.
- it was only from the highest basis of settled and mixed agriculture that large scale social systems, including state-formation, were able to grow.

That is to say stateless societies, with their hunting and herding can carry the development of the social system to a point. They cannot go beyond this point. Let us now consider briefly what emerges from these developments.

16.6.1 Emergence of Simple Form of Government in Society

First we find that there is the emergence of 'government' in simple form within each community. In the easy hunters there is a very simple form of government but at the top agricultural and pastoral levels settled government is established.

Secondly, there is a clear extension of settled government to embrace wider groupings. In only twenty-five percent of easy hunters does "government" extend beyond the primary community which is the family and kinship group. Almost eighty per cent have proper government with an administrative machinery.

There are several interesting features to note. We find that chieftains usually possess 'authority' within the pattern of custom. This type of government also involves a Council of Elders. All have to observe customary rules. It is called a government by discussion.

The same development is clear in the organisation of law,. In the stateless societies, kinship solves disputes. Some customary procedures of retaliation and retribution such as 'blood feud' the 'customary fight' and so on as found in some African tribes like the Nuer, exist. However in these forms of retribution the guilt of the individual is not involved. There are also forms of compensation where retribution is still visited upon the guilty kin group but punishment takes the form of restitution. This aspect has been discussed earlier.

At the highest pastoral and agricultural levels systems of public justice are established. This is regular with reference to attacks on the social system but sporadic in small-

scale conflicts. In such cases customary procedures can be applied provided they do not become socially disruptive. In more complex societies there is regular public justice.

As a stateless society changes there is a marked movement from tribal concerns and religious offences by corrective punishment towards claim and counter-claims of restitutive punishment. Oath and ordeal are used less and less. The matrilineal principle of descent predominates among the hunters and gatherers. While amongst pastoralists the patrilineal principle of descent predominates.

16.6.2 Political Aspect of Religion in Simple Societies

The function of religion in the simpler societies is two fold: It serves ecological functions, by giving men an interpretation of their relationship with nature. It indicates to them how they should relate with it. Religion also serves social and political functions. It binds men together, and gives meaning and legitimacy to authority. In the higher pastoral and agricultural societies higher forms of authority systems appear. These are the doctrines, rituals and worship.

Though morality is not directly linked with religion, the latter requires regulation of wide areas of behaviour, including various do's and don'ts. In simple societies, religion does not hold the individuals responsible for all their actions.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space below for your answer.

b) Compare your answers with those at the end of this unit.

1) What are the stages of stateless societies?

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2) Easy hunters hunt big animals.

Yes

No

3) What functions does religion serve in stateless societies?

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16.7 LET US SUM UP

We have seen that stateless societies are those which lack centralised power. There is **hardly any administrative machinery** in them. There are no judicial institutions. Sharp cleavages of wealth, rank and status are missing. These societies include the Nuer and Tallensi, in Africa. They also cover Bhils, Oraons and Santals in India.

In such societies without government, what gives them law and order? We have considered this in the preceding sections. However it is the segmentary lineage system which controls political relations between different territorial segments. Kinship in these societies is very significant in political organisation. This is due to the link between territorial grouping and lineage grouping.

In such societies political office carries no economic privileges. Wealth can confer status and help in acquiring political leadership.

This is because wealth itself accrues from superior status in stateless societies. It was previously held that stateless societies came under the control of those with a state. They were conquered in war and acquired a state. This theory has been questioned and is generally not accepted now. Further there is no association, class, or segment which dominates. It does not control the political system any more than another group. Force when used is met with opposing force. Again the important fact is coexistence: if one segment defeats another it does not try to establish political control over it. Since there is no administrative support, it cannot do so. There is no person or group with absolute authority. Thus stability is maintained by equilibrium at every point of separation.

More than this, unity and cohesion come in these societies through common symbols. These include myths, dogmas, persons, sacred places and so on. These are regarded as final values in themselves.

Thus we can say that stateless societies have an internal cohesion system that is strong and effective. They are 'stateless' but they do not miss out any component that creates efficiency. These societies are, in fact, fully formed political units, and must be treated as such.

16.8 KEY WORDS

- Clan** : A kin group with a common ancestor
- Endogamy** : A social practice that prescribes marriage within a specific group
- Exogamy** : A social practice that prescribes marriage outside a specific group
- Kinship system** : A system of social ties based on matrimonial (i.e. affinal ties) and blood ties. (i.e. consanguinal ties)
- Lineage** : A segment of clan based on ancestral heritage in one line, either father's or mother's
- Matriarchal** : A social system based on female domination and authority
- Matrilineal** : A social system where descent is traced through the mother
- Patriarchal** : A social system based on male domination and male authority
- Patrilineal** : A social system where descent is traced through the father
- Sanction** : Certain constraints prescribed by the society.

16.9 FURTHER READINGS

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1940. *The Nuer*: Oxford University Press: Oxford. (Chapter IV).

Gluckman, Max. 1965. *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*. Basil Blackwell: Oxford. (Chapters 3 and 4).

Vidyarthi, L.P. and Rai, B.K., 1985. *The Tribal Culture of India (2nd Ed.)*. Concept: Delhi. (Chapter 2, pp. 25 and Chapter 5, pp. 195-235).

16.10 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) A stateless society has no rigid boundary. It has only oral traditions. Very often a single person is the chief of the entire tribe. There is no rigid boundary and economically these societies are primitive.
- 2) Yes
- 3) No
- 4)
 - i) Archaeological record
 - ii) Literature produced by missionaries, travellers and administrators
 - iii) Monographs written by anthropologists

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Stateless societies comprising a single ancestor divide or create fission in the second or third generation for various purposes. They behave as opposed units. However when under threat from other stateless societies they 'fuse' or join their forces.
- 2)
 - i) Santal
 - ii) Oraon
 - iii) Bhil
- 3) Informal control is exercised during the evening meetings. The criticism is very pungent and effective. Public disapproval is another such method for informal control.
- 4) No
- 5) No

Check Your Progress 3

- 1)
 - a) Early Agriculture
 - b) Developed Agriculture
 - c) Top Agriculture
- 2) No
- 3) Religion serves an ecological purpose. It also serves a social function and binds people together.





UNIT 17 STATE IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Traditional Societies as Political Systems
- 17.3 The Nature and Scope of Political Authority
 - 17.3.1 The Central Authority
 - 17.3.2 Scope of Political Authority
 - 17.3.2.1 Patrimonial Authority
 - 17.3.2.2 Delegation and Distribution of Authority
 - 17.3.2.3 Delegation of Authority as the Balance of Forces
- 17.4 The Basis of Legitimacy of Political Authority
 - 17.4.1 Legitimacy in Primary States
 - 17.4.2 Legitimacy in Conquest-type or ‘Secondary States’
 - 17.4.3 Legitimacy Derived from Myths
 - 17.4.4 Grounds on which People Accept Authority
- 17.5 Institutions to Prevent Abuse of Authority
- 17.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.7 Key Words
- 17.8 Further Readings
- 17.9 Model Answers to Check Your Progress

17.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between traditional and modern societies in terms of their politics;
- Discuss the nature and scope of centralised authority;
- Describe the grounds on which authority is legitimised; and
- List the institutions which prevent a ruler from abusing his powers.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit is concerned with centralised authority in societies which lie between the two poles of stateless societies and modern states with government and executive. These societies can be called traditional or pre-modern insofar as they lack developed forms of political institutions which are mostly found in modern nation states. In traditional or pre-modern societies, we find distinct and permanent political structures which are clearly dominated by religion and to a lesser extent by kinship.

After a brief description of various types of traditional societies, the unit discusses the nature and scope of political authority in such states. We, then, look into the bases upon which this authority rests and finally we also discuss restraints which are usually exercised upon the political authority.

17.2 TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES AS POLITICAL SYSTEMS

In contrast to modern democratic and totalitarian states on the one hand, and the primitive stateless societies on the other, we have the whole range of pre-modern societies with political traditions which have shaped the political thought and issues of modern times. By acquiring an understanding of these traditions it is possible to follow the complex political institutions of modern states, which are discussed in Unit 18 of this Block.

17.3 THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

Taking the wide range of societies, as we have done within the category of traditional/pre-modern, it is natural that the nature and scope of political authority in them will vary to a large extent. The fact of centralisation of political authority is always a matter of degree. For example, clan-lineage based polities may have only a symbolic tribal chief, while politically centralised principalities and states with political heads may exist independent of each other, or, form part of a feudal systems.

17.3.1 The Central Authority

Let us focus on the nature of the political authority, considered to be central.

i) Chief Authority as a Titular Head

By acknowledging a more centralised concentration of power to a chief, a tribal group may achieve greater productivity without changing its technology. It may still maintain its segmentary social structure and acquire a political head to express the group's unity and identity. Surajit Sinha (1987: xi), an anthropologist, holds that, 'the chiefdom is a development of the tribal system to a higher level of integration.' In terms of secular power, a chief may or may not function as an executive head of state. He may be only a symbol, representing the entire group. Political implications of even a titular or symbolic authority are quite significant.

Such a ruler is often invested with a high degree of deference and is much feared by his people. He is considered almost divine. Politically speaking, a symbolic head of state is a potential source of becoming an authority with secular power. For example, among the Shilluk of the Upper Nile, Evans-Pritchard (1962) observed, the Shilluk king reigned but did not govern. In other words, he was only a titular head. Later, under the impact of British rule, this institution of a symbolic head turned into a secular authority, making political decisions.

ii) Secular Authority Endowed with Sacredness

Just as we noted the potential of a symbolic head being invested with real political authority, the secular authority of a king is also generally endowed with 'an aura of sacredness'. Let us take the Indian Rajahs. In Surajit Sinha's (1987: xv-xvi) words: 'The Rajas not only ruled over their kingdoms on behalf of the presiding deities of their lineages, they imbibed in their social being the sacredness of the Deity'. Almost all over the world, most monarchies reflect this tendency. Myths of divine origin of ruling families justify the ruler's claim to exercise political authority.

iii) Necessity of Acquiring a King

The secular authority is ceremonially ritualised in order to raise its status above the ordinary people. In some cases, the need to acquire a king of the appropriate status is so strong that persons of royal origin are stolen and reared to become rulers. Mahapatra (1987: 1-50) has shown that small-scale polities in ex-princely states of Orissa felt so insecure in the face of pressures from larger kingdoms that they were compelled to sponsor kingship. According to a legend, in 1200 A.D., Jyotibhanj of the Bhanja dynasty, reigning over Khijjings mandala, was stolen from his palace by the Bhuiyan tribals of Keonjhar in Orissa. This shows that they needed to acquire the necessary aura of sacredness in their ruler. Successors of such kings, then, had to enact the myth of origin through rituals and ceremonies.

iv) Territory and Demography in Relation to the Range of Political Authority

Both the territory and people are basic components of the nature of political authority. The area, in which the residents acknowledge the power of a king, defines the range of his political authority. The territorial aspect of a chief's power demarcates the geographical limits of his administrative and judicial measures. Except the political organisation in stateless societies, all other polities are bound by a territorial reference.

In India, the forces of conquest and co-operation always mediated through the principle of territory. The separate units within the state always tried to lay claims to a tiny piece of territory in order to break away from the control of a paramount ruler.

Demography, or, the numerical size of a population, and not the special size, generally introduces elements of complexity in a polity. However, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940: 7) warn us not to confuse size of population with density of population. Writing about two African tribes, they observe: 'It might be supposed that the dense permanent settlements of the Tallensi would necessarily lead to the development of a centralised form of government, whereas the wide dispersion of shifting villages among the Bemba would be incompatible with centralised rule. The reverse is actually the case.'

v) Economy and Centralisation of a Polity

Research findings on tribal politics and state systems in India point to an important link between the level of surplus growth and development of a centralised polity. Amalendu Guha (1987: 147-76) writes: '...in India, it was the use of the cattle-driven plough that ensured a relatively large surplus and therefore, also a higher form of political organisation. Larger the surplus, more developed was the state'.

On the other hand, research in Africa show that subsistence economy in most parts of the country provided little scope for surplus growth. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940: 8) report: "Distinctions of rank, status or occupation operate independently of differences of wealth". In such societies, the political authority has economic rights to tax, tribute and labour. In fact, through economic privileges the centralised authority is able to maintain the political system.

Activity 1

Visit a local governing body, such as, the Municipal, Civil, Electrical, or a Panchayat office (if you are in a village). Discuss the various aspects of administration with one or two officers working there and write a report of a page on "Political / Civil Authority and its Structure in My Area". Discuss it with other learners at your study centre.

17.3.2 Scope of Political Authority

The extent, to which a ruler exercises his authority over his people, defines the scope of his political power. It is actually the scope rather than range of power that makes a polity more or less centralised.

Sometimes, the head of state command only respect and recognition of his subject. In other cases, the ruler may also demand tribute or ritual acceptance of his authority from subsidiary vassals. In feudatory states of Orissa in India, the territory controlled by the king was surrounded by segmentary clan-lineage based units. These units acted as vassals and participated in the main rituals and ceremonies of the central kingdom. But besides this token acceptance of centralised authority, the extent of the political authority power exercised on them was almost nil.

In order to find the scope of a central authority, it is necessary to find what aspects of the people's lives are controlled by the political power. If the individuals are free to resort to force or violence, it is a clear indication of the minimal scope of the central authority. On the other hand, a political head, if he is powerful enough, will not allow the use of force. In other words, people cannot take the course of law in their own hands.

Among the Shilluks of the Upper Nile, the king's powers are minimal, as is clear from the fact that blood feud occurs commonly among them and the king has no say in its operations. On the other hand, in most feudal type of politics, homicide is considered a punishable offence by the state.

17.3.2.1 Patrimonial Authority

Scope of a centralised authority can also be discussed in terms of it being diffuse or specific. In many polities, the ruler's authority is quite diffuse, covering almost all aspects of his subject's lives. Max Weber (1964) has described this form of authority as patrimonial, which means that the scope of this kind of authority is not clearly specified, rather it subsumes all kinds of protective measures and cares of his people by the ruler. The ruler considers his subjects as his children and protects them. Mahapatra (1987: 25) remarks: 'The pata-rani or senior most queen was held in the highest affection and solicitousness by the tribal people as their 'mother' and she looked upon the tribesmen as her children'. Sometimes, even in modern context, vestiges of these expectations are found on the part of both the ruler and the ruled.

17.3.2.2 Delegation and Distribution of Authority

In polities with wider scope of authority of the ruler, we also notice the mechanism of delegation of authority. The ruler may seem to possess absolute power, but he distributes it among others. This system gives us a pyramidal formation of authority, i.e. the king on the top and successive grades of subordinate officials below. Each person in the official hierarchy functions under the authority above him. We may mention here the Meiteis of Manipur state, during the first phase of state formation in 18th century R.K. Saha (1987: 214-41) says: Under the kingship the services became institutionalised under distinct categories, **famdun** (prestigious posts), **lalup** (non-menial service) and **loipot** (menial service). We can clearly see the gradation of function, performed by the officials. This delegation of power among the state functionaries takes two forms:

a) Delegation of Authority among the Relatives of the Ruler

Quite often, the ruler selects men from among his kinsmen for higher posts. To take again the example of the Meitei of Manipur State. R.K. Saha (1987: 272) reports that the office bearers were recruited at all the three levels of prestigious posts from the genealogically senior most persons. We may say that in such political systems, governing becomes a kind of family affair. From Africa, we can give the example of some Southern Bantu states, such as the Swazi, which follow this pattern (see Kuper 1947).

b) **Delegation of Authority among the Loyal Subjects**

In many states, relatives of the ruler are considered as rivals and therefore not trustworthy. They cannot be invited to share the ruler’s authority, lest they conspire and usurp all of it. The distribution of power is then among the trusted and loyal friends. Great value is placed on one’s personal loyalty to the ruler. The loyalty is rewarded by the king in the form of a share in his authority. The fact that power is not shared with kinsmen but with loyalists, does not preclude the possibilities of subordinate chief becoming too powerful and eventually deposing the ruler himself.

17.3.2.3 Delegation of Authority as the Balance of Forces

The power of the central authority is reinforced by the institutions of hereditary succession to kingship, distribution of power to kinsmen, and supernatural sanctions of king’s status. However, other institutions, such as king’s council, royal priest, queen mother’s courts, impose checks on the king.

Once the power is distributed between the central authority and regional chiefs, the balance mechanism begins to operate. If a ruler becomes autocratic in his ways, subordinate chiefs may secede. On the other hand, if a subordinate chief becomes too powerful the king may decide to remove him or suppress his power with the help of other subordinate chiefs. In trying to keep all his vassals very much under his control a paramount ruler may also set one against the other. Thus, we can see that delegation of power to regional chiefs is not simply an administrative mechanism. It is also concerned with the representation of various groups and interests in the machinery of government. Or, in other words, we can say that there is always a balance between authority and responsibility. Though abuse of power is noticeable in the forms of constitutional arrangements in practice, in every political system the balance of forces is recognised and instituted in theory. So also in traditional societies, each centralised authority is subject to these forces of balancing mechanism which characterise its nature and scope.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) How do we define the scope of political authority? Use two lines for your answer.

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2) Among whom does a king delegate his powers? Use two lines for your answer.

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17.4 THE BASIS OF LEGITIMACY OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

In discussing the question of the basis of political authority, we study the process of state formation to see if the state developed as an **endogenous** growth or came into existence as a result of an interaction with **exogenous** state systems. This kind of inquiry provides us with a historical dimension. Ethnographic data at our disposal is full of both types of state formations.

States endogenously come into being as a result of evolutionary process from within, without outside influences. These are sometimes also called 'primary states'. Exogenous state systems are built by conquests. Or, their particular formations are affected by systems from earlier periods or from outside their own territories.

As mentioned earlier, some tribal groups in Orissa, lacking the mechanisms of a centralised authority, took the extreme step of stealing not the idea of kingship but the king himself. Southall (1956) has described how, among the Alur people of Western Uganda, centralised political authority was instituted by peaceful means among uncentralised tribals.

17.4.1 Legitimacy in Primary States

A state based on endogenous evolutionary process reflects a kind of homogeneity in society which is found to be lacking in states of conquest type. The process of state formation among the Meitei of Manipur state, described by R.K. Saha (1987), seems to be the result of inter-clan feuds within the tribal groups in Manipur valley. This case can be given as an example of a primary state. The basis of legitimacy of power in a primary state is rooted in its indigenous traditions. Political relations in such a society are perceived in terms of common structural principle. It may be unilineal kinship, or, it may be military and political groups of states, coming together yet remaining independent in internal affairs.

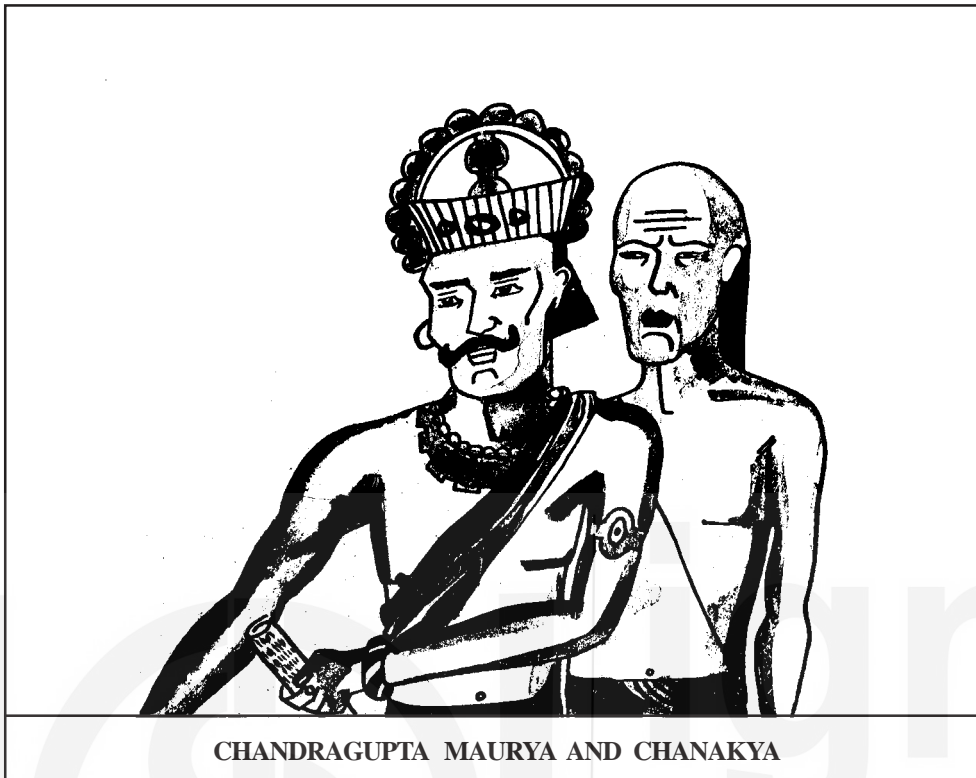
17.4.2 Legitimacy in Conquest Type or 'Secondary States'

The conquest type, also known as 'secondary state', emerges after smaller political units are conquered by more powerful people. The conquest may be in the form of an actual warfare. When the political institutions of neighbouring states influence the process of state formation in an area, even without an actual conquest, a secondary state is born.

Invariably, non-indigenous political institutions are superimposed on conquered groups. In some cases, super imposition of foreign political traditions is quite superficial, that is, the values and ideas behind it are not fully accepted by the conquered people. Subsidiary principalities are therefore able to maintain older polities along with the imposed political order.

However, in most cases, kinship-based community relationships of the peasant groups (e.g. in Indian villages) come in sharp contrast to the feudal type political relations, which are associated with the foreign government. In such a situation, the centralised authority has only the legitimate power to collect taxes and carry out public works. This then, is, the scene of subordinate units trying to break away at the first possible opportunity. Any student of Indian history can see this process at work in the development of political unity in India. Attempts to unite India as a political unit were made from time to time by the Hindu empires, the Muslim dynasties and also by the British colonial powers. During the entire span of Indian history, the control

authority was constantly challenged by smaller political entities. In fact, Wittfogel (1957: 98) has shown that a political authority in Asiatic societies has to be coupled with religious sanction in order to gain legitimacy. A king, advised by a priest (purohit) was the Indian ideal of legitimate political authority.



State in Traditional Societies

Then, there is also the element of two levels of political organisation and process. At the first level, lacking a basic political integration, the central authority acts, as a tax collecting and public works body. At the second level, the unity of subsidiary states is maintained according to the obligations of local community membership. In the case of India, the caste system and religion remained as constant factors of unity of the society, no matter how many types of polities were superimposed on its people. Generally, even the people are conscious of the opposition and conflict between two levels. These factors obviously influence the grounds on which people accept the claims of political powers over their lives.

17.4.3 Legitimacy Derived from Myths

All political systems have stories about their origin. Such myths basically reflect the attitudes and values of the society. Stories about the genesis of the system of political authority can be considered as its 'mythical charter'.

Generally, myths show the divine origin of the ruling line. The effect of such myth is to legitimise the existing political authority. In a closed system of stratification, such as the caste system, the political role of priests required religious validation. In India, the law books were created by the priestly class and law in India has always maintained a religious base.

Not only this, as Surajit Sinha (1987 : xi) observes, the ideology of caste system, more than any other feature of Indian society, provided a broad frame of state formation in the tribal regions. It can be said that in India and perhaps so also in Byzantium, the Inca Empire and ancient Egypt, the political role the priestly class has shaped political thought and religion.

17.4.4 Grounds on which People Accept Authority

Max Weber (1964) speaks of three bases upon which the authority can be accepted by people. According to him, there are three types of authority: i) traditional, ii) charismatic and iii) rational-legal. We find that in most of pre-modern political systems the authority is accepted on traditional grounds. When people accept a ruler because of his personal qualities of leadership and they are attracted to him because of his personal charm, he may be described as having charismatic authority. Of course, where such authority becomes institutionalised, it becomes an integral part of traditional authority.

The last type of authority, which Weber called rational legal, is based on the assumption that people recognise a need of being governed and submitting to a rule of law. Many myths and proverbs, in pre-literate societies, reflect this attitude of faith in orderly life. In literate societies, usefulness of a government and its machinery' is discussed at length in their law books. Material components of political relations are mostly expressed by people in terms of their utilitarian and practical functions.

17.5 INSTITUTIONS TO PREVENT ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

Maintenance of kingship rests on a constant adherence to its constitutional principles. A king's powers may appear to be absolute but, in practice, their various components function through different offices. The co-operation of all these parts enables the king to govern his people. Thus, it is necessary to recognise that it is not easy for a ruler to disregard certain social institutions which check and control the centralised authority. This does not mean that there are no despots. In fact, history of many political systems is full of such figures. In that sense, no constitution can really prevent a ruler from becoming an oppressor. All the same, tendencies towards despotism are checked by well-recognised mechanisms in most traditional societies. Some of them are given below:

- i) The transmission of power from one to the other ruler is either by inheritance according to patrilineal or matrilineal principles or election/ popular choice. Both ascribed and achieved criteria may be combined when the subject selects a particular son of the king as his successor. On the other hand, not following the rules of proper behaviour may have quite tragic consequences.

J.B. Bhattacharjee (1987: 190) mentions in his article on Dimasa State Formation in Cachar that Govindachandranarayan (1813-30) became unpopular because he married the widow of his elder brother. This was allowed by neither Hindu nor Dimasa rule in Cachar. That is why the ruler was deposed and when the British reinstated him, he was assassinated in 1830 and the Dimasa rule came to an end in Cachar.

- ii) Ceremonies of oath-taking and exhortations by the councillors to the new king also act as guide-lines for proper conduct on the part of the new ruler. For example, Busia (1951) describes how the Ashanti chief was exhorted by his councillors at the time of his accession. In tribal societies, it is common for councillors to reprimand the ruler and even fine him. Interestingly enough, in pre-colonial Jaintia state in north-east India, 'the role of a raja was much despised in the eyes of the people. The office of the raja was viewed with such disdain as a lowly office which no respectable person would occupy' (Pakem 1987: 287).

- iii) Lastly, the subject had the right to appeal against the subordinate officials. Many a Muslim rulers have been known to keep a bell at the gates of their palaces for any one to ring in order to get justice from the king.

Activity 2

Do you know a folk tale where a despotic ruler was brought to his senses by the people whom he ruled. If so, write down the story and its analysis and share it with other students at your study centre. Focus on the political power aspect of the story.

Having looked at mechanisms through which rulers were to be prevented from abusing their powers, we need also to consider what happens when a ruler does not pay attention to these social institutions and abuses his authority. Those who know the story of Shaka, the Zulu ruler in South Africa, and his tyrannical rule, would also know how popular disapproval of his rule by the people prompted his brother to assassinate Shaka. To escape a tyrannical political authority, the following set of institutions can be activated:

- i) The people may decide to migrate to another area, outside the jurisdiction of the existing ruler.
- ii) The paramount ruler may depose his subordinate who has abused the power delegated to him.
- iii) The king may be made to feel scared of sorcery or assassination by disgruntled people.
- iv) Lastly, there may be a revolt against the intolerable government of a despot. Such a revolt is generally in the form of a rebellion, in which the tyrant is replaced by a just ruler. As no change is brought in the basic values of the society, the revolt does not amount to revolution. It is simply reinstatement of a lawful authority.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Define the primary and secondary state. Use three lines for your answer.

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- 2) Distinguish, in two lines, between rebellion and revolution.

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17.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed main aspects of political authority in traditional or pre-modern societies. We looked at symbolic and secular aspects of centralised authority and described its range and scope in terms of territory, demography and economy. Then we discussed the grounds on which authority is accepted and finally listed those institutions which restrain and prevent the political authority from abusing its powers.

Viewed as historical forms of modern political institutions, these dimensions of state in traditional societies throw light on the political processes in modern context. Today,

our life is dominated by politicisation of social issues and in order to fully understand the implications of this process, this unit will provide us with some categories to systematise our information.

17.7 KEY WORDS

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Blood feud | : Hostility between two tribes/lineages with murderous assaults in revenge for previous homicide |
| Clan | : Group of people recognising common ancestry |
| Demography | : Vital statistics, showing numerical condition of communities |
| Despot | : Absolute ruler, tyrant, oppressor |
| Feudal | : Polity based on relations of vassal and superior arising from holding of lands in feud. |
| Homicide | : Killing of a human being |
| Kingship | : The institution of sovereign ruler |
| Legitimacy | : Lawfulness |
| Lineage | : Group of people with identifiable ancestors of independent state |
| Segmentary Social Structure | : Social formation of many parts form a single unit |
| Titular Head | : Holder of office without corresponding function |
| Vassals | : Holder of land by feudal tenure |

17.8 FURTHER READINGS

Beattie, J. 1964, *Other Cultures: Aims and Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology*. Cohen and West: London (Ch. 9, pp. 139-64)

Bottomore, T.B. 1972. *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature* Vintage Books: New York (Ch. 9 pp. 151-67).

Mair, L. 1985. *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. (Second Edition and Impression) Oxford University Press: New Delhi. (Chs. 7 and 8, pp. 109-138)

17.9 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The scope of political authority is defined by the extent to which it exercises control over the lives of people.
- 2) A king delegates his powers among either his kinsmen or loyal subjects.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) A primary state evolves from within, without outside influences. A secondary state is built by conquests or is affected by political systems from outside.
- 2) In a rebellion, a tyrant ruler or authority is replaced by instituting a just and lawful authority while in a revolution, basic values of a society are challenged and sought to be changed.

UNIT 18 STATE IN MODERN SOCIETIES

Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Modern Societies
- 18.3 Political System in Modern Societies
- 18.4 Elements of a Political System
 - 18.4.1 Ideology
 - 18.4.2 Structure and Oligarchy
- 18.5 Function of the Political System
 - 18.5.1 Political Socialisation and Recruitment
 - 18.5.2 Interest Articulation
 - 18.5.2.1 Institutional Interest Groups
 - 18.5.2.2 Associational Interest Groups
 - 18.5.2.3 Non-associational Interest Groups
 - 18.5.2.4 Anomic Interest Groups
 - 18.5.3 Interest Aggregation
 - 18.5.4 Political Communication
 - 18.5.5 Government Functions
- 18.6 Political Processes
- 18.7 Basis of Legitimacy
 - 18.7.1 Traditional and Charismatic Authority
 - 18.7.2 Legal Rational Authority
 - 18.7.3 Legitimacy of Modern Political System
- 18.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.9 Key Words
- 18.10 Further Readings
- 18.11 Model Answers to Check Your Progress

18.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit introduces you to the political processes of modern society and thereby aims to:

- describe a modern society;
- explain political modernisation;
- discuss the political systems of modern society; and
- analyse the major components of a political system.

18.1 INTRODUCTION

The political system of a modern society is very complex one. A lucid description of this system, indeed, requires coverage on a wide range of items pertaining to society and polity. Here the unit describes a modern society and political system in society. A political system incorporates a few important elements. While explaining these elements of a political system the unit highlights the ideology, the structure and function, the political processes and the basis of legitimacy of a political system. In discussing the structure of a political system the unit explains various forms of the same, viz. traditional oligarchies, totalitarian oligarchies, modernising oligarchies, tutelary democracies, and political democracies. The major area of discussion on the function of the political system has been that of political socialisation and recruitment, interest articulation (institutional interest groups, associational interest groups, non-association interest groups, anomic interest groups), interest aggregation, political communication and the function of the government. The unit also covers traditional authority, charismatic authority, legal rational authority and the legitimacy of modern political systems. The unit, lastly, summarises the economic and social indicators of modernisation and the elements of political system.

18.2 MODERN SOCIETIES

In this section we intend to familiarise you with the political system and political process in modern societies. A modern society may be defined as one with a comparatively high per capita income, high rate of literacy, urbanisation and industrialisation, considerable geographical and social mobility, extensive and penetrative mass-communication media and wide-spread participation of the citizens in the social and political processes. Some scholars have included a few more items to measure the level of modernisation. They are quality of life index, per capita availability of doctors and hospital beds, road length, number of vehicles, consumption of electricity etc.

Box 18.01

A developed Country like America uses about 14,000 K whr per capita of electricity which is about 30 times more than the Indian average of 415 K whr per capita. America also produces eight times more electricity i.e. 3235 billion kilowatt hours; than India for a population that is about one-fourth of India's. (TOI, Aug. 16, 2003)

Based on the position which a country has achieved on the above items, one can determine the extent of modernisation of the country. Using the same indices, one can also prepare a ranked list of countries on the modern scale and tell whether one country, for example, India, is more or less modern than another country, for instance, Bangladesh.

The idea of modernisation has a profound appeal in the developing countries of the world. Even traditional societies, which are against modernisation, for example some of the Arab countries, have introduced elements of modernisation in different areas. They have modernised their armies and started industrialisation in a big way. Even in tribal societies, modern items of consumption and modern technologies of agriculture have become popular. An important point to remember in the context of modernisation is that one cannot hold up modernisation in one sector for a long time when other sectors are getting modernised, except at a great strain to the social system. For example, with the modernisation of Indian economy the traditional joint

family system has broken down in many parts of the country. Again, when modernisation takes place in a society, its political set-up also is bound to get modernised. For example, as an impact of modernisation popular movement began in Nepal for the decentralisation of power. This movement challenged the traditional hereditary authority of the King of Nepal. It however, ended with the formation of Rastriya Panchayat, which handed over considerable power to the hand of peoples representatives. As a matter of fact, the process of modernisation has influenced political development in all societies. The state has been exposed to the influence of modernisation and has found it a useful tool for effective transaction of business at both internal and external levels.

18.3 POLITICAL SYSTEM IN MODERN SOCIETIES

The conventional approach to the study of politics was through the “State”. Politics in this sense is a set of activities centering in the state. According to Max Weber, a state is a human community which successfully claims, within a given territory, the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force. Hence politics means the striving to share power or to influence the distribution of power either among states or among groups within a state. However, this definition cannot adequately define political process in societies which are apparently stateless or where a regime capturing power through revolutionary means or a **coup d’etat** is still struggling for obtaining legitimacy for its action and position. Political writers, therefore, prefer to use the term “political system” instead of the term “state” to discuss the various agencies and their relationships that were earlier studied under the blanket term politics. A political system, in this sense, may be defined as a sub-system of the general social system. Unlike other sub-systems in society, the political sub-system is characterised by the monopoly of coercive power over citizens and organisations. The political system can therefore force a citizen to behave in the general good. In the case of such force the question some times arises whether this is legitimate or not. The possession of coercive power by an individual or group over the entire societies, the monopoly of power held by the state is in dispute and voluntary organisation pose a challenge to the arbitrary and monopolistic use of power by the state.

A political system in this sense is a system with structures, functions and transactions, which are directed towards the control of individuals and groups within an identifiable and independent social system. It also covers the transactions between different political systems.

A modern political system is characterised by a high degree of differentiation, explicitness and functional specificity of governmental and non-governmental structures. In a modern political system each of these sub-systems plays its assigned role and acts as a mutually regulative mechanism. Since modernisation in different societies shows different levels of attainment, this is reflected in the political development of these societies also.

We have discussed several features of a modern society and the features of the political system of a modern society. We hope you have read and understood this section on the modern society and political system. You will know the level of your understanding by doing the exercises given below.

Activity 1

Have you ever visited the Parliament when it is in session or watched the proceedings on T.V. If so, write a page on “Indian Democracy”. Compare your answer with those of other students at your study centre. You may also discuss this topic with your Academic Counsellor.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What is meant by a modern society? Use about five lines for your answer.

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2) What is meant by a political system? Use about five lines for your answer.

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3) A modern political system is characterised by a high degree of differentiation. Yes No

4) The political system is not a sub-system of the society. Yes No.

18.4 ELEMENTS OF A POLITICAL SYSTEM

The political system of modern society can be best described in terms of (1) Ideology, (2) Structure, (3) Function, (4) Process and (5) Basis of Legitimacy.

18.4.1 Ideology

Ideology may be defined as an integrated system of beliefs and symbols which have an appeal to the followers beyond their rational and objective meaning. It has the power to sway the sentiments of the followers. It is accepted as an article of faith by the followers. A political system in general and political parties within that system, in particular may have their own ideologies which will define to the members the nation's or parties' goals and means. By implication, the followers not only accept the goals without question, but become committed to the means and to adopt them' with all the risks involved. The degree of internalisation of an ideology and of its goals and means, are dependent on political socialisation of individual and the party's capacity for disciplining its members. That is to say that the degree to which an ideology is understood differs from individual to individual. The degree to which it is absorbed depends on political exposure of the party members and the extent to which the party considers it important.

Ideology may be based on political, economic or religious elements. Sometimes, ethnic and cultural elements also may provide the necessary basis for ideology. Democracy is a political ideology, communism is an economic ideology and theocracy is a religious ideology. However, none of them can be considered as falling within a single realm alone. Since politics, economics and religion overlap in many areas, especially in the developing societies where the relationship is highly diffuse, a political ideology will have economic and religious overtones. An ideology like democracy

will call for the welfare of all citizens (an economic ideology). In a multi-religious society, it will also call for secularism. Communism is the best example of an ideology which extends to political and other fields. Communism is against religion and, at least in the early stages, calls for a totalitarian social structure. However, communism as an ideology in its purest form, as visualised by Karl Marx, has not been found in practice, anywhere in the world.

A characteristic feature of modern political process is the entry of non-political issues and factors into the political arena in a big way. Thus ethnic, religious and regional considerations have begun to weigh heavily in the ideology of many political parties in the world including India. Religious fundamentalism also has formed a fertile soil 'in many countries'. Another tendency for political parties is to follow extremist methods in most cases terrorism, to achieve their goals. These are becoming more and more the pattern in political process in many of the countries of the world.

The implication of the rise of fundamentalism as a political ideology and terrorism as a means to achieve goals is the potential for destruction of the socio-political basis of the state and unpredictability in the pattern of political modernisation. In India for example, both religious fundamentalism and ethnic and linguistic movements for example the developments in Punjab, Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur and in North Bengal, Karnataka and many parts of Assam which are often backed by terrorism, has posed a serious threat to its democratic structure. Political elites belonging to dominant ethnic groups in ethnically pluralistic societies are finding ethnicism as a convenient ideology for achieving their political ambitions.

18.4.2 Structure and Oligarchy

Another component of a political system is its structure. The political structure of society at any point of time will be influenced by prevailing dominant ideology, i.e., the ideology of the rulers or ruling party. In turn, this will be influenced by the social structure, values and stage of development of a society. Actually structure and values reinforce each other and influence development. Traditional social structure and authoritarian values go together while modern social structure and democratic values go hand in hand. Of course, permutations are possible and do exist in some societies but they are exceptions. In many cases social structure and values have acted as constraints to development. At least they have slowed down the tempo of development. And dampened modernising efforts in some countries. From the political point of view, they have moulded the political cultures of societies and the orientation of their political elites. These, in turn, have influenced the political system of societies. It should be kept in mind that when we speak of oligarchies no time bar is evident. An oligarchy comprising a small power group may go on indefinitely.

Depending upon the political culture and orientations of political elites, political structures have been divided into the following categories.

- i) Traditional Oligarchies
- ii) Totalitarian Oligarchies
- iii) Modernising Oligarchies
- iv) Tutelary Democracies
- v) Political Democracies.

i) Traditional Oligarchies

This is usually monarchic and dynastic in form and is based on custom rather than any constitution. The ruling elite and the bureaucracy are recruited on the basis of

kinship or status. The goal of the ruler is stability and maintenance of the system. In its own interest it may launch schemes of modernisation - like modernisation of the army and bureaucracy and may even launch welfare programmes, but the primary aim continues to be the perpetuation of the dynastic rule.

ii) **Totalitarian Oligarchies**

Here, there is a total penetration of the society by the polity. There is a high degree of concentration of power in the hands of the ruling elite and a high tempo of social mobilisation. The Chinese regime is a good example of this type of oligarchy.

iii) **Modernising Oligarchies**

These are characterised by the concentration of political functions in a ruling clique and in the bureaucracy. There is an absence of competitive political parties. Associations and interest groups exist with limited activity. The media are controlled by the government. Generally the ruling elite is committed to development and modernisation. Some of the Latin American states are examples of modernising oligarchies.

iv) **Tutelary Democracies**

The dominant characteristic of this system is that it has accepted the formal norms of democracy, viz., universal suffrage, freedom of association and speech and the structural forms of democracy. But there is a concentration of power in the executive and the bureaucracy. The legislature tends to be relatively powerless and the judiciary is not always free from interference. The executive wants to establish democracy only piecemeal. The assumption is that people are not ripe for the democratic process, otherwise the political system may go out of gear and there will be instability. Until the end of 1988 Pakistan was the best example of this system.

v) **Political Democracies**

These are systems which function with autonomous executives, legislatures and judiciary. Political parties and the media are free and competitive. There are autonomous interest groups and pressure groups. Examples are U.S.A. and U.K. some of the developing countries such as India, are examples of political systems which are moving in that direction.

As stated earlier, political structures in the five political systems will differ considerably. It is only in political democracies that the three organs of the state, the executive, the legislature and judiciary, have autonomy and political parties and the media are relatively free and competitive. In the majority of cases, there will be a written constitution which defines the powers and duties of these bodies. In all other political systems, either there is no autonomy for these bodies, or when autonomy exists, it is limited. The non-government structures also will have to fall in line with the wish of the rulers.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Describe briefly the major elements of a political system. Use about five lines for your answer.

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.....
.....
.....

- 2) Name the major categories of political structures:
- a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)
- 3) In democracy the executive, legislature and the judiciary are autonomous. Yes No
- 4) In traditional oligarchies the bureaucrats are selected on merit. Yes No
- 5) India, is an example of tutelary democracy. Yes No

18.5 FUNCTION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

A political system usually performs some well defined functions. The major functions of a political system may be categorised into two broad headings: The input functions and the output functions.

Input functions:

- i) Political Socialisation and recruitment
- ii) Interest articulation
- iii) Interest aggregation
- iv) Political communication

Output functions:

- v) Rule making
- vi) Rule application
- vii) rule adjudication

Actually, the first set of (input) functions is reflected in the non-governmental sub-systems and the second set of (output) functions is reflected in the government sub-systems.

18.5.1 Political Socialisation and Recruitment

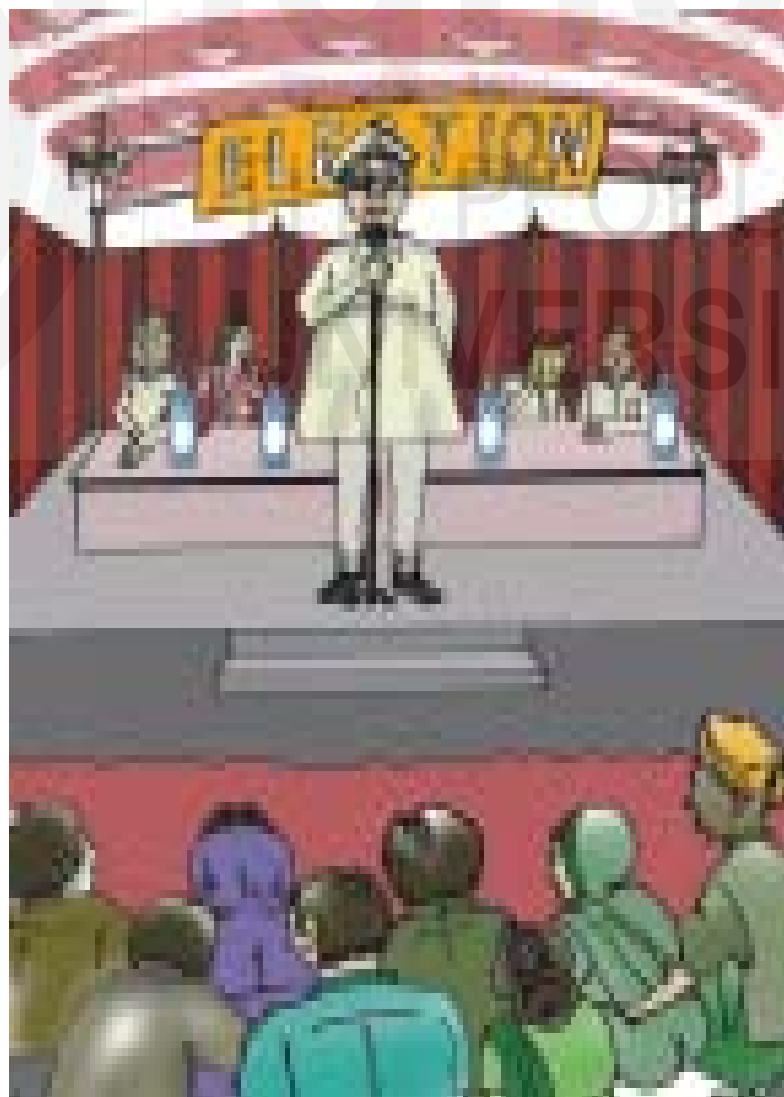
Political socialisation is the process of inducting an individual in the political culture. It is a part of general socialisation but with a different focus and objective. Unlike general socialisation, political socialisation starts later in childhood. There are two main components of political socialisation. One is the inculcation of general values and norms regarding political behaviour and political matters and the other is the induction of the individual into a particular political party and the imparting of the party's ideology and action programmes to her or him.

The first is done by the general educational system and by the other agencies of the state. The second is done by different political parties. In democratic countries and those which are experimenting with democratic models, the two components of political socialisation are different. Whereas the first aims at some general understanding of the what he should and should not do, the second may differ from party to party both in goal and is means adopted. In oligarchies, the socialising

agencies will be more or less, identical, if not the same. The ruling elite would take up the political education of the masses in a manner that will perpetuate their (elite's) power and influence over the masses. This tendency of the ruling elite is in its own interests. Thus the theory that is forwarded will show the ruling elite in a good light.

Another aspect of political socialisation is the socialisation that takes place within the non-political sub-systems which make frequent inroads into politics. These are ethnic, religious, linguistic and other particularistic associations and organisations which play upon the inner feelings of members and enter or try to enter politics in order to enforce their ideology. Actually, they are a threat to the smooth political development of a society, but in so far as they are assuming importance all over the world, they have to be reckoned with. This is more so in the developing societies where they are being used by clever politicians to sway the sympathies of the masses.

Political recruitment means recruitment into political areas and political roles. In a modern political system, all citizens are involved in the political process and even when they are not active workers of any political party, they are aware of the political process to participate in it passively. In the oligarchic type of political systems, elections may be only a ritual even so the citizen will have to undergo the procedures of election with all the political overtones involved. While all persons in a society are thus politically socialised, the actual recruitment to political roles and authorities will be limited to only those who qualify. This is inevitable, as general socialisation itself follows such patterns.



The social base for entrants into the political file could be broad or narrow. In the Arab countries, the base is narrow, patriarchic and oligarchic, whereas in India it is broad-based and competitive. In the first category, leaders are recruited from social groups which have been historically predominant (wealthy and aristocratic families or clans or classes). Other categories such as civil servants, army officers and professional and business groups may come from the urban educated class. In the patriarchal societies, professional and business elites and other modern groups are largely non-participant but their increase which follows modernisation is bound to make them competitors in the political arena. Social change is bound to enable these groups to come to the forefront, eclipsing the traditional elements.

Broad-based societies are characterised by competition in the political arena but it is mostly the urban, educated middle-class persons, who are increasingly attracted to the catchment area of politics and it is they who are potential material for recruitment by political parties. Social mobility which is a characteristic of competition and which is a part of social change is bound to upset the balance, so that it is possible for non-middle-class persons to be inducted into politics.

18.5.2 Interest Articulation

Interest articulation means the expression of interest in a political system, for the attention of the government. In all political systems, the needs and problems of the citizens are, in the final analysis, to be taken care of by the state. Due to the complex and interdependent nature of modern societies, even small problems of individuals, may have a bearing beyond the area of their occurrence, and may require solutions by an agency located elsewhere. Many of the problems of an individual are beyond his control and need the help of the state for their solution. While the problems may not be political, their solution would require political (state) action. However, for a need to be taken care of, it has to be expressed. Usually since it is difficult to get individual demands heard or attended to by decision-making agencies, they are collectively expressed; persons who have the same problems join together. Depending upon the mode of their articulation, they can be divided into the following institutional interest groups, associational interest groups, non-associational interest groups and economic groups.

18.5.2.1 Institutional Interest Groups

These are duly constituted, stable and institutionalised structures such as the Church, the bureaucracy, the army and the legislature. Though their official functions are clearly spelled out, they, or, an active group among them, may take up the cause of reform or social justice, and use the formal structure for airing their views, even though this is not in the permitted categories of functions. In many developing countries, the elite among the bureaucracy or army may espouse the cause of the underdog or the poor and the down-trodden.

18.5.2.2 Associational Interest Groups

Examples of these are trade unions, associations of managers, businessmen and traders and various agencies organised for non-economic activities such as ethnic, cultural and religious groups or civic groups, youth organisations etc. They will have their own established procedures for formulation of interests and demands, and further transmission of these demands to other political structures such as political parties, legislatures, bureaucracies, etc. In most of the developing countries, many of these associations will have political leanings and some of them, like trade unions and youth organisations, may actually be front organisations of political parties. However, the special feature of these associations or organisations is that they have established goals and means.

18.5.2.3 Non-associational Interest Groups

These are groups that are not formally established, but are nonetheless important due to their caste or religious or family positions. An informal delegation may be formed to meet the official or minister concerned, about some problem, for example, the mode of collection of a certain levy or alterations of a government rule, etc. It is not necessary that the interest is articulated through a delegation. It is possible that in a formal or informal get-together, the spokesmen of a group could air its grievances before the official. In any case the occasion serves the purposes of articulation of the demand.

18.5.2.4 Anomic Interest Groups

These are groups that are spontaneously formed and may be relatively unstable and short-lived, such as in a riot or demonstration. Here we do not include the violent political demonstrations and show of strength at rallies and route marches of political parties and their front organisation. We have in mind groups that are formed ad hoc and that may find other forms of articulation ineffective. Sometimes they will remain stable for a relatively long period, in which case, they will become associations.

18.5.3 Interest Aggregation

Aggregation is the sorting out and combination of the demands articulated by the different interest groups. Aggregation may be achieved by means of the formulation of general policies in which interests are combined, accommodated or otherwise taken account of. This could be done by political parties or by the ruling elite or by the government itself. It is also possible that the interest articulation agencies themselves could aggregate these interests and present them to those in charge of policy formulation. It can be exemplified that issues pertaining to the lower status of women in the society were articulated by the women's organisations, and other associations they pressurised the government to formulate policies on women's development. The government, however, realising the urgency of the issue formulated the National Perspective Plan for Women's Development. In societies where political functions are not so clearly divided, the functions of articulation and aggregation will generally be combined. This is because tasks have not been sufficiently specialised. As political functions develop, aggregations and articulation functions, become divided. In modern societies, associations at the national level aggregated the demands of the local units, and present them to the authoritative body for consideration. Here, these apex bodies also act as an interest articulation as well as interest aggregation only. However, it has to be remembered that the two functions are different. The first is the expression of interest while the second is the combination of different interests in an implementable form.

Actually, the aggregative functions could be performed by other systems within the polity. Thus the institutions and associations could, articulate their demands, and put them in an organised form and present them to the political system. They even take up the demands of individuals and groups and incorporate them in their manifestos. Alternatively, in such a political system. Associations which have sympathies with one or the other or the political parties would seek the latter's help in aggregating their demands for action.

This is more so if the associations find it difficult to get their demands accepted by the government. We have many such examples in our own country. Many apparently independent trade unions affiliate themselves with the labour fronts of the political party in power, some trade unions which have their own political leaning also would go over to the ruling party. Interest aggregation is an important function in the

political system. It enables the different and, in many cases conflicting, demands of groups to be sorted out and consolidated into a single set or different sets of demands which are pragmatic if the political authority takes them up seriously. In multi-party systems where there is competition between parties it serves the purpose of all important demands being taken care of.

In a political system where there is one dominant party and opposing small parties, interest aggregation is a difficult task. There will be trouble if there is a strong traditional element in the party, for this element is sure to oppose all modernisation efforts. The same would be the case even if the traditional elements were weak or non-existent but heterogeneity among the people is strong. Thus, a society composing of a population which is divided on ethnic, linguistic and communal lines, poses a big problem for the dominant political party to aggregate the interests of groups. In that case, party cohesion is in trouble. The situation could result in splits within the party and in the formation for new parties. Even then, this would not achieve better aggregation of interests. On the other hand, it would strengthen the hands of another subsystem (e.g. bureaucracy) to which the interest groups will turn for help.

18.5.4 Political Communication

Communication is the life-blood of any social system. It is through communication that interpersonal and elite mass relationships are maintained. In a political system this is equally important since all the political functions-socialisation, recruitment, articulation, aggregation and the entire rule-making, enforcement and adjudication process rest on it. Information, which is an essential input in any rational action, is supplied through communication. Again, it is the means of communications that makes the political system work efficiently and in a responsible manner.

An autonomous, neutral and thoroughly penetrative communication system is essential to the development and maintenance of an active and effective electorate and citizenship. This is possible only in a mature democracy. In the developing countries the government will be controlling many of the means of communication, especially the electronic media (radio and television). In these countries, the press will be controlled by interest groups so the information coming out of it will be selective and biased. Low literacy level and poor means of transport will restrict the spread of the newspapers and other print media while poverty will restrict the spread of communication through the radio and television. In many modern political systems, political parties run their own newspapers to educate and inform their followers but the information that flows through them will be selective.

Even in a modern society where there is widespread penetration of the mass-communication media, the role of person-to-person communication is very important. In the developing societies, opinion makers and elites assume great prominence in screening the available information and passing the desired one to other followers. This is one reason where government seeks the support of the opinion leaders to help the Family Welfare Programmes of the Government in India. Political parties in developing countries have used the person-to-person communication in reaching the rural masses who are illiterate and who are beyond the pale of the mass media.

In the modern societies, the political information that flows from the government to the people is much larger in volume than that flowing from the citizen to the government. The government therefore makes extensive use of the communication network-be it the electronic media controlled by government, or newspapers, or official communications sent as circulars and orders through the bureaucracy.

18.5.5 Government Functions

Under this head there are three items which cover all the functions of modern governments. They are: rule making, rule application and rule adjudication.

A characteristic of modern political systems is the increasing tendency to specialise government functions. Thus, rule making is done mostly by the legislature and party by the executive, while rule enforcement is done by the executive with the help of the bureaucracy. Rule adjudication is done by the judiciary which, in modernised countries, is free from the executive and legislature. However, there are two factors which contribute to a difference in the situation. In most modernising societies, there is a wide difference between the formal and informal arrangements in the government functions. While the formal arrangement is embodied in the Constitution of the country, this is seldom observed in actual practice. This, in turn, is because of the political culture and the type of government that a country may have.

Activity 1

Do you think mass media in India, which includes radio, T.V., Newspapers, etc. are effective in educating the masses in the political process of voting and electing a suitable Government? Write a report of two pages on “The Role of Mass Media in Spread of Political Education in India.” Share your report with other learners and your Academic Counsellor at your study centre.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Describe briefly the major functions of a political system. Use about five lines for your answer.

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.....

2) Name the major interest groups of a political system.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

3) Political socialisation is the process of induction of individual in the political system of the society. Yes No

4) Political socialisation starts as soon as a child is born. Yes No

5) Describe briefly the functions of the government.

18.6 POLITICAL PROCESSES

The transactions that take place within a political system and between political systems may be called political processes. These include interactions between individuals and groups within the polity, viz., the executive, legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy, political parties, the communication media and other agencies within a state. Interest groups whose activities influence political decisions also form part of the political system. Depending on the type of political structure, these processes would differ. In democracies, for example, the executive will be responsible to the legislature, law-making will be the responsibility of the legislature and the courts will function without interference from the executive or the ruling group. The political parties and the mass media will act with great freedom and could penetrate deep into the society. On the other hand, in a controlled or guided democracy, the freedom that exists under full democracies will not be available. The different agencies may be existing but will be controlled by and be sub-servient to, the whims of the ruling elite or, more often, a single ruler. The three types of oligarchies also will reflect different political processes. In a totalitarian state, for example, there will not be much difference between executive, legislative and judicial functions. All merge together in the hands of the ruling group or individual.

18.7 BASIS OF LEGITIMACY

Use of coercive power is the distinguishing mark of the state. This means that the state possesses the power to coerce individuals and organisations under its jurisdiction to accept its authority and to impose all kinds of punishments, including imprisonment and death, on erring members. The individuals and organisations will have to submit to the authority of the state. This makes the state the final authority. It can authorise any punishment on the members. It is the final collective authority. Otherwise the citizens will not feel obliged to submit themselves legally or even morally to their authority. All holders of power of this kind therefore are anxious to legitimise their power.

According to Max Weber there are three ways of legitimising authority. They are (1) Traditional, (2) Charismatic and (3) Legal-rational ways.

18.7.1 Traditional and Charismatic Authority

Traditional Authority: This authority is sanctioned by custom and practice. The authority was there from the very beginning and nobody has challenged it so far. The authority of the parents over children and of kings over subjects has rested on such claim.

Charismatic Authority: This is derived from charisma, that is, the extraordinary power of some of the leaders to influence their followers. According to these followers, their leader possesses certain powers which will enable him or her to take them out of a critical situation or give them what they want. They consider their leader as a saviour. The extra-ordinary power attributed to a leader or claimed by him/her may be-real or imaginary, but for the followers it is real. The followers submit to all her/his authority without questioning. Mahatma Gandhi and Napoleon were charismatic political leaders.

Activity 2

List out at least five charismatic leaders of India and write an essay on “Charisma as a basis of Social Change.” Discuss your answer with your peer group at your study centre.

18.7.2 Legal Rational Authority

Legal rational authority is the authority based on law. The person who uses authority is duly appointed as per rules to the office concerned and this entitles him to exercise all the authority vested in that office. The President or Prime Minister of a State who comes to power through the constitutionally established methods is the legitimate ruler of the country and the subjects consider him or her to be legitimate ruler. Since the rules and regulations are based on reason, they are rational. In fact, law is considered to be an embodiment of reason.

18.7.3 Legitimacy of Modern Political System

Modern political system work on the basis of legal rational authority. All the parts within the system function on the basis of clearly established rules and the persons holding office are entitled to discharge all the functions that are assigned to their offices. Those affected by their action are legally bound to obey them. If anybody has any complaint or grievance that an official has acted arbitrarily or beyond the power vested in his office, there are again, legal and constitutional remedies for him i.e., he can go to a court. But if the court also decrees that the official concerned is right, he has to accept the decision.

In the modern political system, there are instances of persons coming to power through revolutions or **coup d' etats**. Such methods are not permitted by law and the persons who come to office by using these methods are not considered legitimate rulers. These persons, therefore, are under increasing anxiety to legitimise their position. They may either claim themselves to be saviours (invocation to charisma) or if this is not convincing to people, they will offer to stand for election so as to come to power through legitimate means. In the long run, none of these leaders feel secure without giving some cloak of legitimacy to their claim to hold power.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Describe briefly the basis of legitimatising authority. Use about five lines.

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2) Describe the basis of legitimacy of a modern political system. Use about five lines

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- | | | | |
|----|--|-----|----|
| 3) | In modern democracies executive is responsible to the legislature. | Yes | No |
| 4) | Charismatic authority of a leader is derived from traditional rules and regulations. | Yes | No |
| 5) | The legal-rational authority is based on the law. | Yes | No |

18.8 LET US SUM UP

A modern society is characterised by a comparatively high per capita income, and a high rate of literacy. It has high rates of urbanisation, industrialisation, geographic and social mobility. It also uses mass communications and its citizens actively participate in the social and political processes. The political set-up of a modern society gets modernised as modernisation takes place in society.

The political system is a sub-system of the social system. A modern political system is characterised by a high degree of differentiation, effectiveness and functional specificity of government and non-government structures.

A political system possesses five elements viz ideology, structure, function, process and the basis of legitimacy. Ideology defines a political system's goals and means. The political structure of a society is also influenced by the prevailing ideology. However depending upon the political culture the political system of a society may have any of the following forms: traditional oligarchy, modernising oligarchies, tutelary democracies, and political democracies.

A political system is to perform certain functions for the maintenance of the systems. The major functions of a political system are political socialisation and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication, rule making, rule application and rule adjustment.

Political processes that emerge out of the interaction between and within the political system is an important element of a political system. Depending upon the types of political structures these processes indeed differ.

There are three distinctive ways of legitimatising political authority. These are: i) traditional ii) charismatic and iii) rational-legal.

A modern political system is based on a rational-legal authority. Here people hold office of the government and discharge all of their functions based on the established rules and laws.

18.9 KEY WORDS

- Anomic** : A social condition without any rules of law.
- Authority** : One's legitimised capacity to impose his or her influence on others. The legitimacy can be derived from traditional, rational-legal and charismatic basis.
- Elite** : People who have excelled themselves in the field of their activity: social, political, economic, religious, etc.
- Coup d' etat** : A regime capturing power through extra legal military means. The capturing of power may or may not be violent.

- Charisma** : An extra-ordinary power of some leaders to influence followers.
- Interest group** : Groups formed especially for the attainment of certain common interests of its members.
- Ideologies** : A system of beliefs and symbols which have an appeal to the followers.
- Modernisation** : A process of achieving the composite features of a modernised nation through high per capita income, high rate of literacy, urbanisation, industrialisation, social mobility, extensive penetration of mass communication, and wide-spread participation of the citizen in the social and political processes etc.
- Power** : One's capacity to impose his/her influence on others.
- Structure** : Network of relationships between the individuals, groups, institutions or organisations.

18.10 FURTHER READINGS

Kornblum, William, 1988. *Sociology in a Changing World*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc. New York (Ch. 16)

Macionis, John J. 1987, *Sociology*, Prentice Hall: Inc. New Jersey. (Ch. 16 and 17)

18.11 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) A modern society may be defined as one with comparatively high per-capita income. It has a high rate of literacy, urbanisation, industrialisation, geographical and social mobility. It also has extensive mass-communication and wide-spread participation of the citizens in the social and political processes.
- 2) A political system is a sub-system of the social system and is characterised by the monopoly of coercive power over citizens and organisations. A political system is directed towards the control of individuals and groups within an identifiable and independent social system.
- 3) Yes
- 4) No

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The principle elements of a political system are: i) ideology, ii) the structure, iii) function, iv) the process and (v) the basis of legitimacy. These elements, have their coherent meanings specific to a particular political system.
- 2) a) Traditional Oligarchies:
b) Totalitarian Oligarchies:

- c) Modernising Oligarchies:
 - d) Tutelary Democracies: and
 - e) Political Democracies.
- 3) Yes
 - 4) No
 - 5) No

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) The vital functions performed by a political system may be enlisted as follows: political socialisation and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication, rule making, rule application and rule adjustment.
- 2)
 - a) Institutional Interest groups.
 - b) Associational Interest groups.
 - c) Non-associational Interest groups and
 - d) Anomic Interest groups.
- 3) Yes
- 4) No
- 5) Rule-making rule-enforcement and rule-adjudication are the major functions of government. For rule-making there is legislature, while rule enforcement and rule adjudication are looked after by the executive and the judiciary.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) There are three main bases of legitimatising authority: Traditional basis, charismatic basis and rational legal basis. The traditional basis is sanctioned by the traditional customs and practices of a society. The charismatic basis by the extraordinary quality of the leadership and rational legal by the law of the land.
- 2) A modern political system works on the basis of rational legal authority. On the basis of the established rules all the persons in the government office discharge their duties. The Indian political system works on the basis of rational legal authority.
- 3) Yes
- 4) No
- 5) Yes

UNIT 19 STATE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Structure

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 The State
 - 19.2.1 Population
 - 19.2.2 Territory
 - 19.2.3 Government
 - 19.2.4 Sovereignty
- 19.3 State and the Government
- 19.4 State and Society
- 19.5 State and other Associations
- 19.6 State and the Nation
- 19.7 Institutions Under the Political System
 - 19.7.1 The Government Organisation
 - 19.7.1.1 The Legislature
 - 19.7.1.2 The Executive
 - 19.7.1.3 The Judiciary
 - 19.7.1.4 The Bureaucracy
 - 19.7.2 The Non-Government Agencies
 - 19.7.2.1 Political Parties
 - 19.7.2.2 Interest Groups
 - 19.7.2.3 The Press
- 19.8 The Individual and the State
- 19.9 Democracy and Individual
- 19.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.11 Key Words
- 19.12 Further Readings
- 19.13 Model Answers to Check Your Progress

19.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit introduces you to the state and other institutions of the society and specifically aims to:

- describe a state;
- explain the interrelationships between the state and other organisation of the society;
- discuss the major institutions of a political system; and
- highlight the position of individual in the state and democracy.

19.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall describe the state and other institutions of the political system. The institutions discussed here are the government institutions, that is, the executive, legislature, judiciary and bureaucracy and the non-governmental institutions, that is, political parties, interest groups and the press. The press is included as part of the political system because of the unique role it plays in influencing the other elements of the political system. The role of the individual in the state and in the democratic system is also given.

19.2 THE STATE

The term “political system” has been preferred by political sociologists instead of the conventional term “state” in order to accommodate several sub-systems that do not form a direct part of the state in the strict sense of the term. However, it is important to recognise the supremacy of the state, in an analysis of political system, as the state alone possesses coercive power in society. The term state has a different meaning in political science from the one given to it in ordinary parlance. In common talk, the term state is used for a variety of things. Thus we speak of Uttar Pradesh as a state, we speak of “state support”, etc., we have in mind the word government instead of the word “state”. Political scientists do not agree on a common definition for the term “state”. We may therefore give a few definitions that bring out all the attributes of the state.

Greek philosophers have viewed the state as a natural and necessary institution coming out of the needs of human beings as a political animal. Marxists have viewed the state as an instrument of exploitation in the hands of the ruling class. Sociologists have defined the state as an association which legally maintains social order within a community. The state has also been viewed as society, divided into government and subjects, claiming, within the allotted physical area, a supremacy over all other institutions. Some political scientists maintain that the state is the people organised for law within a given territory.

The marks of an independent state are that the community constituting it is permanently established for a political end, that it possesses a defined territory, and that it is independent of external control. Taking all the accepted elements of the state, the state could be defined as a community of persons, more or less in number, permanently occupying a fixed portion of territory, independent of external control and possessing an organised government to which the vast majority of people render obedience.

From the above definitions certain essential properties of the state emerge, viz., (i) a population, (ii) a territory, (iii) a government and iv) sovereignty. We may briefly examine these attributes.

19.2.1 Population

The state arises out of the gregarious instinct of human beings combined with his or her political instinct. The state comes into existence originating in the bare needs of life, and continues in existence for the sake of a good life. Here people are basic to the state. Without people, no state can exist. However, one single family or a group of families does not make a state. There should be a viable number of people in a state. China with over 100 crores of people and Maldives with a little over one lakh of people are both states. States with large populations have certain political advantage over states with very small populations.

19.2.2 Territory

Some writers feel that territory is not an indispensable attribute of a state. They say that nomadic people have political arrangements but they have to move from place to place in search of food. As such they cannot afford to have a fixed territory. However, the widely accepted view is that a state should have a fixed territory, the boundaries of which can be identified. There is no state at present which has no proper territory and no mechanism to enforce authority over citizens. Such a state cannot carry on relationship with other nations.

There is also another need for the state to have its territory. All states require revenue which will not be forthcoming. The economic base is provided by the land (including water) under the authority of the state. The state can establish authority over its subjects only if they live in a territory. Territory is very important because it identifies a certain population within it. As such it provides physical limits. It is quite evident that the Government of India cannot have any control over citizens staying outside its territory except with the help of the state of their residence. Territory is therefore a pre-requisite. Again, as in the case of population, there cannot be any rule regarding the minimum area required for a state. There are states like the Soviet Union with an area of 12.4 million sq. km. And there are small states such as Maldives with an area of only some hundred square kilometres.

An argument is sometimes advanced that small states are more conducive to democracy than big states. The abode of direct democracy, Switzerland, is cited as an example. But with rapid developments in the means of transport and communication, it has been possible to make democratic systems of government work efficiently in bigger states. At the same time, states with large territories have the advantage of mobilising huge natural resources which small states do not have, especially when resources dry over time.

19.2.3 Government

As stated earlier, there is a confusion in common language between the state and government. Actually the government is the agency of the state, and exists for carrying out the will of the state. Without a government a state cannot function. As a matter of fact, the very justification for a state is that it provides people with a machinery for orderly life. The state does this through a government. A state cannot be conceived of without a government.

19.2.4 Sovereignty

The word sovereignty means ultimate power. The distinguishing character of a state is the monopoly of coercive power over all individuals and institutions within its territory. No one can question this power of the state. But sovereignty is not confined to the area within the state. It extends to the relationship with other sovereign states. No state has power to impose restriction on another state and this is recognised by international law. Indeed, all writers on the state agree that sovereignty is the outstanding characteristic of a state.

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that in order to be called a state, the institution should have all the four attributes referred to above. If it misses any of them, it ceases to be a state.

It is necessary at this point to give a few clarifications which are related to the state. These are given in sub-sections 3 to 6 below.

We have discussed several features of the state. We hope you have read and understood this section. You will know the levels of your understanding by doing the exercises given below:

Activity 1

“Is India a state or a Nation” write an essay of one page on this topic. You can take the help of other books or articles, if possible. Compare your essay with those of other learners at your study centre, and discuss the topic with your Academic Counsellor.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the essential attributes of a state? Use five lines for your answer.

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2) Is sovereignty an essential criterion of a state? Give reasons for your answer. Use about five lines for your answer.

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3) Uttar Pradesh is a State with all the attributes of an independent State. Yes No

4) A government has control over the population even outside the territory. Yes No

19.3 STATE AND THE GOVERNMENT

In everyday language, the terms state and government are often used interchangeably. But they are, by no means, the same. Government can exist independent of the state as in the so called stateless societies. Historically the family preceded the state. But while a government can exist without a state, a state cannot exist without a government. Government, as we have seen earlier is an element of the state. It is created to achieve the goal of the state. Without government, a population would be a mass of incoherent, unorganised anarchic people with no means of collective action. Government is an instrument of the state to carry out its will. For this purpose it is vested with sovereignty. Government can take different forms such as democratic, totalitarian etc., and can have different goals such as communism, socialism, capitalism, welfare ideology, etc.

The difference between the state and the government may now be summarised.

- i) The state is an abstraction, but the government is a concrete element of the state.
- ii) The state is a supreme body, but the government is an element of the state.
- iii) The state is more or less permanent, whereas the government's authority is derived and limited by the terms of the Constitution. Sovereignty is an attribute of the state and not of the government.

19.4 STATE AND SOCIETY

The state is the agency which performs the political function in society and as such is a sub-system of the society. The political function is different from the functions performed by other agencies in a society but is functionally integrated with those functions. Thus, while the society is concerned with the functions of procuring food and meeting other economic needs, related integration needs, and security and related political needs, the state is invested with ensuring the satisfaction of all these needs in a smooth and continuous manner. The state does this by using the coercive power vested in it. This coercive power, further, enables the state to ensure that all individual, institution, associations and agencies within its territory, perform their appropriate roles. Besides this the state has also to protect the citizens from external interference. The state has also to pursue its interests in the international field. For this, the state is endowed with the additional attribute, the sovereignty, which the society does not have. Indeed, it is this attribute that differentiates the state from the society and it is this that enables the state to rule over the members of the society. It is possible that the territorial boundary and population of a state may be coterminous with the territory and population of the society as in many of the countries of the world (e.g. England and France).

19.5 STATE AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

There are other associations which perform important roles within the state. But for them, the citizens will be denied many things that enrich their life. While they are important, each in its own way, the overriding power of the state enables it to control and regulate them and even to dissolve them at will. However, in some states the associations have become so strong that they are able, to put a break on the state's arbitrary use of power. These associations argue that the state is only one among them. Though they are willing to grant it the primacy of place. This argument is called **Political Pluralism**. In countries such as U.K. and U.S.A. where democracy has reached some level of maturity, pluralism has become a very strong challenge to the state's arbitrary use of power. Because of the threat from these associations, many states with oligarchic forms of government do not encourage the growth of associations, especially if they develop into **interest groups**. However, it is admitted, even by pluralists, that the state has, and should have, the ultimate and coercive power which alone will, in the last analysis, enable the associations to function properly and settle disputes among them. In the days of multi-national organisations, the need for the state's help in pursuing their activities abroad is more strongly felt.

19.6 STATE AND THE NATION

There is a difference between the state and nation. The word nation is derived from the Latin word *nation* which means "born". This means that a nation is a people

descended from a common stock. The ethnic attribute of nation is seen in most of the definitions of nation. The nation has been defined as a population of an ethnic unity, inhabiting a territory of a geographic unity. By ethnic unity, we mean a population having a common custom and a common consciousness of rights and wrongs. Actually the ties that bind people together into a nation are more psychological and spiritual than ethnic, linguistic or religious. **A nation is the people's consciousness of unity.** Once this consciousness is achieved, ethnic difference lose their importance. Switzerland is a good example. It is inhabited by three ethnic groups.

We may now examine the distinction between state and nation. The theory of one-nation-one state, or the creation of states on the basis of self-determination, became practical politics after World War I. New nation-states were created and the term nation and state began to be accepted as synonymous. Even now we hear and read of countries being described as nations when the word 'states' should have been more appropriate. The United Nations Organisation (UNO) is a union of sovereign states and not of nations. The state is different from the nation in the following respects.

- i) The state is a people organised for law within a definite territory, whereas a nation is a people psychologically bound together..
- ii) Statehood is objective, nationhood is subjective.
- iii) Statehood is an obligation enforceable by law, whereas nationhood is a condition of the mind, a spiritual possession.
- iv) A state may consist of one nation (Rumania, Albania, France) or different nations, (India, Canada). For the same reason, a nation may be split into two or more states (North and South Korea, People's Republic of China and Republic of China).

Related to the word nation are two other words, nationality, and nationalism. Nationality is a spiritual or psychological identification among people having common affinities like common origin, race, language, tradition or history and common political aspirations. It is a way of feeling, thinking and living together. Nationalism is the growth of a feeling of oneness among people based on the same attributes that contribute to nationhood and nationality. Nationalism brings together people into a nation by creating in them a sense of identity (nationality).

In conclusion, we may say that states will be more viable if they are formed on the basis of single nations but many of the pluri-national states have also proved to be viable, showing that nationalism is only one aspect of a state's strength.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What are the fundamental differences between the sate and a government?
Use five lines for your answer.

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| 2) | Political pluralism recognises the state to be the only important association. | Yes | No |
| 3) | Self-determination means right of self-development of the citizens. | Yes | No |
| 4) | United Nation's Organisation is a union of only sovereign states of the world. | Yes | No |

19.7 INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

In this section, we shall describe two sets of institutions that enable the state to function in modern societies:

- i) Government organisations, and
- ii) Non-government organisations.

Government organisation are:

- i) Executive,
- ii) Legislature,
- iii) Judiciary, and
- iv) Bureaucracy.

The non-governmental organisations are:

- i) Political parties,
- ii) Interest groups, and
- iii) The press.

19.7.1 Governmental Organisation

Depending upon the number of persons sharing authority, we can speak of rule by one or rule by many persons. The former can be a monarchy or a dictatorship. Rule by many can take different forms. If power is in the hands of a few persons, it is called oligarchy, if it is in many hands, it is a democracy. **These descriptions are not precise but only approximations.** Democracy can take different forms Parliamentary and Presidential, the former means that the Parliament is the supreme body in the state. United Kingdom and India are examples of Parliamentary democracy. In fact India borrowed its democratic set-up from the United Kingdom. Presidential democracy is one where the President holds supreme power and is not answerable to the legislature. United States of America is the best example of Presidential democracy. In India, the Prime Minister, who heads the Union Cabinet, can be removed by a vote of Parliament. In the United States of America, the President can be removed only by impeachment by the two-third majority of the Congress (American equivalent of Parliament). Yet another distinction in the form of government is whether it is of the Unitary or the Federal type. The Unitary type exists where the government is centralised and there is local autonomy (e.g. Sri Lanka). In the Federal type, the local governments have autonomy over limited area of power (e.g. U.S.A., India).

19.7.1.1 The Legislature

The legislature is one of the three branches of the government. It is the law-making body of a state. In parliamentary democracies, the legislature has unlimited power to make or annul any law, but in states where the Presidential form of government prevails, or in oligarchies or dictatorships, the legislature's power to make or annul laws is limited. Even in democracies where the Constitution safeguards the legislature's supremacy in law-making, the ruling elite can, in several ways, undermine this and install its laws through the backdoor.

Thus legislatures differ both in type and composition. The two major types are unicameral and bi-cameral; whereas in the former there is only one law-making house in the state (e.g. Norway, Israel) in the latter the legislature consists of two houses, generally called the Assembly (lower house) and the Council (upper house). Almost all the states in the world, including India, have the bi-cameral system. In India, the lower house is called Lok Sabha and the upper house, Rajya Sabha. In England they are respectively called the House of Commons and the House of Lords. In both India and England, the two houses are together called the Parliament. In U.S.A., the House of Representatives is the lower house and the Senate is the upper house. Together, they are called the Congress. Many Indian States have the bi-cameral system (e.g. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar) but many other states (e.g. Kerala, Andhra Pradesh) have house.

The composition of the legislature also differs from state to state. In some states which are under the dictatorial rule, all the members of the legislature, or at least, a majority of them will be the nominees of the ruler. Sometimes the members of the upper house will be elected by the people directly. In India, the Lok Sabha consists of members directly elected by the people while the Rajya Sabha members are elected by the members of State Legislative Assemblies. In the United Kingdom, the House of Lords (Upper House) consists of hereditary nobles (except the Church officials). In U.S.A. members of both houses of the Congress are directly elected.

When there are two houses for making law, the upper house will have lesser power than the lower house (except in U.S.A.). Both in India and the United Kingdom, the upper house has only limited powers.

It has to be mentioned that even though the main purpose of legislatures is law-making, in almost all states of the world, they have financial as well as judicial functions. As all of us know, the annual budget of the government has to be passed by it. A large part of the time of the legislature is spent on deliberations or discussion of the work of the government.

19.7.1.2 The Executive

This is the second branch of the government. The term is used to designate all those officers of the government, whose business is to execute or put into effect the laws passed by the enforcement of the law alone. The formulation of policy and its implementation through programmes are also the work of the executive. These activities vest in the executive's enormous power and, as a result, many of the legislators will look towards the executive for patronage.

The executive can be one person such as a dictator or king or several persons such as a Council or Cabinet. Even when the latter form exists, the executive is still known by the person who is its chief—the King, President, Prime Minister, Chairman etc.

An important question regarding the executive is the mode of appointment. The following are the ways through which the chief executive comes to power.

a) **Hereditary Principle**

This is the way Kings come to power. There are only very few monarchs as heads of state in modern times and even though they rule with limited power, most well-known hereditary rulers are the Queen of England, the King of Saudi Arabia, the King of Nepal, the King of Thailand, the King of Japan etc.

b) **Election**

Prime Minister of India is elected. So also are the Presidents of the United States of America, France and most of the democratic countries of the world. Elected executives rule only for a limited period, as prescribed by the Constitution and the country concerned.

In some cases the chief executive comes to power through unconstitutional means, a revolution or **coup d'etat**. For example. Zia-ul-Haq, the late President of Pakistan, came into power through coup d'etat.

19.7.1.3 The Judiciary

The Judiciary is the body which adjudicates the laws made by the legislature. The judiciary consists of a hierarchy of courts. Usually at the lower level, there are two parallel systems of courts-the civil courts and criminal courts. The highest court is usually called Supreme Court. In England, it is the Privy Council. In India, the highest court at the state level is called High Court. There are district (Zilla) and Munsiff or Magistrates Courts at the lower levels.

Courts at the lower level have original jurisdiction while courts at higher level have appellate jurisdiction (hearing of appeals on the judgement) of lower courts. The High Courts and the Supreme Court in India take up both original and appellate petitions. They have also the power of dealing with constitutional issues.

On democracies, the courts are free from the interference of other branches of the government. To ensure their freedom, judges, once appointed, cannot be removed except for very grave offences. In totalitarian states, the judiciary is a wing of the executive as is the legislature, and will have to obey the command of the dictator.

19.7.1.4 The Bureaucracy

This is an arm of the executive. In modern times, the functions of the state have increased by leaps and bounds, and many of these functions (e.g. planning and programming) have become highly technical. Under this circumstance, the executive will have neither the time nor the expertise to perform its role efficiently. Therefore, the civil service has stepped in to fill the gap. The Civil Service, in the modern state, is recruited on modern lines. Officials are recruited through competitive examinations, usually by an impartial agency such as, the Public Service Commission – which enables the appointment of the person maximally suited for the job. Elaborate rules are framed for guiding the officials in their work. The whole system has been highly professionalised. This system is called bureaucracy – rule by bureaucrats. The bureaucrats are not just servants of the executive. In many cases, they perform the functions of the executive in their limited area. The ordinary citizen generally sees the bureaucrat as a person wielding enormous power. In some states such as France, recruitment to the executive is mostly from the top bureaucracy so that the difference between the two gets blurred. It is the unique role of the bureaucracy in policy

making and programme implementation (though next only to the executive), that has enabled it to consider as a vital part of the political system.

19.7.2 The Non-Government Agencies

We have listed three agencies – political parties, interest groups and the press as important units of this sub-system. Let us cover these three important areas. This will make their functioning clear.

19.7.2.1 Political Parties

These are organised groups of citizens who hold common views on public issues and, acting as political units, seek to obtain control of the government with a view to further the programme and policy which they profess. A political party has been defined as an association organised in support of some principle or policy which, by constitutional means, it endeavours to make the determinant of government.

Political parties are indispensable for the working of a democratic government. They are the connecting link between the people and the government. They are the vehicle through which individuals and groups work to secure and exercise political power. They make people politically conscious of their role as citizens. They are the agencies that maintain a continuous link between the people and those who represent them in government or in the opposition.

Political parties may differ on ideologies, and consequently, on their goals and means. The modern trend is to divide them broadly into two categories - right and left. The rightist parties are conservative and status quo oriented whereas the leftist parties are revolutionary and change-oriented. In many European countries there are centrist parties which do not belong either to the right or to the left. Of late, religious fundamentalism has also entered the arena of political parties. Several states in the world today are under the grip of religious fundamentalism (e.g. Iran). In India religious fundamentalism is gathering strength every day among all major communities (Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs)

The number of political parties functioning within a state is also an important aspect of a political system. There are states with only one political party (For eg. China). There are also states with a number of parties. A few states have only two parties (e.g. U.K. and U.S.A.). The number of parties does not affect a political system in any serious manner even though a two-party system can be more healthy for a democracy. In states with multiple parties, political coalition have emerged. Parties with similar ideologies may decide to make a common front to achieve their common objectives. In a multiparty system where the coalition government consists of a number of small parties, there can be political instability as some parties may withdraw their allegiance from the ruling coalition and join the opposition on flimsy grounds. The chances for such change of allegiance are greater when the differences between parties are less ideological and when party loyalties are based on personal considerations and loyalties. France, before the coming of Charles de Gulle, is a good example. Till then in France, the ministries used to come and go within months. Currently, Italy is an example.

In India, we have a multiparty system. In some states there are coalition cabinets. In the Centre, at present in Sept. 2004. Congress and its allies i.e. the UPA is at the Centre. But in some of the states such as Uttar Pradesh, the alliance of BJP and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) headed by Chief Minister Mayawati who belongs to BSP, had existed. Each faction followed a separate leader. Transfer of loyalty by members of the legislature is quite common in these states as this has led to the instability of cabinets.

In fact Communist countries and non-communist totalitarian states do not tolerate any opposition. They have only one political party. Pakistan, a non-communist country, until recently had one political party. Other parties then worked under severe restrictions.

A multiparty system is a basic requirement for the survival and growth of democracy. The presence of several parties competing for the loyalty of the citizens and acting as a control on one another is the strongest safeguard for democracy. If there is only one party, it can become indifferent to the needs of the people and can use its power arbitrarily, there is no check on the ruling party as it does not have to face any opposition either from the legislature or from the people.

Political parties play a very important part in the political system of a country. They socialise the people into political behaviour, sort out the needs and aspirations of the people and place them before the people in the form of a party programme (manifesto), present the people's needs and demands before the government and provide a link between people and their elected representatives. The citizens pick up the parties of their choice and the ambitious among them use the party as a channel for mobility and for fulfilling their political aspirations.

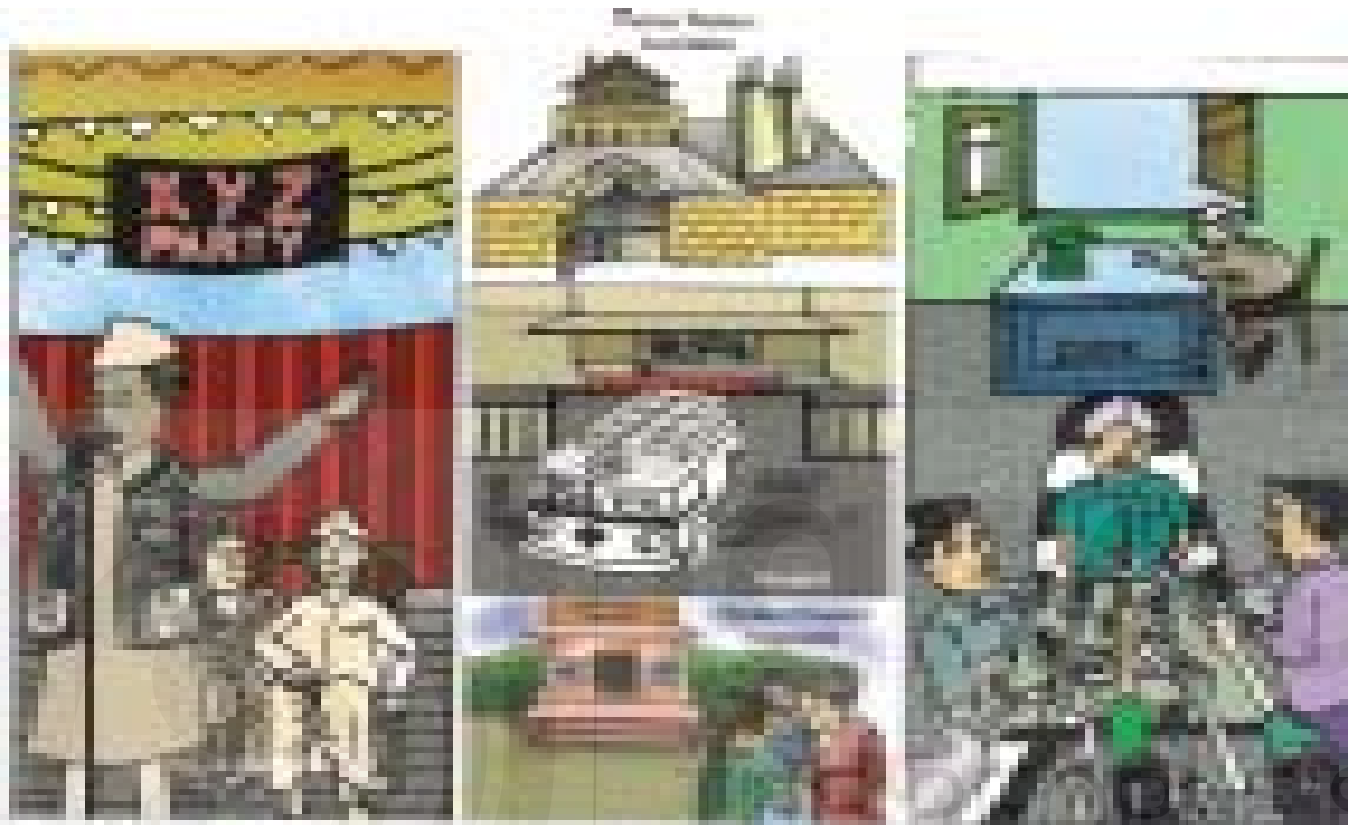
19.7.2.2 Interest Groups

These are associations or groups which have objectives different from those of political parties. Some times members of these groups may join political parties but this is much more to further their particularistic interests than out of conviction in the party's ideology or action programme. Interest groups may be based on economic, ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional or other considerations. Sometimes they would convert themselves into political parties or win over some members of the government (ruling party) and pressure the government to concede their demands. In this case, the group could be considered as a pressure group. Within the legislature, their friends and fellow-travellers could form an informal (or even formal groups and may lobby their cause. Such groups are called pressure lobbies. The Federation of Indian Chamber of commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the All India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AIMA) are examples of interest groups. At times, when the government introduces a bill or the budget proposal in Parliament, the interest groups will use their influence and lobby the Parliament members to use pressure on the government either to withdraw or to amend it in a form acceptable to them. Interest groups and pressure groups use a number of strategies to influence the government and to get their demands accepted. These strategies include threats of direct action like boycott, threat of holding back essential services, protest closure of shops and agitation's such as street demonstrations and strikes. However, the strategy is decided by the probability of success. Interest groups play an important part in government decision-making.

19.7.2.3 The Press

We have taken only the press from among the mass communication media and avoided the radio and television in our discussion because the latter are controlled by the government in almost all countries. In some totalitarian countries, the press also is controlled. By and large, the press has become an important part of all political parties. A free press is the strongest safeguard of democracy. In fact a free press has become synonymous with real democracy. The press enables the citizens to know what is really happening in the country, especially what the government does or does not, for them. In this way, they could mould the citizens' attitude and behaviour towards the government and the party in power, and show their support

or opposition at the next election. For a political party, the press is a sure medium for propagating their programmes. Since the press itself may have political leaning, each newspaper may become partisan, but since all parties have the freedom to have their own media of communication, the disadvantages of this will be, to a great extent, neutralised. In any case, the citizen would be best informed about the political developments and political processes in the state through the press and other mass media like, Radio & T.V., Internet, etc.



Non Government Agencies

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the major institutions of a political system? Use about five lines for your answer.

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2) In parliamentary democracy parliament is supreme. Yes No

3) Name major types of legislatures with examples:

a)

b)

- 4) Tick mark the correct answer
Multi-party system is indispensable in:
- a) Democracy
 - b) Oligarchy
- 5) Opposition parties are not tolerated in the Communist countries. Yes No
- 6) Free press is dangerous to the democracy Yes No

19.8 THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE STATE

Some political writers were of the view that the individual exists for the state. This view was also advocated by Fascism and Nazism. Both Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany advocated this view. However, from early times, the opposite view also was voiced. According to this view, the state came into existence to meet the needs of life and continues to exist to assure a good life. Modern welfare theories have accepted this view. The declared goal of all government is the welfare of their citizens. While the state has the responsibility to cater to the needs of the individual, the individual, in turn, also has the responsibility to enable the State to perform its task by discharging his or her duties towards the state. The relationship is reciprocal. The modern democratic state confers the following rights on the individual: right to life, liberty and (limited right to) property; right to freedom of speech and religion, right to equality, right to education and right to public offices. These rights to education and right to public offices are sometimes called “Fundamental Rights” and are embodied in the Constitution. The Indian Constitution contains a chapter on fundamental rights. In return for these rights, the individual has the following duties to the state: (i) duty to obey the law, (ii) duty to pay taxes and, above all, (iii) duty to be loyal to the state.

Activity 2

List out at least five duties that you have as a citizen of the state to which you belong and to the Indian Nation. Write a note of one page on these duties and your performance of these duties. Compare your answer with those of other learners at your study centre. You may further discuss your rights and duties as a citizen with your Academic Counsellor.

19.9 DEMOCRACY AND INDIVIDUAL

We are living in a democratic state and it is necessary to know what democracy brings to us. Many of us have a tendency to take democracy for granted, and very few of us realise that democracy is a form of government whose continuance can be guaranteed only by a vigilant citizenry. Democracy is most vulnerable to ills like mobocracy (rule by the mob) or dictatorship (rule by one person). In either case, the majority (mobocracy) or arbitration of a single person (dictatorship) will replace. It is very necessary that the two extreme forms of democracy are avoided. **This can be best ensured only if the citizens are enlightened.** Enlightenment has several attributes. These are participation in the political process, especially exercise of voting rights, tolerance of, if not respect for, the opposition and other points of view, knowledge about one’s rights and duties and honest exercise of rights and performance of duties and avoidance of unconstitutional or extra-constitutional methods to achieve one’s goals. All these could be subsumed in the term civic

responsibilities. Democracy ideally is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. All people in a democracy have to realise that the rules of the game of democracy have to be honestly observed not only to achieve the goal but to keep the game going.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the fundamental rights conferred on the citizens by modern democratic state? Use about five lines for your answer.

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2) What are the civic responsibilities of the citizen of democracy. Use about five lines for your answer.

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3) Democracy can be safeguarded by:

- a) Vigilant citizenry
- b) Strong Military power
- c) Strong Executive
- d) Vigilant bureaucracy

(Tick mark the correct answer)

4) In a democracy a citizen should have knowledge about:

- a) Rights only
- b) Duties only
- c) Both rights and duties
- d) None of the above

(Tick mark the correct answer)

19.10 LET US SUM UP

The state is a distinguishing social organisation. The state has been defined as a community of persons. More or less in number permanently occupying a definite part of a territory. It is independent of external control and possesses an organised government to which the majority of citizens remain obedient. Political scientists, however, recognise the following essential properties of the state viz. a population, a territory, a government and sovereignty. Sovereignty, indeed, confers the ultimate power on the state.

Nationalism is the growth of a feeling of oneness among people based on the same attributes to contribute to nationality. The nation is the peoples consciousness of unity.

Government is an essential element of a state as the day to day function of the state is carried out by the government. Though the terms government and the state are used interchangeably, to speak of differences: (i) the government is concrete while the state is an abstraction: (ii) the state is supreme while the Government is an element, (iii) the state is permanent, but government is not, (iv) the authority of the state is unlimited, but for the government it is limited (v) the states have common attributes, while types of government vary. The state performs the political functions as the political sub-system of the society. There are some other organisations in the society looking after the welfare and other activities. Though the political pluralists claim the state to be one of the associations of the many associations of the Society, but the State stands to be a distinctive organisation because of its sovereign power.

A state, however, carries on its function through two main types of organisations; (i) Governmental organisation viz, executive, legislative, judiciary and bureaucracy (ii) Non-government agencies viz-political parties, interest groups and the press & other mass media. These organisation, indeed, perform distinctive functions in their respective fields of specialisation.

The relationship between the individual and the state is not uniform all over the world as there are different forms of governments. A modern democratic state confers certain fundamental rights on its citizens viz the right to life, property, liberty, expression, equality and education. In return citizens are also expected to perform certain duties of the state viz, obey law, pay taxes, to be loyal to the state, exercise voting rights, avoidance of unconstitutional means to achieve one's goal. It also expects citizens to be knowledgeable about their rights and duties.

19.11 KEY WORDS

Fundamental Rights : Certain rights guaranteed by the state to its citizens and given in the Constitution. These include civil liberties like freedom of expression, freedom of speech and religion, equality before law

Nationalism : Growth of a feeling of oneness among the people based on some common attributes to contribute to nationhood or nationality. These could include religion, economics, politics, language culture and so on.

Political Pluralism : Political thought of a group of thinkers who propagate that there are multiple social organisation in the society and the state is only one of them.

Sovereignty : The supreme power of the state over individuals and organisation.

19.12 FURTHER READINGS

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19.13 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) a) a population b) a territory c) a government and
e) sovereignty.

- 2) Yes

It confers ultimate power to the state in exercising its monopoly of power over all individual and institutions within its territory. Again, it extends to the relationship with other sovereign states and formulates its own policy avoiding external interference.

- 3) No

- 4) No

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The state is an abstraction while the government is concrete; (ii) the state is supreme but the government is an element of the state only; (iii) the states have similar attributes, but types of government vary, (iv) the state is permanent but the government can change and (v) authority of the state is unlimited but that of the government is limited.

- 2) No

- 3) No

- 4) Yes

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Executive, legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy are the major governmental organisations of the state. Besides these, there are several non-governmental organisations viz. political parties, interest groups and the press.

- 2) Yes

- 3) a) Uni-cameral b) Bi-cameral

- 4) a) Democracy

- 5) Yes

- 6) No

Check Your Progress 4

The fundamental rights are:

- 1) Right to life, right to liberty and (limited rights to) property, right to freedom of speech and religion, right to equality, right to education and right to public offices.

The civic responsibilities are:

- 2) Duty to obey law, paying taxes, loyalty to the state, exercising voting rights, tolerance of the opposition, performing duties and avoidance of unconstitutional methods to achieve one's goal.
- 3) a) Vigilant citizenry.
- 4) c) Both rights and duties.



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