

Structure

4.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

4.2 Views on Man

4.3 Man, The Resident of Two orders of Existence

4.4 The Idea of Man: Two Views

4.5 How Gandhi Views Man?

4.6 Elaboration of Gandhi's Idea of Man

4.7 Man, Society and Cosmos

4.8 Overview

4.9 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Sense of “I” is at cross roads, it has a double reference. It shares at once two orders of being, the conditioned and the unconditioned; it is at once a universalizing as well as a particularizing tendency. It can work as much for liberation as for bondage; it can work non -lingingly as well as clingingly.

---Nagarjuna

Without a reference to “who man is” no definite understanding of any social phenomenon can be gained, it is necessary to firmly elucidate what we mean by the term “man”. Several terms are used to denote man. For example, such terms as “I”, person, self, man, are commonly used to refer to man. All these terms have double signification. Man can mean both a spiritually awakened person and a person who is sunk deep in materiality. This is also the case with terms that are commonly used to refer to man as an entity. For example, according to Jacques Maritain “...the human being is held between two poles: a material pole, which in reality does not concern authentic personality, but rather the material condition and the shadow, as it were, of personality; and a spiritual pole, which concerns personality itself”. Maritain is not alone in making this distinction; even M.K. Gandhi concurs with this characterization of man. Also the quotation from Nagarjuna, the greatest philosopher India has produced, too, emphasises this distinction, that is, the particularistic and the universalistic tendencies. Nevertheless, characterisation of man as individual has not wilted in want of supporters. As a matter of fact, with the breaking apart of Christianity-inspired civilisation, the view of man as a material being, nothing

more than a bundle of desires, emerged as the dominant characterisation. In India, too, materialistic characterization of man is linked with Charvak.² When contrary viewpoints about “who man is” compete for articulation, ascendance and control, it is necessary to pin point the exact sense in which Gandhi understands man. The idea of man and his relationship with the external world are subject to varying interpretations. If spirituality is emphasized as the central quest of life, then there exists the danger of man becoming completely detached from the world and worldly affairs. If man’s materiality is vigorously asserted, then there is the possibility of man becoming completely engrossed in material life and becoming indifferent to the claims of his soul. Gandhi’s idea of man becomes significant not only because Gandhi puts a great stress on man’s spiritual nature but also because he conceives of man’s relationship with the external world not in terms of exploitation but nurturance.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- Two referents of man’s existence and the Idea of man: scientific and creative
- Gandhi’s idea of self-development; and
- The quest of the Absolute: Truth and non violence.

4.2 VIEWS ON MAN

The question what a person stands for becomes important for very good reasons. First, the characterisation of a person has an important bearing on how humanity is itself defined. True that man, as a member of the animal kingdom, is subject to the laws that operate in nature and determine the behaviour of and relations among beings in the world. As such, man’s behaviour is as causally determined as that of living beings, in general. However, man is different from other living beings. This difference lies not in the fact that consciousness happens to accompany man’s behaviour because it does so even in the case of a few other living beings. What distinguishes man from other living beings is the way man uses his consciousness to come to a certain understanding, judgment and conclusion about what he is and what kind of relationship he has, or should have, with the external world. It is the manner in which the role of consciousness is

defined, concretised and given specific content that goes into the definition of human person and humanity.

Second, the way human person is defined has a great deal to say about what constitute specifically human needs, aspirations and relationships. But the delineation of what humanity consists in is just the half of the story. It focuses primarily on the human condition of individuality or how the individual thinks and acts. The other half of the concept of humanity pertains to the relationship between the self and the external world. Individuality has no meaning if there are no other individuals. The presence of others, however, means that one has to come into contact with others, interact with them, compete with them for access to societal resources and collaborate with them for transforming resources into consumable goods and services or for appropriating what one needs or defending what one has. The pattern of interaction that develops and gets crystallised into institutional arrangements, both with regard to man and man relations and man nature relation, is necessarily based on some notion of what is good or what is right. In other words, to talk of humanity or human condition is also to talk of certain norms, standards or criteria that regulate and give content to the idea of man, which, in turn, yields standards for man – man and man nature relationship.

4.3 MAN, THE RESIDENT OF TWO ORDERS OF EXISTENCE

Man is a resident of two orders of existence: (a) material aspect and (b) spiritual orientation. Max Scheler talks of the confluence of two factors, material and spiritual; but real efficiency, he insists, lay in the realm of material conditions whose inner workings are fateful for humanity. However, even while material conditions are necessary for human life, they are not utterly fatal. The elements of the spirit also develop independently out of their inner tendencies. However, two limitations, one biological and the other material, both, govern their growth and extension refining the parameters of the possible scope for spiritual development. And “should spiritual goals exceed the limits of the possible, the contradiction in biological and causal laws of matter, they will remain mere utopias that...bite on granite and disintegrates”³.

The spiritual nature of man, as one of the referents of man, constitutes the first order of his existence. The second order of his existence is constituted by the phenomenal world, the world of his pragmatic affairs in which he finds his temporary home. By virtue of this, man has, at one and the same time, to relate himself with his fellow beings as well as the natural world, which provides his succour and sustenance. This relationship is both competitive and cooperative depending on the belief system, under-girding a particular society. It should, however, be noted that a society which installs competition as the central tenet of social life reduces man to the level of porcupines who, suffering from the cold in the winter, must huddle together; but when they huddle together, their thorns prick each other and they have to move away. In other words, in such a society the individual must compete but cannot survive if he does not collaborate with others. But such collaboration is simply functional that lacks the warmth of love.

It is clear from the discussion above that the notion of humanity or human condition comprises at once of two elements: description and evaluation. It describes what is meant by specifically human, that is, it describes those attributes that constitute humanity and that distinguish human beings from all other living beings. At the same time, it also prescribes certain norms with reference to which man can be judged as having or lacking in necessary human qualities. The description is not only a specification of what is uniquely human but also an exhortation for living up to the idea contained in the notion of humanity. It is at once a pointer to an actual situation that conforms or fails to conform to what is truly human and a demand for restructuring the deviant situation.

In short, the notion of humanity takes note of man as belonging to the realm of living beings but striving to be human. This implies that man is not irretrievably caught in the web of nature and that he can and must free himself from its deterministic, causal laws. The notion of humanity is, therefore, concerned not only with the empirical phenomenon of being human but also with the idea of man's perfectibility. Thus man is a resident of the realm of necessity, which denotes not only his dependence on nature for survival but also subject to its deterministic laws. He is, in addition, also a creature who seeks to rise above the bondage of nature and engage into the quest of freedom. This quest, when

successful, places man in the realm of freedom, Since man lives in society and society itself has a strong bearing on how man develops and what he becomes, and strives to be human in the process of his becoming, the notion of humanity also carries, by implication; the idea of the perfectibility of human society too. ⁴ Thus, to be truly human is to make a definite transition from the realm of necessity.

4.4 THE IDEA OF MAN: TWO VIEWS

In order to enter into the realm of freedom, it is necessary to break the thralldom of the realm of necessity, that is, to conquer the animality in man and achieve what is distinctively human. This further means that there are two distinct ways of viewing what substantively the term “man” means. One of these views takes man as a body-mind complex; mind, in this perspective, is equated with a mechanical mind. On this view, man is subject to laws of matter and life; he is simply a natural man. As a natural man, he must treat the phenomenal world and its structure as the only reality confronting him as well as others. Enveloped by this reality, man makes use of his freedom for pursuing worldly concerns. The individual must then be guaranteed freedom, which he can use without, of course, jeopardising the pursuit of freedom by others. Freedom, in this perspective, consists in the absence of constraints on whatever one wishes to do provided it does not put the freedom of others in jeopardy. Such a perspective is rooted in an outlook that has two attributes of far-reaching consequences. In the first place, this perspective breaks the link between man and the divine insofar as the idea of man is restricted to the body-mind complex alone. The element of soul as the seat of divine has been left out. The consequence is that the phenomenon of commonality that was provided by everyone sharing in the splendour of the divine has been jettisoned. With this man is reduced to a mere fragment of totality of his being. He is a peasant, a businessman, as Indian or a worker, etc alone; he is seldom a total man enjoying the full panoply of his attributes.

In addition, such a perspective is rooted in an outlook that treats human beings as separated from each other; it sees an absolute dissociation of every individual person from every other. It projects happiness as the primary concern of every person. Happiness

lies in the satisfaction of desires; satisfaction of desires becomes the instrument of man's fulfillment insofar as it helps in the articulation of hidden potentialities and the realisation of creative urges; with this, man is said to ensure his perfection by developing his moral and spiritual sensibilities. Thus, by satisfying one's own need by exercising freedom, man is said to promote collective good, and push mankind on the path of progress. These concerns arise from man's existential conditions, which can be realised in this world. This requires that man controls and transcends his primitive nature in some ways, on the one hand, and he builds a society that ensures the satisfaction of man's need, on the other. On this alone, it is claimed, depends man's self-identification and self-realisation.

What becomes central in this perspective is the pursuit of self-interest. The pursuit of self-interest or what Adam Smith calls "augmentation of fortune" functions as the imperial governor of passions.⁵ Rationality is supposed, in this perspective, to help the pursuit of self-interest in choosing the least costly and most rewarding means to realising particular ends. The pursuit of self-interest so helped and supported by rationality is, then, supposed to open the way for self-realization and to yield benign results for society and promote collective good. Thus the pursuit of self-interest is claimed to hold the key to individual happiness and collective good.

However, the hope of personal felicity paving the way for personal development, collective good and civilisational progress—all these prove illusory. Personal development is eclipsed by man's externalisation, that is, his attachment to external objects that attract or repel him. As a result of man's externalisation, there occurs a split between rationality and emotion, between matter and spirit, between man and man and between man and nature. Freedom means freedom for man's totality of being and therefore self-control as the precondition of self-determination. Self-determination becomes the instrument of the expressive unity and fullness of life. If this does not happen then man's entry into the realm of freedom is blocked. Phenomenally, every individual has to identify with something and 'belong'. The roles a man plays in the world do not constitute his real self. To be completely identified with and get immersed

in one's worldly roles, playing the drama of everydayness, is, therefore, to negate the claims of his real self, that is, the soul as the *sensorium* of divine, the imperishable entity.

To define the totality of a person exclusively in terms of his phenomenal roles is thus not conducive to the full flowering of man's essential personality. Fulfillment can only come by discovering one's real self. This requires detachment, if not complete withdrawal from the world. To be detached is to be free from the attractions and allurements of the world. Herein lies the distinctive dignity of man that inheres in his capacity of becoming a really human being. This capacity enables him to gain the competence ultimately for looking on himself and the world in a new light. By discovering his self, man becomes free and develops a nurturant attitude towards the external world. He can, then, develop his soul force to successfully resist and defeat the forces that try to bend him to the will of others.

The two polar views of man sketched above compete for ascendance. As a matter of fact, the view of man as merely a body- mind complex is in ascendance today. It is against this background that we must ask: Where does Gandhi stand in relation to these views? Gandhi offers a very distinct view of man; he emphasises the quest for salvation as the primary end and insists that this end must not be pursued in some cave far from the madding crowd; it must be pursued in this world of here and now. Gandhi accepts the reality of this world as given, however, man has, in his view, to transcend it to successfully resist its overpowering attractions. What is the nature of this transcendence? What factors are necessary to make this transcendence possible? What should be the nature of man and what conditioning attributes are necessary for safeguarding and preserving the personhood of Gandhi's conception? These are some of the questions that are dealt with below.

4.5 HOW GANDHI VIEWS MAN?

One of the stories in the *Panchatantra* illustrates Gandhi's view of man very well. A tiger cub had fallen among goats that brought it up. The cub learnt the language of the goats, adopted their voice, that is, the gentle way of bleating and displayed all the attributes of a goat as any kid of the flock. One day a fierce tiger attacked the herd of the goats. All the

goats fled; the cub remained where he stood, devoid of fear. On being asked by the tiger as to what it was doing among the goats, the cub only bleated its pitiful response. The tiger then seized the cub by the scruff of its neck, and took it to a nearby pond where it was shown its similarity with the tiger. It was then carried to the tiger's den where it was forced to eat a bleeding piece of raw meat. Just as the cub was to protest it tasted blood. The cub was amazed and reached for more meat. And as the meat reached its stomach it felt a transformation. As if waking from a night of deep sleep, the night that had held it long under its spell, the cub stretched its form, arched its back, extended and spread its paws. The tail lashed on the ground and suddenly from its throat burst a terrifying triumphant roar. Watching with satisfaction, the tiger observed, "Now, do you know what you really are? And added, "Come, we shall go now for a hunt together in the jungle".

The story illustrates the process of self-discovery and underlines the fact that there is the self or the soul in everybody enveloped by materiality. As long as this covering of materiality remains intact, the soul remains hidden, unmanifest, and suppressed. It is therefore, necessary to pierce the shell of materiality. But the question is how? Gandhi recognises the brute in man, but he also believes that man can attain perfection, if he so chooses. As he says, "We are perhaps all originally brutes. I am prepared to believe that we have become men by a slow process of evolution from the brute".⁶ He is also willing to concede that it is very easy to remain a brute. He notes that "man must choose either of the two courses, the upward or the downward, but as he has the brute in him he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially when the downward course is presented to him in a beautiful garb".⁷ For Gandhi, modern industrial civilisation does just that.

Gandhi believes that man is the maker of his destiny⁸; he must strive to become perfect. But complete perfection is possible only after the dissolution of the body since the bonds of his flesh limit man. However, man has still to try to elevate himself, to lift himself up from the brute state because he is "a special creation of God precisely to the extent that he is distinct from the rest of his creation."⁹ For Gandhi, perfection in life time means a continuous, ceaseless striving towards knowing one's true nature. This becomes

incumbent upon man since he is different from a brute because he is a moral being. And to stay at the moral plane is to recover one's leonine nature. But what does discovering the leonine nature mean and how is this discovery to be made?

4.6 ELABORATION OF GANDHI'S IDEA OF MAN

Gandhi makes a distinction between external freedom and internal freedom. He notes that a thousand laws enacted to protect man's freedom would fail to do so if man remains a slave internally, i.e. to his passions and appetites. He rejects the notion that external freedom can be the means of ensuring the freedom of the soul within. For Gandhi, it is swaraj (self-rule or auto-control) that guarantees internal freedom. It is "an inward change...it is the transformation of the heart...and that absolute transformation can only come by inner prayer and a definite and living recognition of the presence of the mighty spirit residing within."¹⁰ When this radical change is effected, the outward form takes care of itself; without inward radical change, the outward form is like a white sepulchre.

The inward radical change/ inner transformation, turns away from the phenomenal, to be sure, but it does not imply that a man becomes a law unto himself or rises above the law. If men were to act according to their "lawless law", there would be chaos. Gandhi deems it necessary to have laws for controlling the brute in us whenever it becomes active. Gandhi is certain that man-made laws do not make men free; if anything, they frequently prove to be shackles. If Gandhi looks at man-made laws with distaste, he also condemns reason if it is devoid of morality. He does recognise the eminence of reason in discriminating human from the bestial, but he would not accept it as sufficient ground for effecting deliverance from the laws of nature. Reason can discriminate, compare and relate means to ends. But it cannot produce the force that can lift man up from the bondage of nature. Moreover, reason has only a limited scope and fails to reach many vital areas of decision, effort and concentration. He pleads "not for suppression of reason, but for a due recognition of that in us what sanctifies reason itself"¹¹.

This something that sanctifies reason itself is the object of Gandhi's quest. It is the transcendental centre, which, according to Gandhi, must be the primary concern of every

person. This transcendental centre is God, “that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know”, a mysterious power that pervades everything” but defies all proof. The process of the discovery of the transcendental centre does not mean retiring from this phenomenal world, the world of here and now. Gandhi steers clear of the two opposite extreme dangers. These are totally abandoning the world of everydayness for pursuing the quest of the transcendental centre and strict adherence to *varnashrama dharma*. The former, for example, the Vedant or the Yoga of Patanjali, emphasises the ideal of transcending the sphere of action and duties and rising to a level where one gives up all one’s activities, mental or physical. The other, emphasising the necessity of preserving the social order, argues that an individual is a functioning component of the complex social organism. His concern must, therefore, be to become fully identified with the tasks and interests of his social role, and even shape to this his public and private character.¹²

Gandhi rejects both of these extremes. He recognises the importance of both the polar views, however, rooted firmly in the stream of Indian classical thought, Gandhi believes in pursuing the quest of the transcendental centre along with the performance of worldly roles. For him, “coming face to face with God” or “coming nearer to one’s own maker” constitutes the supreme goal. As he says, “Man’s ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God”.¹³ Gandhi treats truth as the sovereign principle and it stands as a surrogate for God. He therefore declares that “devotion to truth is the sole justification for our existence....Without truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life”¹⁴. The realisation of absolute truth is not always possible. Gandhi says, “as long as I have not realized this absolute truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. The relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.”¹⁵

To hold on to relative truth as a means of realising the absolute truth implies acceptance of the phenomenal world, and the recognition of the importance of the vital concerns of life. And since the notion of relative truth may vary from person to person and from time

to time, conflict may raise its ugly head. Gandhi recognises the eventuality of the occurrence of conflict. He would, however, like to resolve conflicts non-violently since non-violence is the other side of truth. And the test of truth is in action. But action must reflect a commitment to absolute truth without which it is prone to embrace either a relativistic or the absolutist horn of the dilemma.

Truth, validity, actuality subsist only in action, in the unrelenting play of enlightened consciousness on the fact of daily life as expressed in the decisions made from moment to moment, in the crises of sacrifice and laying hold, the acts of Yea and Nay: only in the work, that is to say, wrought by a being in whom enlightenment is continuously alive as a present force”.¹⁶

Action, for Gandhi, is then not only the hearer of truth but also a means of self-disclosure as a precondition of discovering truth. Action in this sense cannot be based on anything other than *ahimsa* (non-violence) since violence destroys the organicity of the situation in which self-disclosure proceeds. But what does the pursuit of truth in society mean? What should be its focus and objective? How can we serve God when we do not know God? Gandhi's reply is clear: “We may not know God, but we know his creation. Service of his creation is the service of God”.¹⁷ Service of God does not come naturally. It comes when one recognises that man is a part of God, a spark of the divine flame, and treats others also as partaking of the same essence. To put it differently, the individual comes to love his fellow men through the love of God.

Service to the creation of God presupposes a belief in unity of all life and, as a consequence of this belief, the treatment of all beings on an equal footing. To quote Gandhi:

I believe in the rock bottom doctrine of *Advaita* (non violence) and my interpretation of Advaita excludes totally any idea of superiority at any state whatsoever. I believe implicitly that all men are born equal. All have the same soul as any other. And it is because I believe in this inherent equality of all men that I fight the doctrine of superiority, which many of our rulers arrogate to themselves.¹⁸

To identify with others is, for Gandhi, to identify with the suffering of others. It is this awareness of the existence of widespread suffering and the necessity of sharing in and, if possible, alleviating the suffering of others that Gandhi would like everybody to embrace as a sacred duty.

4.7 MAN, SOCIETY AND COSMOS

Gandhi's vision of man underlines the need to vanquish the brute in us by a conscious effort for self-development as the basis of self-knowledge. The attainment of self-knowledge is to attune our soul to the divine ground of reality. This attunement makes possible a radical inward change. This radical inward change produces two benign consequences. The first consequence concerns the awakening of nobler feelings in man, which express themselves in treating all life as a unity, service to the creation of God, especially those who stand at the lowest rung of social hierarchy, the Daridranarayan and the last man, and treat everybody with the attitude of *samatwa* (Sameness). Thus envisions a spiritually awakened person who exercises auto-control and reinforces it by undertaking of *Vratas* (disciplining engagements) and *Yama–Niyamas* (principled living). Such a person evinces strict discipline by minimising his wants, even going to the extreme of not having anything that the poorest of men cannot have.

The second consequence is to forge a very intimate and strong bond with the envioning social order. It is in society that a person has to live and interact with others for survival and for the quest of freedom in the spiritual sense. A disordered society does not easily allow a person to get rid of his own disordered interior. Thus it is necessary to achieve compatibility between the needs of a spiritually awakened person and the structure of society. This means three different but interlinked factors. Firstly, if the envioning social order manifests certain deficiencies, they must be removed not violently but peacefully without damaging its prescriptive and cooperative structures. Secondly, the individual must develop sociality so that he eschews the altitude of superiority and aloofness. And, thirdly, an identity between individual and collective good must be sustained.

But the source from which these three factors can smoothly flow out is the development of morality. As he says:

First of all, we shall have to consider how we realize the self and serve our country...for realizing the self, the first essential thing is to cultivate a strong moral sense. Morality means the acquisition of virtue such as fearlessness, truth, *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and so on. Service is automatically rendered to the country in the process of cultivating morality.¹⁹

Given the very intimate relationship between the individual and society, Gandhi considers this relationship as that which obtains between the ocean and the drop. To quote him again:

The ocean is composed of drops of water; each drop is an entity and yet is the part of the whole; “the one and the many”. In this ocean of life, we are little drops. My doctrine means that I must identify myself with life with everything that lives, that I must share the majesty of life in the presence of God. The sum total of this is God.²⁰

The sharing in the majesty of life concretely means dealing with others on the basis of truth and non-violence, practising *swadeshi*, and celebrating life in a completely decentralised political system undergirded by democratic decision-making.

4.8 SUMMARY

Gandhi's conception of man embraces the notion of man's perfectibility. To be fully human means the mounting of a conscious effort to cultivate morality through the process of self-development. The cultivation of morality must take place in the phenomenal world. This signifies not the acceptance of the world as it is but to improve it through reforms so that it serves the existential needs of spiritually awakened person. The real purpose of life is to get release from the world and achieve a situation of non-action. However, action is necessary for the preservation of the cosmic order and the sustenance of the lived world. Selfless service is the principal means of *Lokasamgraha*, that is, the maintenance of the world. It presupposes the interconnectedness of man, society and nature. It emphasises the necessity for disciplining action by morality in order to prevent

the world from sinking into physical misery and moral degradation as well as to make common life decent and dignified. Gandhi insists on the development of detachment as a step forward to becoming *sthitaprajna* (to rise above pain and pleasure). Gandhi considers detachment as negative; he therefore insists on selfless service. For Gandhi, detached selfless service is real *purushartha* (objectives worthy of man's *purushartha*). All this enables the individual to develop the capacity to resist exploitation, oppression and fight tyranny.

4.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine the statement: "Man is nothing more than a body mind complex".
2. Analyse critically Gandhi's view of man.
3. Would you say that the vision of man that Gandhi holds is impossible to attain? If so, why?

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. M.K. Gandhi., *Hind Swaraj*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1938
2. M.K. Gandhi., *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth in Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. (ed by Shriman Narayan), Navajivan Publishing, Ahmedabad, 1968, vol. 2
3. Ramashray Roy., *Self and Society: A Study in Gandhian Thought*, Sage Publication, Delhi, 1984
4. Tu Wei-Ming., *Humanity and Self-cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought* Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley, 1979
5. Jacques Maritain., *Challenges and Renewals: Selected Essays*, Eds. James E. Evans and Leo R. Ward, The University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1966
6. Joan V. Bondurant., *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1958
7. Krishna Chaitanya., *Gandhi's Quest of Being in Becoming*, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1977

End Notes

1. Jacques Maritain, *Challenges and Renewals: Selected Readings*; eds. Joseph and Leo R. Ward (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), P. 285.
2. He is attributed with saying that “*Yavatjivet, sukham jivet; rinam kritwa ghritam pivet; bhastmibhut sharirashya, puaragaman kutah*. (Live happily as long as you live; take loan and drink ghee; there is rebirth of the body, which ultimately turns into ashes.)
3. Max Scheler, *Max Scheler on Knowing and Feeling* ed. Harold J. Bershady (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.29
4. See Kalidas Bhattacharya, “Nature and Freedom,” in F. Mcleod, ed. *Man and Nature* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 104
5. On this point, see Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977)
6. *Harijan*, April 1938
7. *Harijan*, January 1935.
8. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House 1958), Vol. 2, P.202
9. Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (to be herein after referred to as SWMG) ed, Shriman Narayan, 6 vols. (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing Houses, 1969), vol. 6.
10. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), 100 vols. (Delhi: Government of India, Division of Information and Broadcasting.), vol, XXXIV, p. 506
11. SWMG, vol. VI, p.12
12. Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Compbell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), p.151
13. SWMG, VI, p.114
14. CWMG, VI, p.40
15. SWMG, VI, p.95
16. Zimmer, op. cit, p. 176
17. CWMG, LXIII, p. 253

18. Ibid, XXXV, p.1

19. Ibid, X, p.70

20. SWMG, VI, p.109



ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 6

DEBATES ON THE NATURE OF STATE

Structure**6.1 Introduction****Aims and Objectives****6.2 Nature of Modern State: Hegel****6.3 The Pluralist State****6.4 Debate on Advanced Capitalist State****6.5 Easton on Political System****6.6 Conclusion****6.7 Summary****6.8 Terminal Questions****Suggested Readings**

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The state is a central concept in political theory and is the pivot around which politics revolves. The word 'state' is derived from Latin which means a situation or state of being (Sartori 1987, p.278). Machiavelli is the first to use the term but did not define what it is. The state is used to convey a historical or philosophical idea, an eternal form of political community, which is a specifically modern phenomenon (Forsyth, 1987, p.503). A state is defined as a political entity that possesses people, territory, a government and sovereignty. A government is a concrete reality of the state, which is an abstraction. Governments change structurally and can be removed without entailing a change in states. A government is the policy deciding body that makes, declares and enforces a law. It can exist and does exist without a state as history and anthropology reveal. An administration is a set of persons and bodies that work under the direction of government to discharge the ordinary public services. A government is the political executive while administration is the permanent executive. Furthermore, the modern state is highly

differentiated, specialised and complex upholding the difference between the private and the public space. As a modern phenomenon the state develops with sovereignty as its distinguishing trait. The concept of sovereignty reinforces the public-private divide and also between one body politic and another. Concurrently with the idea of sovereignty—and partly in opposition to it—grows another idea that distinguishes the state as a modern phenomenon, namely the idea that it is the people as a single entity who rightly decide and constitute the form of rule within the body-politic. This idea was carried further by the American and French Revolutions that established representative institutions and also developed the idea that the proper end of the state is primarily protection of individual rights. The emphasis on 'pursuit of happiness' as proclaimed by the American Revolution and the notions of liberty, equality and fraternity as declared by the French Revolution answer the willing obedience of citizens to political authority. 'The state as a modern phenomenon may, thus, be defined as the institutional representation of the people's will, enabling it to act effectively in both the normal and extreme situation to secure the defence and welfare of the whole and the rights of the parts—together with this very activity itself' (Forsyth, 1987, p.506). The political apparatuses of the modern states are distinct from both rulers and ruled, with supreme jurisdiction over a demarcated territorial area, backed by a claim to a monopoly of coercive power and enjoying a minimum level of support or loyalty from their citizens (Skinner, 1978, pp.349-58; Giddens, 1985, pp.17-31, pp.116-21).

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The nature of the modern state
- The concept and meaning of pluralist state
- The debate on the advanced capitalist state

6.2 NATURE OF THE MODERN STATE: HEGEL

Hegel describes and analyses in detail the nature of the modern state. The state, for him, represents universal altruism synthesising dialectically the elements within the family and the civil society. It functions in a manner that the interests of everyone are furthered and

enhanced. It represents the universal tendencies within the civil society, thus giving rise to the notion of citizenship. It is 'absolutely rational' with a 'substantive will' realising itself through history and is, therefore, eternal, 'This substantive unity was its own motive and absolute end. In this end freedom attained its highest right. This end had the highest right over the individual, whose highest duty in turn is to be a member of the state' (Hegel, cited in Bondurant, 1967, pp.212-13).

Hegel perceives the state as an end in itself; it is Mind realising itself through history. He emphasises the public nature of the state, but does not distinguish between the private and the public spheres. The indispensability of the state is demonstrated by the fact that the individual qualities and potentialities of good life can be realised only through the state. It is divine will, 'in the sense that it is mind present on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of a world'. It is the most sublime of all human institutions, the final culmination which embodies both mind and spirit deriving its strength from a synthesis of the individual interest with that of the state. If there is a conflict between the two, the citizen would identify with those of the state rather than pursue one's own interests. The state is the individual writ large.

Hegel examines the different components of the state like the rule of law, the bureaucracy, and the monarchy. Rule of Law is one of the key formulations in the *Philosophy of Right* (1821). Hegel does not see law as a hindrance to freedom but as a characteristic of freedom. He espouses a broad and a narrow conception of law. In the wide sense, it is one of the instruments for realising social cohesion with law not as a code but one that reflects ethical values which governed cultural life. In this holistic concept, justice is linked to the institutional ordering of the entire society. In the narrow sense, law is linked to positive legal justice. The emphasis on the conventional principles of law makes him reject a conception of higher or natural law, for modern civil codes are becoming more rational and public. Laws must be universally applied based on impersonal and universal values recognising every person as a legal entity entitled to dispose the objects, which are his property. The quantity of that property is a question of

legal indifference, for what matters is the legal authority to acquire, use and exchange property with others based on the principle 'be a person and respect others as persons'.

An interesting aspect of the Hegelian legal system is its lack of the idea of 'command' normally associated with Hobbes. The determining characteristic of a legal norm is its form, which has its basis on practical rationality. The embodiment of a rule is more important than command, for that gives meaning and shape to the rule of law, distinguishing itself from arbitrary power. In an important distinction between command and law, Hegel asserts that commands and orders are specified purposes for identified people, whereas the ambit of law is wider as it addresses a larger and unknown audience and is equally applicable to all within its jurisdiction. Command is from a superior to an inferior while the sanction of law is its rational authority. He rejects the ancient notion, as exemplified by Aristotle, of the purpose of law, being the realisation of human excellence or full development of human capacities and leaves it to the individual's private discretion. In contrast, the modern rule of law consists of a few necessary features that are common to all and is established by the rationality of free individuals. Laws have to be impersonal, rational, intelligent and written for people to conform and consent. He rejects Burke's appeal to tradition and custom as such attitudes result in ill-feeling and hatred for all laws and legislation.

The Universal Class is the bureaucracy, an important component of the Hegelian State, because of its commitment to impartiality. Unlike the other groups of the civil society, who are primarily interested in their own progression or business, the civil service performs the stupendous service of supervising the entire societal apparatus, which Hegel calls the public business. This class of people will not be recruited from the nobility but from the modern middle class symbolising 'the consciousness of right and the developed intelligence of the mass of people'. For this reason, it becomes 'the pillar of the state so far as honesty and intelligence are concerned' (Hegel, 1969, p.190). It is 'knowledge and proof of ability' and not hereditary that is the criterion for recruitment (Ibid, p.190). In developing this philosophy of the civil service, he differentiates the modern constitutional state from the polis and oriental despotism as the bureaucracy is relatively impersonal.

The constitutional state retains its independence from its ruling groups by mechanisms of free institutions and a civil service. The state is not the personal property of an individual or a group and institutional constraints define and limit the power of governments which do not depend on the virtues of statesmen or citizens. This is because modern constitutionalism is suspicious of the abilities of persons in power to control their passions and prevent abuse of power by the rulers. Rule of law and not rule of men reflect the concern of modern societies enabling the modern constitutional state to act impartially. The civil service, like Plato's Guardians, has the interests of the commonwealth in mind. Hegel is categorical that the bureaucracy shall be open to all citizens on the basis of ability and citizenship. They shall have fixed salaries so that they can resist the temptations of civil society. Unlike Plato's guardians, the universal class functions within a framework where the special interests expressed themselves legitimately within the Assembly of Estates and autonomous corporations.

The Monarchy, for Hegel, is a functional requirement of the modern constitution based on separation and division of powers. He goes to the extent of saying that the division of power guarantees freedom. Hegel differentiates between the doctrine of the separation of powers from his own innovative theory of inward differentiation of constitutional powers, dismissing the former as a false doctrine as it supports total autonomy and independence of each functioning category. His model portrays all these categories as mutually supporting aspects of the same totality. His supreme concern is to find a method that secures the unity and integrity of the state. Absolute separation of powers either leads to a stalemate or causes the self-destruction of the state. To avoid this, Hegel prescribes legally differentiated spheres for the crown, the executive and the legislative body, each cooperating with the other to guarantee freedom to its citizens. Interdependence and harmony of the three important branches are the precondition of continuance of the sovereign state with the monarchy at the apex, signifying this unity. Hegel opposes the idea of an elected monarchy or the American-style President, for, even though it may express the popular will, it still represents a small portion of the constitution, while the monarch embodies, in his view, the whole constitution. Hegel's defence of monarchy has to be understood on the basis of his philosophical framework to find out rational

arrangements within the existing institutions. It does not descend into mysticism as Marx thought. He was not interested in finding a philosophic ruler as Plato nor was he trying to depict a future based on human emancipation within a framework of true democracy like Marx. Such ideas were a negation of the entire approach of Hegel, which was based on the assumption that the real is rational and that the immediate present and not the future is the concern. The Hegelian conception influenced British idealist school in the later part of the nineteenth century, especially in the writings of Bosanquet who exalted state authority. Hegel considers the state as a supreme community because of its comprehensive membership and competence as compared to other associations. It is not only physically supreme but also morally preeminent among the social institutions! It is necessarily right and its opinion will prevail when there is a conflict between its opinion and that of a citizen.

6.3 THE PLURALIST STATE

The Pluralist view of state is based on the idea that the government intends to serve mass interest, even though in practice, it may not do so always. The idea that people will collectively determine the laws that should govern them is traced to antiquity yet for a long period of time divine law defined relations between individuals, including who should and how they should be governed (Carnoy, 1983, p.11). With the breakdown of divine law as a result of the rise of capitalism there were important changes in the old social formations by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the throes of political changes taking place in England, Hobbes and Locke developed their political ideas. The theory of the liberal state based on individual rights and the State acting in the common good developed.

Schumpeter criticises the aforesaid classical and liberal assumptions by pointing out that there is no such as common good as to different individuals, common good is bound to mean different things. The notion of common good is misleading and dangerous, as there rarely exist an agreement among individuals and groups among ends and even if there is one, there will be disagreements about the means to be employed for the realisation of a given end. In modern societies that are economically and culturally diverse there are

bound to be different notions of common good. Citizens are rarely informed or interested in political issues except for those that affect them directly and economically. Within this critique, Schumpeter comes up with an alternative model of how the modern democratic capitalist state does and should function. Reversing the notion of the classical theory that power resides in the people who chose their representatives to represent their interests-the general will, Schumpeter makes the deciding of issues by the electorate secondary to the election of representatives who are to do the deciding. The electorate is left with the power to decide which set of leaders it wishes to have carry out the decision-making process. Schumpeter compares the power of vote to that of money in the market.

Dahl argues further that even though elections rarely reflect the will of the majority, they are 'crucial process for insuring that political leaders will be somewhat responsive to the preferences of some ordinary citizens. Power, according to Dahl, still resides in the voters even though this power is not expressed as majority versus minority 'will'; rather each issue calls forth those voters interested enough in the issue to vote for the politician on the basis of that issue. Political parties help in translating the diverse political demands and help in forming stable governments which equilibrates demand and supply. Both Schumpeter and Dahl argue that individuals function through multiplicity of groups. Dahl points out that power is distributed and shared by many groups in society representing diverse interests and they defend their particular interests through government, creating a proclivity towards 'competitive equilibrium' that benefits the citizens in the long run. Citizens exert control over leaders through regular elections and political competition among groups, parties and individuals. The rule by a series of minorities, called as polyarchy function within the boundaries stipulated by consensus with none being able to dominate but all having a space for their manoeuvre and bargaining. This emphasis on consensus is in contrast to Schumpeter's view of democratic politics, as managed ultimately by competing elite. The competition among groups is the safeguard of democracy, as the latter does not establish the sovereignty of the majority but a rule by 'multiple minority oppositions'. The more is the presence of competing interest groups, the more secure is democracy.

Marcuse is critical of the democratic pluralist defence of advanced capitalism. He points out that though it is generally conceded that the welfare state has lessened inequalities to a considerable degree by improving standards of the poorer sections, it is acknowledged that far from any indication of the withering away of classes it continues with in-built cleavages giving considerable validity to the Marxist analysis of these societies.

Mills criticises American pluralism by arguing that far from being an independent arbiter of national interest, the state is dominated by the power elite of politicians, military and corporate bosses who shape public policy to suit their own ends. Mills' theory involves a three level gradation of the distribution of power. At the top level are those in command of the major institutional hierarchies of modern society—the executive branch of the national government, the large business corporations and the military establishment controlling political power, means of production and death, respectively reinforcing Eisenhower's conception of the military-industrial complex. The pluralist model of competing interests, according to Mills, applies to the middle level—the semi-organised interplay between interest groups and legislative politics that the pluralists mistakenly assume as the feature of the whole power structure of capitalist state. At the bottom exist the politically fragmented masses (1956, pp.167-68). Mills' account explains the close nexus between economic elite and governmental elite: the corporate rich and 'the political directorate'. He asserts that the growing centralisation of power in the federal executive branch of government is attended by a declining role for professional politicians and a growing number for 'political outsiders' from the corporate world (1956, p.235). Notwithstanding this, Mills declares that it is misleading to consider that 'the political apparatus is merely an extension of the corporate world, or that it had been taken over by the representatives of the corporate rich' (1956, p.170). He tries to distinguish his position from that of what he terms as 'simple Marxian view' that holds economic elite to be the real holders of power and therefore uses the term power elite rather than the 'ruling class' for that implies too much economic determinism (1956, pp.276-77). He also asserts that his analysis is compatible with the Marxist view. Furthermore, he also maintains that the political, military and economic elite are considerably autonomous, often in conflict and rarely act in unity.

Miliband thinks that there is no room for debate about details in Mills' account but the background thesis is reasonably satisfactory. Dahl criticises the analysis on the grounds of insufficient data. He notes that a theory, which cannot be converted to empirical evidence, could not claim to be a scientific theory. The burden of such a proof has to be provided by the theorist and not by his critics. The argument that 'A is more powerful than B' is both ambiguous and meaningless without specificity. No comparison is actually possible when two actors are performing different and not identical functions. Any ideal of political equality is Utopian and the absence of political equality does not mean that there is a ruling elite. Parsons praises the copious data of Mills and agrees that Mills has put it to good use but rejects Mills' claim, as the data is not enough for sufficient empirical grounding. He argues that Mills ignored two very important developments: first, the dynamics of a maturing industrial society; and second, the altered position of the United States in the world in the context of the relative decline of Western Europe, rise of the Soviet power and independence of colonies. The combination of all these factors has led to enormous enhancement of American power in a short time and with their profound repercussions, old political institutions have disappeared. In an essentially non-political society and localism this increase in relative importance of government and its power, has created a great degree of tension in a society where Jeffersonian individualism places primacy in economic values of production. Ignoring these important developments, Mills makes large generalisations on the basis of short-term experience. Parsons argued that the structure of American political leadership was far from settled. Mills provides for a very selective treatment of a complex problem. Without dismissing power to be illegitimate, one should accept it as essential and a desirable component in a highly organised society. However, it is clear that power can be abused and needs many safeguards and controls. In Mills there is no explicit position except that he is partly pre-liberal, anti-capitalist and pro-socialist within the Jeffersonian tradition, but such loose identities are no longer enough for serious model building. Sweezy finds the greatest merit in the book in its graphic description of those who ruled America. He considered it to be an authentic voice of American radicalism. However, he also criticises Mills for blurring class relationships in the light of the dynamics of the class system in areas of the process of co-optation and the loss of high-class status. In short, even the admirers on the left like Miliband and

Sweezy did not consider Mills' account to be rigorously worked out and empirically verifiable thesis of power in contemporary United States.

6.4 DEBATE ON ADVANCED CAPITALIST STATE

Gramsci rightly points out that an advanced state rules by perfecting the ideological apparatus rather than through repressive measures like force and terror. The state consists of two elements: (1) the coercive apparatus comprising of the police, army and judiciary that uphold the authority of the ruling class through force and (2) the other includes various institutions of civil society such as media, church, schools, clubs, parties and trade unions, the instruments of hegemony, the means by which the ruling class secures spontaneous adherence of the rest of the society to comply to its rule. Hegemony allows a ruling group to hold on to power long after it has ceased to be the dominant class. For Gramsci, the tenacity and strength of societal forces within advanced capitalism make it possible for the capitalist class to assert its hegemony. In the process it renders a genuine communist revolution as a virtual impossibility unless carried out in the Leninist manner.

The democratic pluralist view provides the most popular defence of advanced capitalism as a viable and relatively just system. Its major emphasis is that within advanced capitalism there is equality of opportunity, for most, if not all the people, and because of this crucial factor, the concepts of a ruling class, power elite and class politics are largely irrelevant. In these systems 'all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process of decision' (Dahl, 1965, pp.137-38). Since 'the fundamental political problems of the industrial and political citizenship have been solved, conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and the democratic left has recognized that an increase in overall state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solution to economic problems' (Lipset, 1963, p.443). This theory of classlessness within advanced capitalism has obvious limitations. Though it is generally conceded that the welfare state has lessened inequalities to a considerable degree by improving living standards of the poorer sections, it is acknowledged that far from any indication of withering away of classes, it continues with inbuilt cleavages. In other words, the Marxist analysis of these societies still retains validity to a very considerable degree.

In recent times, one of the most penetrating class analyses of the welfare state has emerged in the writings of Ralph Miliband, who in his *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969) makes a detailed critique of the pluralist view by asserting the superiority of the Marxist analysis. He begins by examining the concepts of ruling class or the power elite, which the pluralists totally ignore. Advanced capitalist countries are highly industrialised and a large portion of their activity is under private ownership and control. Miliband points out that there is state intervention, of varying degrees, in the economic life. Their economic base is identical, resulting in notable similarities within their social structure and class distribution. A relatively small number of people continue to own a very large and disproportionate share of wealth deriving their incomes from ownership. This class is the ruling class in the Marxist sense. Despite 'all the instances of growing or achieved 'classlessness' . . . the proletarian condition remains a hard and basic fact in these societies, in the work process, in the levels of income, in opportunities or the lack of them, in the whole social definition of existence' (Miliband, 1969, p.16).

These affluent societies also carry with them large sections of people who live in misery. Managerial capitalism is not a selfless neutral institution but maintained definite class interests. They appeared social in character but exist largely for private purposes. The social origins of this managerial class are similar to people with large incomes and ownership of property. The elite recruitment is mostly hereditary. Education is very important to rise in the ladder, though the elite institutions are usually accessible to upper and middle classes. The working class students do not get better jobs. The differences among the dominant classes are confined within a given ideological framework. The property owners control the state system. For instance, a very small percentage of the American army officers come from the working class background. It is the same case in Sweden and Japan. The main purpose of the government is to further the interests of capitalism for it, 'genuinely believed in the virtues of capitalism, and . . . have accepted it as far superior to any possible alternative economic and social system' (Ibid, p.70). Contrary to the general belief, the higher civil service is also not neutral. The military maintains close relationships with large-scale business houses. The government appoints judges who, in turn, appoint conservative judges. All these factors combine to create an

imperfect competition. In different ways this process is legitimised. For instance, the bourgeois political parties are in a position to spend more money than the working class. Miliband also points out that the most significant political fact of advanced capitalism 'is the continued existence in them of private and ever more concentrated economic power. As a result of that power, the owners and controllers in whose hands it lies, enjoy a massive preponderance in society, in the political system, and in the determination of the state's policies and actions' (Ibid, p.265). The basic fact in these societies is that unequal economic power produces unequal political power.

It is the capitalist context of generalised inequality in which the state operates which basically determines its policies and actions. The prevalent view is that the state in these societies can be and indeed mostly is the agent of a 'democratic' social order, with no inherent bias towards any class or group; and that its occasional lapse from 'impartiality' must be ascribed to some accidental factor external to its 'real' nature. But this too is a fundamental misconception; the state in these class societies is primarily and inevitably the guardian and protector of the economic interests which are dominant in them. Its 'real' purpose and mission is to ensure their continued predominance, not to prevent it (Ibid, pp.265-66).

Miliband's instrumentalist view argues that the capitalists use the state as a means for domination in society. The Structuralists like Althusser (1969) stress the ideological and structural mechanisms that help the ruling class maintain itself in power using both force and consent. Elaborating on Althusser's basic formulations, Poulantaz (1973) relates it to the major function of capitalism, namely the reproduction of the capitalist society in its totality. The state along with maintaining the political interest of the ruling class also performs the functions of ensuring cohesion and equilibrium in society in a manner that blurs class divisions. As a result, social relations appear competitive and individual-based. Any notion of class and class struggle disappears in that situation. The competitive party system concealed the contradictions, factions and disunity. It does not allow hegemony of any particular class, including the bourgeoisie. Since the state is not the instrument, as Miliband assumes, of a dominant class, it is a relatively autonomous and a stabilising factor. The Structuralist view, like the instrumentalist one, does not deal with

the mechanism of change or the essential reasons for the continuance of the capitalist state.

Marcuse accepts the fact of inequalities in advanced capitalism and its irrationalities; yet he concludes that there is no probable escape from it because there is some rationality in these irrationalities which are cherished and valued by all, irrespective of class and status. One of these is the prevailing false consciousness in an overwhelming number which allows disguised violence of the state to continue making the state look legitimate to the majority of the people.

6.5 EASTON ON POLITICAL SYSTEM

Easton rejects the use of the term state both historically and in its contemporary use. It is not an analytical tool and comes into frequent use only since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and developing fully in the nineteenth century. In between, it served two important functions: (a) universalistic claims of the Medieval Church and (b) rivalries and competitions of local feudal lords. To combat these two challenges “the state concept became a crucial myth in the struggle for national unity and sovereignty. It is both vague and imprecise because of the many conflicting claims and interpretations which cannot provide the basic tools of a scientific analysis”.

The concept of the state has no utility for empirical work and “its importance lies largely in the field of practical politics as an instrument to achieve national cohesion rather than in the area of thoughtful analysis”. The use of the concept of the state has three serious limitations: (a) it does not allow any distinctiveness of the political science analysis from the other social sciences; (b) it does not help in working out a satisfactory definition and (c) it concentrates on particular episodes rather than emphasising on the general characteristics.

The basic limitation of the concept of the state is that it concentrates on the specific and the particular rather than on the general framework which will allow study of a wide variety of institutions. It does not allow study of formations where the state does not exist. The state is just one form of political institutions and not the only one as social

anthropology has established. The universality of the political is restricted by the state and the fact remains that the state originates only in some specific historical setting.

In this effort at broadening the meaning of political participation, Easton includes all the political activities that affect the entire policy making process, the cumulative effect of all these factors forms the political system. Political system, with its unique characteristics, would be different from other systems like the economic system. These concepts become crucial in comprehending this differentiation and identification, policy, authority and society. Policy means allocation of values. It has two parts, formulation and execution of a policy. Policy is much wider than a formal or legal decision-making process. Political science is not concerned with all value allocations but only “with authoritative allocations or policies”. The distinctiveness of political research lies in identifying the values that influence and affect authoritative allocation.

The concept of authority is linked to obedience. The societal basis of authority is the notional concept of universal application, though a particular policy normally affects a small segment of the entire society. The data for political research is broadly differentiated between the situational and the psychological. Within the situational data there are three different categories: (1) the physical environment (2) the non-human organic environment and (3) the social environment as a consequence of social interaction. The basic distinction between the situational and psychological data leads to the adoption of the idea of political behaviour, which makes the departure from the traditional approach, which ignores this distinction. However, moral framework is also essential for a constructive approach both for rational enquiry and in formulating a systematic theory. For elaborating on this moral framework of research, Easton makes a critical assessment of value premises of traditional political theory based on historical research.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The wide diversity that is reflected in the various theories and practices of the state indicate the extreme complexity of dealing with this important concept. Today the debate is within the framework of liberal democracy, between the individualists and

communitarians. Owing to a larger consensus between the pluralists and the Marxists, a convergence in broad terms is also visible in the theories of the state, with emphasis both on structure (Marxist-elitist preference) and agency (the pluralist emphasis). However, one major inadequacy of the theories of the state, more in the case of pluralists and less in that of the Marxists, has been its lack of comprehension of the international impact of globalisation, which makes these theories locally dated. In this age of globalisation, a theory of the state must reflect both, on its relative autonomy and subordination in a world where most of the decisions are emerging from centre, beyond the jurisdictions and control of the individual nation state.

6.7 SUMMARY

The state is a central concept in political theory and is the pivot around which politics revolves. The word ‘state’ is derived from Latin which means a situation or state of being. Machiavelli is the first to use the term but did not define what it is. The state is used to convey a historical or philosophical idea, an eternal form of political community, which is a specifically modern phenomenon. The wide diversity that is reflected in various theories and practices of the state indicate the extreme complexity of dealing with this important concept. Today the debate is within the framework of liberal democracy, between the individualists and communitarians. Owing to a larger consensus between the pluralists and the Marxists, a convergence in broad terms is also visible in the theories of the state, with emphasis both on structure (Marxist-elitist preference) and agency (the pluralist emphasis). However, one major inadequacy of the theories of the state has been its lack of comprehension of the international impact of globalisation, which makes these theories locally dated. Today’s theory of the state must reflect both on its relative autonomy and subordination in a world where most of the decisions are emerging from centre beyond the jurisdictions and control of the individual nation state.

6.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Define the state and what are the distinguishing features of the modern state?
2. Critically dissect Hegel’s analysis of the state
3. Explain the debate on the advanced capitalist state. What are its criticisms?

4. What is a pluralist state? Explain with reference to the views of Schumpeter and Dahl.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Block, F., *Revising State Theory: Essays in Politics and Postindustrialism*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1987.

Bondurant, J., *The Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967.

Carnoy, M., *The State and Political Theory*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1983.

Dahl, R.A., *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1965.

Dunleavy, P., and B.O' Leary., *Theories of the State*, Macmillan, London, 1987.

Entreves, A.P.D., *The Notion of the State*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967.

Forysyth, M.G., 'State' in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Political Thought*, (ed.) D. Miller, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987.

Giddens, A., *The Nation State and Violence*, Macmillan, London, 1985.

Hegel, G.W.F., *Philosophy of Right*, Trans. T.M. Knox, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969.

Hoffman, J., *Beyond the State: An Introductory Critique*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995.

Levine, A., (ed.), *The State and its Critics*, Edward Elgar, England, 1992.

Lipset, S.M., *Political Man*, Doubleday, New York, 1963.

Miliband, R., *The State in Capitalist Society*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1969.

Mills, C.W., *The Power Elite*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1956.

Oppenheimer, F., *The State*, Free Life Editions, New York, 1975.

Sartori, G., *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Chatham House Publishers, Chatham, NJ, 1987.

Skinner, Q., *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 Vols., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978.

Vincent, A., *Theories of the State*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987.

Structure**7.1 Introduction****Aims and Objectives****7.2 Meaning****7.3 Types of Democracy: Liberal, Marxist, Social Democracy****7.4 Practice and Problems of Democracy****7.5 Conclusion****7.6 Summary****7.7 Terminal Questions****Suggested Readings**

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The idea of Democracy can be traced to antiquity while its actualisation is more in the recent past, in particular, in the post Second World War period. It is with the emergence of mass democracies, made possible by the extension of universal adult franchise since the second half of the twentieth century, that democracy has become an acceptable and preferred form of government. Churchill considered it as a bad form of government but the others, even worse. Today, it is seen as the best practicable and the best possible form of government which is in contrast to the earlier perceived view of it being unworkable and unjust.

Democracy is a composite word of two Greek words, *demos* meaning people and *kratia* meaning rule. It is the people, who are both rulers and ruled, unlike other systems like monarchy, dictatorship or oligarchy where there exists a distinction between the ruler and the ruled. In a democracy there are no permanent rulers and all people have equal powers and are equal under the rule of law. While in ancient times, democracy meant the rule of

people, its modern version coalesces rule of people with notions of individual rights and limited state power.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The meaning of the term ‘democracy’
- The types of democracy
- The practices and problems in democracy.

7.2 MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

There is considerable ambiguity about the meaning of people though the overriding meaning of *demos* is community assembled in the *Ecclesia* (Assembly). Sartori (1987, p.22) points out that people means: a great many, lower class, an organic whole, absolute majority and limited majority. In ancient Athens, the cradle of democracy, people meant the adult male citizens of Greek parentage. But with the extension of franchise since the middle of the nineteenth century, the electorate of today consists of all adult men and women. Initially, franchise was restricted to the educated and propertied men. But with the extension of franchise came democratisation of society. This resulted in active citizenry and brought about a sense of equality that undermined old customs of deference and subordination, and thus established a link between democracy and equality. Along with universal suffrage came public education and reforms of electoral systems in the West. Subsequently, these sentiments spread to the colonial world with its people demanding rights of self-determination rather than mere self-government. People mean the electorate, the voting population indicating the presence of a single cohesive body with common interests. This perception was the basis of the classical theory of democracy from Locke to J.S. Mill. However, this perception is challenged by the modern pluralists. Elections, public opinion and Gallup polls are the different techniques through which the opinion of the people is mirrored. According to Sartori, democracy is the system in which none enjoy unconditional and unlimited power. Limiting and restricting power and making it accountable are the key to democracy. Historically, in the West, liberal constitutionalism precedes democracy. According to Zakaria (2003), the

focus is on the protection of individual's autonomy by providing a bulwark against any form of coercion perpetrated by the state, society or church.

Democracy also means government by consent that is elicited through periodic competitive elections that register voters' decision in a free and fair manner. Election is the key mechanical process through which democracy functions but what is more important is the condition under which a citizen gets the information, for 'the opinion of the governed is the real foundation of all government' (Dicey, 1905, p.3). Easton (1965) refers to three levels of consensus: (a) consensus at the *community level* or basic consensus; (b) consensus at the *regime level* or procedural consensus and (c) consensus at the *policy level* or policy consensus. The first refers to the same value beliefs and value goals that are shared by a given society. This is a facilitating condition of democracy. The second with the rules of the game of which the most important is the way conflicts are resolved. Usually in a democracy, conflicts are resolved through majority rule but if that is not acceptable then there has to be an agreement (a) on the rules for disagreeing and for processing disagreements and (b) disagreements within such rules are those that democracy protects and extends. The level of consensus over policies emerges through discussion, which, according to Barker (1942, p.67) is the 'basis and essence of all democracy'. The second and the third are necessary conditions of democracy and its presence indicates the beginning of democracy. In defining democracy one has to also take into account two aspects: procedural and substantive. The former refers to mechanisms of free, fair and competitive elections by which governments are held accountable and a constitutional framework that guarantees and protects rights and liberties. The substantive aspect pertains to socially based value judgements such as equitable income distribution. Dahl (1989, p.5) points out that the substantive aspect of democracy gets strengthened only if desirable results can be obtained through 'collective decision-making processes'.

The notion of human equality is the foundation of democracy. Equality means equal intrinsic worth of all human beings in making collective decisions and 'the good or interests of each person should be given equal consideration'. It also implies the need to

rationally justify discrimination and preferential treatment. The idea of equality before law was an established feature of Athenian democracy. Its modern variant is underlined by the assertion that all individuals have equal and inalienable rights. Equality before the law means equal rights and equal laws, and after Napoleonic period and the Restoration, the liberal democratic demand for equality came to include three specific demands: (1) equal universal suffrage to every adult; (2) social equality understood as equality of status; of not giving much importance to class and wealth distinction; and (3) equality of opportunity, of giving achievement and talent as the basis of access to institutions. The notion of career open to talent is an important consequence of the American and French Revolutions and set aside ascribed status and favoured acquired status, of opening administrative and political positions to talent, aptitude and merit rather than birth and status.

Modern day democracy is representative or indirect in nature as people elect their candidates through a process of elections for a constitutionally stipulated period of time and the representatives in turn mirror the views of their constituency and act as link between the people and the government. Representative democracy is most suited for present day mass democracies. The idea of representative democracy, in its embryonic form, exists in the writings of Locke but its full-fledged meaning becomes clear, as a result of spread of franchise and institutionalisation of democracy procedures and practices in the nineteenth century, in the works of later liberals like Bentham, James and John Stuart Mill. Representation is through various means, from proportional representation followed in many European and Scandinavian countries to the first-past-the-post-system that exists in Britain and India. Representation is secured through an effective and viable two or multi-party system. It is the acceptance of the party system and with it, the plurality among individuals that distinguishes modern liberals from the classical liberals for whom factions and parties represented divisions. Political parties became important with the extension of franchise to the larger sections of the population. Parties as mediators between the people and the state offer direction to government and steer the ship of the state. It functions as agents of elite recruitment of candidates for public office, serve as agents of interest aggregation by transforming a multitude of

specific demands into more manageable ones as proposals. It filters various demands and decides which one should go through.

Ancient democracy was direct or participatory with citizens participating, unmediated continually and directly, in the tasks of the government. Direct democracy does not distinguish between civil society and state. Its modern variant is participatory democracy with a subtle difference that participation need not necessarily carry the implication of ultimate decision-making power. Techniques such as referendum/plebiscite are frequently used to elicit people's views and opinion on some political questions directly. Switzerland follows this practice (since the sixteenth century).

7.4 TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

Modern representative democracy began as liberal democracy. Historically, the establishment of the liberal state that emerged from the ashes of absolutism in the late 17th century paved the way for a secular and national system of power with fixed territory, control of the means of violence, impersonal power structure and legitimacy as its characteristics. The transition from absolutist to modern state systems with governments deriving their legitimacy and consent from people was brought about by the two revolutions, the English (1640-88) and the French (1789).

Liberal Democracy consists of two interdependent ideas: liberal component signifying limits to political power and democratic component for people's rule, participation and representative institutions. As Sartori (1995, p.102) puts it succinctly, liberalism stands for 'freeing the people' and democracy for 'empowering people; demos-protection meaning safeguarding people from tyranny and arbitrariness, and demos-power meaning the implementation of popular rule. The liberal state started as a constitutional and limited state before it became a democratic one. There could be formal democratic states like the post Revolutionary Iran, according to Fukuyama (1992, p.44) without being liberal. Liberal democracy, in course of its evolution, developed from protective to developmental notions democracy (Held, 1987).

Locke furnishes the bases of a liberal state with the concepts of limited state, consent – direct and tacit- as the basis of government, legislative supremacy, individual rights as prior to and independent of government and the principle of majority rule. Montesquieu elaborates on Locke's suggestion of separation of powers and makes it the institutional requirement of government to curtail the highly centralised authority and ensure virtuous government through checks and balances. The American Constitution of 1789 is the first liberal constitution that created a republic based on representative institutions. The early liberal vision, in course of time fused with democratic elements of participation and representation through the widening of franchise, establishment and growth of political parties and interest groups paved the way for a liberal democratic state. Individual rights till the early part of the 19th century meant rights of the propertied male individuals making franchise and participation oligarchic and patriarchal. In Britain, only six percent of men had the right to vote prior to 1832 Reform Act bringing about a wide gulf between theory and practice of democracy.

The English Utilitarians- Bentham and James Mill- played an instrumental role in pleading for making suffrage universal as that would make governments accountable and less whimsical. Bentham specifically points out that good government is possible only with 'democratic ascendancy', by granting people the power to select and dismiss their rulers. He drafts a complete scheme of parliamentary democracy pleading for secret ballot, annual elections, equal electoral districts, annual parliaments, a scheme for elementary, secondary and technical public education, election of the Prime Minister by the parliament, abolition of Monarchy and the British House of Lords, unicameralism, checks on legislative authority and rejection of plural voting. The Utilitarians defend representation of people, for each individual has to be represented and therefore should have the right to vote. Bentham defends women's right to vote but tactically rejects it subsequently so as to not jeopardise the cause. James Mill defends representative government as the best option. John Stuart Mill, taking a cue from Tocqueville, insists on the need to defend minority rights and specifies and limits the powers of legally elected majorities. Mill defends representative democracies but believes these would work successfully in small and homogenous states. Post J.S. Mill liberals, like Green, revise

liberalism by making common good and positive freedom rather than private gain as the chief function of the state and that the latter must intervene to ensure the wellbeing for all, an essential precondition for a liberal society. Keynes advocates state intervention to ensure full employment and control of trade cycles. The acceptance of Keynesianism was first reflected in the New Deal in the US in the 1930s and then in the Beveridge Report of 1942 in Britain that inaugurated the welfare state at the end of the Second World War. Public opinion was for state regulation of the markets but some swam against the current and the most noteworthy was Hayek.

Classical liberal democratic theory is criticised by the Marxists and the Elitists. The latter point out that in every society it is the elite rather than the people who rule. The strength of the elite varies: psychological reasons for Pareto, organisational abilities for Mosca and Michels and technological expertise according to Burnham. Schumpeter tries to make democracy and elitism compatible. He points out that classical theory sets impossible high standards by stating that it knows the will of the people assuming people to be homogenous whereas in all societies there is multiplicity of conflicting wills. Another fallacy is the assumption that it depends on a high level of rationality. Schumpeter defines democracy as a political method to arrive at political, legislative and administrative decisions. Democracy is competition among governing elites and establishes an analogy between political behaviour and market behaviour. Pluralists accept diversity and contend that the modern liberal state is too complex for any single group, class or organisation to dominate society. Politics is the arena for resolving conflicts between different groups who represent the divergent dominant interests of society. Pluralist democracy or polyarchy, according to Dahl, does not establish the sovereignty of the majority but a rule by 'multiple minority oppositions'. Dismissing the concerns of Madison, Mill and Tocqueville about the tyranny of the majority is misplaced for a tyrannous majority is impossible because elections express the preferences of different competitive groups rather than the wishes of a strong majority. Democracy is different from dictatorship which is a government by minority. The preconditions for a functioning polyarchy are consensus on the rules of procedure, consensus on the range of

policy options and consensus on the legitimate scope of political activity which act as a bugger against oppressive rule.

Marxist Democracy offers a critique and an alternative to liberal democracy. It criticises the formal conception of equality offered by liberal democracy on the grounds that political equality would be farcical in the absence of economic equality, the latter existing as a result of the institution of private property. For democracy to become a reality, a rule by the people, the non-propertied, there is a need to abolish private property and capitalism. This would be possible when the working class, the true creators of wealth overthrow capitalism and create an alternative, the socialist democracy. Marx and Engels envision a majoritarian socialist revolution led by the working class wherein the proletariat is raised “to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy”. Socialist democracy would be a true one since for the first time, the proletarian majority would rule whereas, all along states have been ruled by a minority, representing the interests of the small but dominant and powerful possessing class. The proletarian revolution will destroy the capitalist state machinery and in doing so, the state ceases as an organised power of one class oppressing another. In 1850s, Marx and Engels invoke the Babouvist-Blanquist conception of educational dictatorship by an enlightened minority as a tactical compromise slogan against the Anarchists and the reformists justifying the need for dictatorship to fill the vacuum as a result of the destruction of the old order and till the creation of the new order. The 1871 Paris Commune is described as ‘the glorious harbinger of the new society’ that Marx and Engels portray and subsequently, Engels identifies the Commune as the prototype of the dictatorship of the proletariat, a controversial and ambiguous phrase in Marxism. In 1872, Marx and Engels also point that in countries like England, Holland and the US which has witnessed steady progress of democracy and the widening of suffrage socialism could be attained through peaceful means but this thesis never moved to the centre-stage of their analyses, and they continue to maintain that socialism would be attained only through a revolution. However, Marx failed to provide for institutional safeguards against arbitrariness and misuse of power. Bakunin, the chief theoretician of anarchism prophetically points out

that the Marxist utopia- the dictatorship of the proletariat could become dictatorship on the proletariat.

Lenin reiterates Marx's core arguments on the need for revolutionary violence and the rationale for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the two-phased development to communism but introduces the idea of the vanguard of the proletariat, the revolutionary party, as he too like Bernstein came to view the proletariat as having lost its revolutionary zeal. While Bernstein uses it to formulate the credo of democratic socialism, Lenin reaffirms the Marxist vision that revolution is the only way to realise socialism. The Leninist vision is criticised by Kautsky, Luxemburg and Trotsky. For Kautsky, socialism and democracy as inter-dependent and any attempt to introduce socialism minus democracy would degenerate into a dictatorship. He describes the Bolshevik revolution as a coup d' etat as it was a minority revolution. Luxemburg too was worried that elimination of representative institutions like the Constituent Assembly in USSR would paralyse public life as "freedom is always and exclusively the freedom for the one who thinks differently". Both Luxemburg and Trotsky feared that the dictatorship of the proletariat would eventually become dictatorship of the party, and within the party eventually of a coterie and one single person. This became true with the rise of Stalin to power.

Social Democracy accepts the capitalist free market as the most efficient system but insists on the need for wise stewardship of public agencies to ensure common good. As articulated by the 1959 Bad Godesberg Programme, it includes political liberalism, mixed economy, welfare state, Keynesian economics and equitable and free society. It rejects the idea of revolutionary transformation of capitalism and believes in the simultaneous realisation of both socialism and democracy as capitalism had undergone substantive structural changes since the late 19th century with the rise of the middle class of salaried persons and technocrats. Lassalle and subsequently, Bernstein were its main theoreticians. Social democracy builds on the institutions of liberal democracy- constitutionalism, rule of law, free market, property rights and civil liberties with human

visage with the aim of ensuring growth, efficiency, competitiveness, equity and just reward within a democratic framework.

7.5 PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY

In the last quarter of the twentieth century democracy has triumphed over different shades of authoritarianism, both of the right and of the left. This development was made possible by the defeat and collapse of the two important rivals to liberal democracy—fascism and communism. Fascism, with its anti-theory stance, had no democratic principle and its objections to democracy were total. However, the claim of communism was different as it proclaimed that its version of democracy would be truer and fuller than liberal democracy. This claim turned out to be false. The core idea of the communist variant of democracy was the idea of collective equality and not individual freedom. It was first established in Russia in 1917 and was then extended to Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, Vietnam and few other countries over a period of time in the post Second World War with stress on full employment, universal state-sponsored education, elimination of a privileged economic class which is inevitable in capitalism and people's democracy with only non-antagonistic contradictions surviving. However, in this idealised version, three crucial elements constitutes the essence of democracy: (1) participation that is free and not coerced; (2) competition between different political parties for power within a framework of a constitution with the victors not in a position of enjoying total power and the defeated not obliterated altogether and (3) enjoyment of liberty that includes rights of free association, free speech and to own property. In the evolution of constitutional democracy three different inputs, each with its own distinctiveness have surfaced providing three models of democracy as it is practiced today and these are (1) liberal democracy as it originated in Britain and practised in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US (2) social democracy and (3) mercantilism.

Within liberal democracies there are variations. Britain has witnessed two opposite frameworks of libertarianism and collectivism providing two alternative models of good political and social order. Libertarianism has emphasised the existence of natural harmony in society without any need for state mediation, and advocates self-regarding

action. It cautions against dangers of concentration of power and points out the importance of the rule of law. In contrast, collectivism has denied this emphasis on individuality by propounding a social philosophy that highlights the importance of public good, need for social justice and of proper organisation of society. The US is committed to free market but did see in the 1930s the beginning of state regulation in the form of the New Deal and then in the mid 1960s, the Great Society Programme to tackle poverty, and provide for social security. Despite these measures, regulations are much weaker and social expenditure and taxation is much lower in the US than in other industrialised democracies. This is because most Americans believe in the virtues of capitalism and are sceptical of state power. The ethical support to capitalism emerges out of puritan ethics, which means acceptance of competitiveness, hard work, thrift and charity. The working of American capitalism teaches us that unbridled economic power of capitalism can be controlled by the will and force of legal and political institutions and by a societal sanction of capitalism. In the 1980s, in both Britain and the US, the welfare measures were reversed in the wake of the rise of the New Right.

Liberal democracy is inseparable from free market and property rights. However there are instances where the economy could be the freest but with restrictive democratic rights as in Singapore. Interestingly modern Singapore's architect and the first Prime Minister and now a senior Minister, Lee Kuan Yew dismisses the British welfare state model as entailing unlimited liability with devastating economic consequences. Singapore has a system of health, education, housing and welfare organised around compulsory savings and the principle of personal responsibility. Critics do point to the asymmetry about the co-existence of free market with political repression. In real world capitalism and economic development do co-exist with authoritarianism but the question is for how long, as there is a belief that the former will undermine the latter. The failures of capitalism also led to rise of authoritarianism as it happened in Germany in the 1930s. In the wake of galloping inflation, which wiped out savings the middle class' concern was economic security as that threatened their wealth rather than who wielded political power. To sustain political democracy the majority must "feel a concern for their rights and the rights of others and are ready to defend them" (Grenville, 1980, p.247) and this was not the case in Germany that time. This led them to support authoritarian rule. The

post-war consensual basis of politics in all the four democratic countries with a strong liberal heritage proves that well-established democracies can create their own safety valves to blunt the edges of major contradictions in society and politics.

Social Democracy with its commitment to private property and the market along with state intervention, as unregulated capitalism leads to inequality and concentration of wealth. To maintain social equilibrium the state intervenes to create positive social rights. Individual initiative is balanced within a framework of collective equality. Though public ownership is inevitable in any kind of economic management, the social democracy state ownership is more extensive as compared to liberal democracies and (3) mercantilism (Mercantilism refers to policies designed to keep the state prosperous through economic regulation and that national trade is best served by increasing exports and collecting precious metals in return. It was a policy that most European states followed between 1600 and 1800).

or the developmental states or the late industrialising nations in non-Western democracies. It is a statist philosophy for which the domestic economy is built around the requirements of the state rather than service to the people. Wealth generation is linked to national identity and pride, power and sovereignty as the entire structure of political power is directed for national consolidation and economic weakness is perceived as a manifestation of national weakness. In the context of national consolidation most European nations were mercantilist and even colonial expansion was an extension of this philosophy of extending protectionism overseas. Even in the modern context, mercantilism is an important economic system, which is followed by a number of nations. A mercantilist nation achieves economic power through a great deal of state initiative with priorities fixed on key industries and accompanied by policies pertaining to taxation and subsidies. Like social democracy it advocates total or partial state ownership of specific industries but with a key difference as mercantilist state spends much less on welfare as compared to a social democratic one. Both private property and markets play an important role but the administration of the state in a mercantilist state.

Mercantilism, in the modern context, is a necessity for the late industrialising countries, which because of colonial interlude missed the first modernising revolution, the Industrial Revolution. This is the primary reason as to why mercantilism is important for democracies like Japan, South Korea and India in the non-European world. There are many critics of mercantilism including the capacity of the state to set proper priorities and achieve the target. Limited competition also creates a fertile ground for waste, corruption, red-tapism and bureaucratisation resulting in what C. Rajagopalachari, the leader of the Swantantra party and the first governor general of free India, aptly called 'permit-licence-quota-Raj'. However, the critics fail to provide an alternative to mercantilism where capitalism is inherently weak and as such without state intervention the basic infrastructure for capitalist expansion and productivity becomes impossible to conceive. The successful mercantilism of Japan and South Korea vindicate the correctness of such a policy, whereas its relative failure in India is a reminder that it need not be fully successful everywhere. The present day mercantilism is not the extreme form of yester-years, which was linked to colonialism and fascism though mercantilism had an authoritarian connotation; but within the specificities of the newly emerging nations after the Second World War and post-war transformation in Japan, the mercantilist interlude has led to successful consolidation of democracy.

It means the consolidation of democracy is possible with a wide variety of economic and social systems except for the communist model of management of modern societies. The communist philosophy rejects in *Toto* the twin institutions of free market and private property for human liberation and in providing a true basis of egalitarian democratic order. Private property leads to domination of a few over the vast property-less multitude and an increase in their gap would lead to a revolutionary situation resulting in the abolition of property which, in reality, means state control of property. Similarly market is eliminated as all kinds of private transactions are banned. It is a total negation of Smith's formulation of the invisible hand of the market and an acceptance of a highly centralised decision-making process which was expected to rationalise economic decision-making process that would benefit the entire society and doing away with the problems of a market economy. Lenin with his utmost conviction about the highly centralised decision-making process as the defining characteristic of communism

distinguishes Marxism from Anarchism on the grounds that the former believes in centralisation, while the latter in decentralisation. However, this highly centralised decision-making process could not compete with the decentralised market either with regard to efficiency or innovation reminding us Popper's succinct observation: 'who plans the planners'. Inefficiency and highly lopsided and wasteful decisions ultimately led to the crumbling of a system that rejects all the important components of liberal democracy. Kennan pointed out in 1946 that the 'Marxist dogma' was the fig leaf covering the brutal realities of the Soviet policy, the origin of that brutality could be traced back to the originators themselves. As such this one clear alternative to liberal democracy after the Second World War failed to provide a credible option to liberal democratic economic and social arrangement. In sharp contrast to this rigid and monolithic model, in the present context liberal democracy, social democracy and mercantilism represent three different models of democratic governance in the contemporary world.

7.6 CONCLUSION

Today constitutional democracy has become universally acceptable and preferred form of government and common to all its three variants are four essential pre-requisites: (1) property as it provides a sense of ownership and responsibility, (2) voting, (3) rule-administration and (4) the law. All the four provide bulwark against both anarchy and despotism and even if one is removed the whole edifice begins to erode (Usher, 2003).

The strength of democracy is derived from the desire of freedom, one of the strongest and the most enduring desire of all human beings as identified by Aron. The universal and liberating force of constitutional democracy has dwarfed all its opponents with manoeuvrability limited to the fringe and has come to occupy the centre-stage and this will continue to be the case in the near future also. Rather, the choice is no longer between capitalism and socialism but between authoritarianism and constitutionalism, the rule of law and independence of judiciary (Ash, 1990, p.21). It is about the ability of democratic regimes to manage their economies so as to provide for growth, protect their environments, safeguard the welfare of the disadvantaged and help other struggling countries to feed their people and find some viable path of development (Bell, 1990, p.

187). In the present age of quick change marked by continuous technological innovations individual choice has expanded in practically all areas of human endeavour and this makes a democracy a necessity for the complex modern societies that we live in. Medvedev (1982) captures this succinctly when he asserts that democracy today has become as much a necessity for economics as it is for politics and implies that governments have to ensure economic productivity, rough economic parity, and civil and political rights. The experience of last five decades in the developing world also demonstrates that an acceptance of constitutional democratic order is *a priori* to both development and social justice (Kothari, 1971 and 1988). It is in providing proper machinery for governing complex mass societies of our times that democracy has become more and more universalised, to the extent that the other variants have become exceptions and transient. Critics of constitutional democracy have been unable to provide a better working formula to the one that constitutional democracy provides, with its commitment to the rule of law, accountability, and limited authority with a flourishing civil society.

7.7 SUMMARY

The idea of Democracy can be traced to antiquity while its practice is more in the recent past, in particular, the post Second World War period. It is with the emergence of mass democracies made possible by the extension of universal adult franchise since the second half of the twentieth century that democracy has become an acceptable and preferred form of government. It is the people, who are both rulers and ruled, unlike other systems like monarchy, dictatorship or oligarchy where there exists a distinction between ruler and ruled. Modern representative democracy began as liberal democracy. Historically, the establishment of the liberal state that emerged from the ashes of absolutism in the late 17th century paved the way for a secular and national system of power with fixed territory, control of the means of violence, impersonal power structure and legitimacy as its characteristics. Liberal democracy was criticised by the Marxists as being formal and unequal. Other variants of democracy were Marxist democracy, social democracy and democratic elitism. With the defeat of fascism and the collapse of communism, constitutional democracy has triumphed. There is no just one variant of constitutional

democracy but many. Broadly, three variants exist in today's world and these are: liberal democracy, social democracy and mercantilism.

7.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Define Democracy and distinguish between the different types of democracy.
 2. What is liberal democracy? Identify its features.
 3. Distinguish between Marxist and social democracy.
-

SUGGESTED READINGS

Ash, T. G. , 'Eastern Europe: The Year of Truth', *New York Review of Books*, 10th February, pp. 17-22, 1990.

Barber, B., *Strong Democracy*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 1984.

Barker, E. , *Reflections on Government*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1942.

Barry, B., *Democracy, Power and Justice*, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989

Beetham, D., (ed.) *Defining and Measuring Democracy*, Sage, London, 1994.

Bell, D., 'On the Fate of Communism', *Dissent*, Spring, pp. 186-88, 1990

Benn, T. *Arguments for Democracy*, Cape, London, 1981.

Birch, A.H., *Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy*, Routledge, London, 2001

Dahl, R. A., *Democracy and its Critics*, New Haven, Yale University Press, Connecticut, 1989.

Dahl, R. A., *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1965

-----., *Polyarchy*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT, 1971.

-----., *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, Yale University Press, London, 1982.

----- ., *On Democracy*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT, 2000.

Dicey, A.V., *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, Macmillan, London, 1905

Easton, D., *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, NJ. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1965.

Fukuyama, F., *The End of History and the Last Man*, Penguins, Harmondsworth, 1992.
Held, D., *Models of Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987.

Hunt, A., *Marxism and Democracy*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1980.

Kothari, R., *Political Economy of Development*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1971.

-----, *State against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance*, Ajantha, Delhi, 1988.

Lijphart, A., *Democracies*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT, 1984.

Macpherson, C.B., *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977.

Medvedev, R., 'USSR after Brezhnev', *Marxism Today*, September, pp. 15-27, 1982.

Mouffe, C., (ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, Verso, London and New York 1992.

Pennock, J.R., *Democratic Political Theory*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1979.

Phillips, A., *Engendering Democracy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991.

Pinkney, R., *Democracy in the Third World*, Viva Books, New Delhi, 2004.

Plamentaz, J., *Democracy and Illusion*, Longman, London, 1973.

Sartori, G., *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, vol.1: *The Contemporary Debate* and vol. II: *The Classical Issues*, Chatham House Publishers, Chatham, NJ, 1987.

-----, 'How Far can Free Government Travel', *Journal of Democracy*, vol.6, no.3, July, pp. 101-11, 1995.

Saward, M., *Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003.

----- (ed.) *Democratic Innovation*, Routledge, London, 2000.

-----, *The Terms of Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998.

Usher, D., *Political Economy*, Blackwell, London, 2003.

Zakaria, F., *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at home and Abroad*, Viking, 2003.

UNIT 8

GRAMSWARAJ TODAY

Structure**8.1 Introduction****Aims and Objectives****8.2 India lives in villages****8.3 Rural underdevelopment****8.4 Gandhian Model of Village Development****8.5 Village Reconstruction****8.6 Gram Swaraj: Meaning and Content****8.7 Basic Principles of Gram Swaraj****8.8 Gram Swaraj: A Complete Republic****8.9 Gram Swaraj: Contemporary Context****8.10 Summary****8.11 Terminal Questions****Suggested Readings**

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi laid great emphasis on the need to revitalise the village panchayats and establish village swaraj in the country. This was because he firmly believed that India lives in its seven hundred thousand and odd villages and that India had no future worth the name unless these villages play their proper part in the life of the country. His scheme of such a village swaraj comprehended every department of rural activity which went to make each village self-governing and self-contained as regards the essential needs of its inhabitants, so that on the solid foundation of a vast network of such little republics peacefully cooperating with one another for mutual benefit, the life of the nation could be broad based. Village sanitation and hygiene, nonviolent rural economy, trusteeship, Khadi and village industries, basic education, panchayati raj are some of the basic means through which village development could be achieved. Village swaraj is man-centered, non-exploitative, decentralised, simple village economy providing for achieving self-sufficiency in its basic requirements of food, clothing and other necessities of life. This Unit helps in understanding the various dimensions of gram swaraj. It also highlights the importance of rural India and

analyses the causes and consequences of village destruction and how gram swaraj can become a reality.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this Unit, you should be able to understand

- the importance of rural India and the reasons for its underdevelopment
- what constitutes a village republic
- the importance of village in Gandhian model of development
- the basic principles of Gram Swaraj and its relevance today.

8.2 INDIA LIVES IN VILLAGES

India lives in villages. Rural areas currently are home to nearly 70% of India's population and have historically accounted for more than half of Indian consumption. Even with increasing urbanisation and migration, it is estimated that 63 percent of India's population will continue to live in rural areas by 2025. In terms of economic output, rural India accounts for almost half (48%) of the country's economy, and the rural markets have the potential to reach \$500 billion by 2020. Thus rural areas will continue to remain vitally important to the Indian economy. However, it is unfortunate that a large percentage of this population lives in high risk and unpredictable environment. Large section of the population lacks even basic services like education, health, drinking water, sanitation and employment. Providing rural India with better access to services, technology, education and health care will reduce inequality, alleviate poverty for hundreds of millions of India's citizens and add an additional engine of growth to India's bulging economy.

The model of development that we adopted has not been able to alleviate the sufferings of the rural population. The problem is further compounded with the declining contribution of agriculture in India's GDP. Agriculture's share in the GDP in 1951 was 65%; it declined to 54% and is currently at 24%. The agricultural growth

rate has remained at around 1.4 % in the last two decades. The condition of the growing number of small farmers in the country is appalling, with lack of support in terms of investment, technology, markets, and rural infrastructure. Small and marginal farmer households account for 84% of all farm households. 57% of India's total employment and 73% of total rural employment comes from this sector. Farming in our country still is the backbone of the livelihood security system for a majority of our population. A mere 5% of the population still controls 25% of agricultural land. The remaining land is broken up into very small family plots, thus becoming uneconomic to cultivate. The land reform measures following independence have rectified some of the problems and inequalities in the system; however, not surprisingly, the large land owners still wield political power and have effectively blocked all attempts to reapportion of agricultural land.

8.3 RURAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT

When we look at the question of poverty in terms of access to work opportunities and basic needs, the rural parts of India are in far worse situation. Self-reliance which made rural people meet their basic needs in the most adverse circumstances stands totally destroyed. Governments, which professed and promised to uplift the rural masses from the miserable living conditions, have failed to do much, if the records of the last six decades are to be seen. The implementation of the rural development schemes scores much less.

Rural underdevelopment has produced a vicious circle of poverty and unemployment. Today the small and marginal farmers are committing suicide as they are in severe debt. They have very little options left; a few migrate to over crowded cities. Not less than 30% of the rural people of India live below the poverty line. These are the people without food security, who cannot afford to send their children to schools, who have no money for health care, who hardly have a roof over their head; and who are partially or completely dependent on government's direct or indirect support. Apart from these the public service delivery mechanism is also very poor. The rural community is so fragmented that they do not depend on each other for help and

support. Sectors like education, health, environment, sanitation and infrastructure continue to be neglected. Gender discrimination is another area of concern. Even in prosperous states like Punjab and Haryana, the sex ratio is declining.

The reasons for rural India's underdevelopment in spite of sixty years of Independence need to be analysed and understood. Poverty, unemployment, hunger, subsistence agriculture and poor public services are the hallmark of our rural development policies. Let us examine as to where we went wrong and how we can revitalise the rural community. It is important to understand the Gandhian model of village development as it provides a number of solutions to the problems faced by the rural community today.

8.4 GANDHIAN MODEL OF VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

The problem of India for Gandhi was not merely political or economic but, in fact, multi-faceted. People needed courage and self-respect to disentangle themselves from slavish mentality developed over centuries of bondage. If these conditions were to be changed, then politics, educational, social reform, economy and technology had to suit the genius of the society. Gandhi was intensely concerned about poverty and wanted to utilise the energy of the vast army of rural unemployed to produce more goods for the nation and some wealth for themselves. Progress was to be measured in terms of human happiness and he wanted a social order that would secure the greatest good of all so that a society could be built in which every man would have equal opportunity and freedom to develop.

There is a perception that Gandhi was against modern machine. However, as early as 1936, Gandhi observed that there would be no objection to villagers using even the most modern machine and tools if they can make and can afford to use. He was against the exploitation of villagers by the cities. He always had the common man in his mind and visualised electricity, ship-building, iron works, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. Industrialisation was planned so as to destroy the village and village crafts but under his scheme, nothing would be allowed to be produced by the cities which could be produced by villagers. The proper function

of the cities was to serve as clearing houses for village products. However, Gandhi preferred to replace large-scale manufacture by cottage production. He believed that only cottage and village industries could bring prosperity back to India. He did not aim at eradication of all machinery but only at its limitation. The political and economic compulsions of the time forced him to take a rigid stand against heavy industries. The British had totally ruined Indian village economy and Gandhi felt that in case India went in for heavy industrialisation, the poorer sections of society could never recover. Therefore his concern for the rural masses moulded his ideology.

The cities and towns did not find a place in Gandhi's swaraj. According to him, the prosperity of the city people has become possible by sucking the blood of villages. The poor villages are exploited by the foreign governments and also by their own countrymen- the city dwellers. The villagers produce the food and go hungry. The half a dozen modern cities serve the evil purpose of draining the life-blood of the villages. The cities with their insolent torts are a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villages. Gandhi regarded the growth of cities as an evil thing, unfortunate for mankind and the world and considered their growth as only a symptom of the malady.

The cities are capable of taking care of themselves. It is the village we have to turn to. We have to disabuse them of their prejudice, their superstitions and their narrow outlook. The task before every citizen is how to prevent the decay of the villages or how to reconstruct the villages of India so that it may be as easy for anyone to live in them as it is supposed to be in the cities. The village movement is as much an education of the city people as of the villagers. Workers drawn from the cities have to develop village mentality and learn the art of living after the manner of villagers. The cities must realise the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them, instead of exploiting them. Exploitation of villages is itself organised violence. If swaraj has to be built on non-violence, then the villages should get their proper place. Therefore there is a need to reconstruct the villages and establish village swaraj.

To be self-sufficient is not to be altogether self-contained. In no circumstances would we be able to produce all the things we need. Though our aim is complete self-sufficiency, we shall have to get from outside the village what we cannot produce in the village. We shall have to produce more of what we can to obtain in exchange what we are unable to produce. Thus, Gandhi spoke of collective inter-dependence and in a way asked for barter if it helped the community as such.

Gandhi was of the view that if the villages perish India will perish too. He constantly reminded all that India is to be found not in the few cities but in its 7, 00, 000 villages. Gandhi greatly understood the real India. His role was crucial in awakening the most dormant and stagnant sector of Indian society, i.e. Indian village. Constructive Programme for rebuilding the life in the countryside became an integral part of the total programme of Gandhi. In fact, to build the Indian villages was his main mission. The prevailing situation could be changed with the active participation and co-operation of the villagers themselves. The blue-print that he gave was unique, provided the real essence of the programmes was understood. Gandhi wanted a society in which every man would have equal opportunity and freedom to develop. For him the villages were the nerve-centers of India and if India were to develop and prosper it should not copy the European model of development but evolve a model that would suit its millions.

8.5 VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION

Gandhi was completely devoted to the cause of village reconstruction, to uplift the standard and quality of rural life through the active participation of people themselves. Since he spoke in their language and lived like them- a life of utter simplicity, he succeeded in enlisting their participation in the freedom struggle. Gandhi held that the individual was of supreme importance and believed in the inner development of man. Accordingly man must pursue truth and non-violence in life if he wants inner contentment. Purity of means was more important than the desirability of the end. If the means were pure, one was bound to reach the goal. As far as possible any imposition or curtailment of individual freedom should be avoided. Equality which is

the basis of economic independent must be achieved through peaceful and non-violent methods. Perhaps Gandhi's attitude to violence makes his message of special significance to the modern age. For him personal liberty was of great value.

Behind Gandhi's insistence on village economy was his grand design of the new civilisation based on sustainable development in the real sense of the term. He wanted the human intrusion into the functioning of the biosphere to be minimised by closing man-dominated systems such as cities, and industrial activities to the point where their net effects on the biosphere approximated those of the natural systems they have replaced. No other system of human settlement can achieve this except the village.

Gandhi attached great importance to education and insisted on good education; he advocated free and compulsory education up to the final basic course. Special importance was attached to women's education especially relating to health and hygiene. He believed that if every activity was conducted on a cooperative basis, there would be no caste as we have today. The village Panchayats would act as major popular agencies involving only the village people. In his structure composed of innumerable villages there would be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life would not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it would be an oceanic circle whose centre will be an individual always ready to perish for the circles of villages till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble sharing the majority of the oceanic circles of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. None will be the first and none the last. In the final analysis, the unit of society should be a village or a manageable small group of people who would be self-sufficient as a unit and bound together in bonds of mutual cooperation and independence.

The basic principles that formed his idea of rural reconstruction were: communal unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition, use of Khadi, promotion of village industries, upliftment of underprivileged classes and women, full employment,

promotion of economic equality and self-sufficient village economy. Above all he preached a simple life and for the development of moral values in society and conceptualised an integrated rural development programme that would serve the Indian needs best.

8.6 GRAM SWARAJ: MEANING AND CONTENT

Swaraj generally means self-governance or 'home-rule'. It lays stress on governance not by a hierarchical government, but by self-governance through individuals and community-building. The focus was on decentralisation and Gandhi thought it necessary to evolve a mechanism to achieve the twin objectives of empowering the people and empowering the state. It was for this that he developed the twin-pronged strategy of resistance (to the state) and reconstruction (through voluntary and participatory social action).

Although the word Swaraj means self-rule, Gandhi gave it the content of an internal revolution that encompasses all spheres of life. At the individual level, swaraj is vitally connected with the capacity for dispassionate self-assessment, ceaseless self-purification and growing self-reliance. Politically, swaraj is self-government and it means a continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government or national. Economically, swaraj means full economic freedom for the toiling masses. Since achieving swaraj could not be possible without the elimination of all forms of dominance, Gandhi undertook a number of constructive activities aimed at reducing the dependence of Indians from the British and simultaneously making them self-reliant.

Gandhi was not only a man of ideas but also a person of great practical wisdom. He worked out meticulously the details of a wide variety of practical things which were vital to building a graceful village life. Gandhi's conception of village was not anchored on the modern (urban-industrial) notion of development but on the post-modern perspective of quality of life. His main emphasis was on the quality of life and his ideal village would contain intelligent human beings, where they would not live in dirt and drunkenness as animals... There would be neither plague nor cholera, nor

small-pox. No one would wallow in luxury and everyone would have to contribute his quota of manual labour.

Gandhi's Gram Swaraj was not the resurrection of the old village but the formation of fresh independent units of villages having a self-sufficient economy. He clearly spelt out the political and economic relations that ought to exist in the village. For him Man was supreme. The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. Self-sufficiency in basic needs was one of the fundamental conditions of Gandhian village reconstruction. Food, clothing and other basic necessities should be produced at the village level itself, leading to full employment and the employment of almost each able-bodied person, which would prevent rural-to-urban migration in search of employment and better opportunities.

His main mission was to make villages a "thing of beauty" as his ideal village would be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It would have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation, but of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages would have courtyards enabling the householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets would be free of all avoidable dust. It would have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It would have houses of worship for all, a common meeting place, common pastures for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education would be the central factor and it would have village Panchayats for settling disputes. It would produce its own grains, vegetables, and fruits and its own Khadi. Gandhi not only visualised the development of the village but the community as a whole. He propagated a theory of interdependence and co-existence which would lead to overall growth and development.

8.7 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GRAM SWARAJ

In Order to grasp the essence of Gram Swaraj we need to understand the basic principles of gram swaraj. These are as follows:

1. Supremacy of man–Full employment

2. Body-labour
3. Equality
4. Trusteeship
5. Decentralisation
6. Swadeshi
7. Self-sufficiency
8. Co-operation
9. Satyagraha
10. Equality of religions
11. Panchayati raj
12. Nai Talim

Everyone needs to have basic necessities of life. The economic constitution of any country should ensure that no one suffers from want of food and clothing. Everyone should get sufficient work to earn his income. To ensure this, the means of production of the elementary necessities of life must remain in control of the masses and monopolisation by a country, nation or an individual would be unjust. Destitution is due to the neglect of this basic principle. Every man has an equal right to the necessities of life. Any plan which exploited the raw material of a country and neglected the potentially more powerful manpower was lop-sided and could never tend to establish human equality. Real planning consisted in the best utilisation of manpower of India.

Gandhi opined that God created man to work for his food and that those who ate without work were thieves. A man who does not do body labour has no right to eat. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be no over-population, no disease and no misery. Such labour would be the highest form of sacrifice. As far as equality is concerned, economic equality would be the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between the capital and the labour. It means the leveling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand and a

leveling up of the semi-starved millions on the other. True economics stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest and is indispensable for decent life.

At the root of this doctrine of equal distribution lies the principle of trusteeship. The wealthy should not be dispossessed of the wealth by violent means but by non-violent way. The rich should be left in possession of their wealth of which they would use what they would reasonably require for their personal needs and would act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. Land was one of the main concerns of Gandhi and he argued for collective ownership and to be operated collectively. Decentralisation was another important principle of gram swaraj. If India had to evolve on nonviolent means, it has to decentralise as centralisation cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Non-violence cannot be built on a factory civilisation but on self-contained villages. The rural economy eschews exploitation altogether and exploitation is the essence of violence.

Gandhi was against the overthrow of the landed class; instead, he advised the zamindars that they should give their tenants fixity of tenure, take a lively interest in their welfare, provide well-managed schools for their children, look after the sanitation and in a number of other ways, make them feel that the zamindars are their true friends taking only a fixed commission for their manifold services. Gandhi wanted the zamindars to change their hearts and own only so much as they really needed and become trustees and trusted friends of the entire village community. This would pave the way for a non-violent society. It is here that the economists have greatly disagreed with Gandhi's concept of Trusteeship. By nature man is property-conscious and it would be difficult to agree in practical terms that without State intervention the upper class would relinquish major part of its property and more so in a capitalist society where property relations and exploitation are best evident. A feeling emerges that Gandhi did not give a major role to the peasants and saw them as passive people and advised them to wait for a change in the zamindar's heart. In fact, to an extent, Gandhi

diluted the effects of Marxism through his theory of peaceful co-existence, non-violence and Trusteeship.

Swadeshi found an important place in his gram swaraj. The swadeshi doctrine would enable every village in India to be self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages which are not locally producible. Every village had to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. The unit of society should be a village or a manageable small group of people who would be self-sufficient in matters relating to their vital requirements as a unit. As far as possible every activity would be conducted on a cooperative basis and this cooperation should be based on non-violence. Non-violence could be the sanction of the village community in which every religion would have its full and equal place.

The government of the village would be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, elected annually by the adult men and women possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. The Panchayat would be the legislature, judiciary and the executive combined together. It would be expected to attend to the education of boys and girls in its village, sanitation, medical needs, the upkeep and cleanliness of village wells and ponds and the upliftment of and daily wants of the so-called untouchables. A Panchayat should have no criminal jurisdiction; however it may try civil suits if the parties to them refer their disputes to the panchayats. No panchayat should have any authority to impose fines, the only sanction behind its civil decrees being its moral authority, strict impartiality and the willing obedience of the parties concerned. A panchayat that fails without just cause to attend to the requirements of the villagers within six months of its election, or fails otherwise to retain goodwill of the villagers, or stands self-condemned for any cause, may be disbanded and another elected in its place.

Village sanitation is important in the scheme of gram swaraj. The things to attend to in the villages were cleaning tanks and wells and keeping them clean, getting rid of dump

heaps as the village tanks were promiscuously used for bathing, washing clothes and drinking and cooking purposes. Many village tanks were also used by cattle and buffaloes were often seen wallowing in them. However in spite of this sinful use of village tanks, the villages were never destroyed by epidemics. Lanes and streets had to be cleaned of all the rubbish, which should be classified. There should be portions which can be turned into manure, or have to be simply buried or can be directly turned into wealth. Rags and waste paper could be turned into paper.

To achieve gram swaraj, education was of prime importance. Accordingly literacy was not the end of education or even the beginning and only one of the means whereby man and women could be educated. Education should draw the best out of the child and man-body, mind and spirit. A new concept of education was offered wherein head, heart and hand could be trained to work in unison and give rise to creative human beings and this was *nai talim* or New Education. It was new because it was completely different from the Western model of education in vogue. *Nai talim* laid great stress on pupils' contact with nature through manual work and on the concept of unity of life.

8.8 GRAM SWARAJ- A COMPLETE REPUBLIC

Illustrating his idea of Gram Swaraj, Gandhi emphasised that it should be a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus the village's first concern would be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. If there is more land available, it would grow useful money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village would maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. There would be no caste with their graded untouchability. Nonviolence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-cooperation would be the sanction of the village community. There would be a compulsory service of village guards who would be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village would be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. They

would have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there would be no system of punishment in the accepted sense, the Panchayat would be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for a year of office. Any village could become such a republic without much interference, even from the present government whose sole effective connection with the villages was the exaction of village revenue.

The purpose was to present an outline of village government where there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and the government where an individual and his village are able to defy the might of a world. The law governing every villager was that he would suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour. Thus, Gandhi's conception of the village was based on the post-modern perspective of quality of life.

Keeping aside his theory of Non-violence and Trusteeship even his close associates and friends failed to understand the meaning and significance of the Village Society that he had advocated. Most of his close associates were people influenced by the European thought and way of life. In a letter to Pandit Nehru in 1945 he wrote, that he was convinced that if India had to attain true freedom and through India the world also sooner or later, the fact has to be recognised that the people had to live in the villages, not in towns, in huts not in palaces. Crores of people would never be able to live in peace with each other in cities and palaces. They would have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth. Without truth and non-violence there could be nothing but destruction of humanity. Truth and non-violence could only be realised in the simplicity of the village life and the simplicity could best be found in the Charkha and all that the Charkha connotes. He did not fear if the world today was going the wrong way and it may be that India too would go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame around which it dances more and more fiercely. However he thought it to be his duty to his last breath to try and protect India and, through India, the entire world from such a doom. The essence of what he said was that man should

rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient; if he does not have this control, he cannot save himself.

8.9 GRAM SWARAJ: CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Gandhi's Gram Swaraj in fact aimed at individual's development, character-building and adherence to basic human values for the development of the community as a whole. But the way our Panchayati Raj system in its present form addresses to these problems remains a question of debate and inquiry. The 73rd Amendment Act was brought about to confer a constitutional status on the panchayats but except in a few states, the situation remains unchanged. People's participation in the development of the villages is missing as the gram sabhas rarely meet to discuss the village development plans. No doubt due to reservation of seats a large number of women and members from the deprived class have come to occupy positions in the panchayats, but their role in decision-making is very limited. The concept of service to the community or 'shramdaan' appears alien in our system of village development as the dependence on government has increased to a large extent. The Gandhian concept of rural development is more of a people's movement than a system of regimented governance. Unemployment is increasing, environment degradation is a major problem, village community is fragmented, people do not participate in development process and due to break down of village and cottage industries and migration to the cities has only aggregated the problem. The answer to some of these problems lies in adopting the Gandhian model of village reconstruction, where every village will be self-dependent and self-sufficient to meet its basic needs and the individual will have enough to lead a life of contentment .

The development of villages was not considered by Gandhi as an end in itself. He thought of the villages not in their isolation but as a starting point in the crusade for a better and peaceful world order. If we do not go back to the ideals of Gandhi as envisaged for the upliftment of the rural population, rural India would continue to suffer as a result of evidently super-imposed process of development. During the last six decades we have seen that the Gram Sabhas and village Panchayats that formed a

part of Gandhi's political philosophy got relegated to political dormancy. But as Gandhi recedes into history he appears more and more a decentralist, even localist and less and less nationalist. In the Gandhian model, village is the central and not the peripheral source that would generate forces of social transformation. The goal of Gandhian action is attainment of a truthful human society and not the creation of a powerful, *albeit* just state. We shall be deluding if we believe that the recent attempts to revive Panchayati Raj Institutions are not an incarnation of the structural elements of state power. They will derive their legitimacy and authority from the state and not from society as such as is being projected. In the present form, the system of rural governance will only perpetuate the 'Raj' further where the ruling class would continue to dominate. By the time the nation rediscovers Gandhi's Gram Swaraj, it may be too late.

The path of development that we have chosen for the Panchayats to trek upon will lead us nowhere near to Gandhi's gram swaraj. In the years to come it will only complicate the rural scene further leading to greater migration to the cities in search of employment. The solution lies in promoting cottage and small-scale industries so as to hold back people from flooding the cities. Employment has to be generated within the confines of the village boundary. The Gandhian approach to rural development should be understood. Gandhian concept of gram swaraj does not really answer only one aspect of development, i.e. economic, but it is a way of life to be practised by a developing, over-populated and rural-based country like India to solve its multi-dimensional problems. Our present development model has no answers to many of these questions.

8.10 SUMMARY

Gandhi is perhaps the only great thinker of this century who could foresee the social and ecological consequences of the exploitative model of development and offer an alternative model. Gandhi was not only a pioneer but also very original as he was not an academic theoretician, but a man of unparalleled wisdom. The gap between this man of wisdom and the men of knowledge that this century has produced in plenty still

remains unabridged. The nonviolent struggle launched successfully against the mightiest colonial power of the time was emulated elsewhere too but it has yet to make a major dent in the war machine of the world and the war mentality of the people. He demonstrated how a very high level of culture and civilisation could be evolved without destroying the environment, and without exploiting nature and fellow humans.

Gandhi's philosophy offers a practical way to a peaceful social revolution to improve the quality of life. What he preached was not only for the Indian masses but for the entire deprived people of the world. His message was not for a particular time but for the future of the mankind, especially his theory of non-violence and peaceful co-existence. But his immediate concern was the Indian masses, especially in the countryside. In fact people needed courage and sense of self-respect to enable them to come out of the slavish mentality developed over centuries of bondage. In his view if these conditions were to be changed, politics, education, social reform, economy, and technology had to suit the genius of the society.

8.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. India lives in Villages. Discuss
2. State the basic principles of gram swaraj.
3. What did Gandhi's Gram Swaraj aim at?
4. Define Gandhi's views on modern machine.

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. M .K. Gandhi., India of My Dreams, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, reprint 2004.
2. M.K. Gandhi., Village Swaraj, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, reprint 2002.
3. M.K.Gandhi., Panchayati Raj, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, reprint 1966.

4. M.K. Gandhi., Towards New Education, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, reprint 2001.
5. Suresh Misra., Gandhian Concept of Indian Village in R.P.Misra, (ed), Gandhian Model of Development and World Peace, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1989
6. Neera Chandhoke., The Assertion of Civil Society against the State; The Case of the Post Colonial World in People's Rights (ed) Manoranjan Mohanty et al, New Delhi, 1998,
7. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/swaraj> (accessed on 27.2.2010)
8. <http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/swaraj.htm> (accessed on 29.2.2010)



ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY