

CASTE, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN INDIA

Y.B.DAMLE

CASTE, RELIGION AND POLITICS
IN INDIA

CASTE, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN INDIA

Y. B. DAMLE

Assisted by

JACOB AIKARA

*Department of Sociology
University of Poona
Pune 411007*



OXFORD & IBH PUBLISHING CO.
New Delhi Bombay Calcutta

*Dedicated to Professor A. B. Shah,
a first-rate intellectual and a liberal*

es

© 1982, Y. B. Damle

*Published by Mohan Pramlani for Oxford & IBH Publishing Co.,
66 Janpath, New Delhi 110001, and printed at
Claridges Printing Works, New Delhi 110005*

PREFACE

The present study was undertaken with a view to enquire into the interaction between the forces of modernisation and tradition in India, as exemplified by the use of political mechanisms on the one hand and adherence to traditional forces like caste and religion. Indian society presents a picture of great complexity because of its plural nature and uneven development of diverse elements of its population. Thus even among the same religious group, we find uneven development in respect of education, income and styles of living, etc. Then again one finds that the way people are governed by forces of tradition and modernity also are not of a uniform nature. The interplay of tradition and modernity is to be noticed every now and then. In fact it would be unrealistic to treat either caste or religion as an independent variable. Instead of that it would be more realistic to emphasise the interplay between politics and caste and politics and religion. In the present study, an attempt is made to employ the interaction model with regard to the existing material made available through different field investigations. Moreover, the main idea is to present to any student of social science or even to an intelligent reader, in a sufficiently lucid manner, the relationship between religion and politics, caste and politics and in fact the continuing relationship and the intertwining of the forces of tradition and modernity. Therefore, scrupulous effort has been made to avoid technical terminology, not to say jargon.

In the first place I would like to record my grateful appreciation of the financial assistance given by the University Grants Commission, so that I could utilise the services of a trained sociologist, Dr. Jacob Aikara, who assisted me in identifying and abstracting the relevant material and also in drafting some of the chapters. I have been also greatly helped by the very careful scrutiny of the manuscript and useful comments and suggestions

viii *Preface*

by my friends, Prof. A. B. Shah, Dr. U. B. Bhoite and Dr. K. S. Nair. Mr. G. B. Kolhatkar also helped a great deal by carefully reading through the manuscript before it was finally typed.

Pune

Y. B. DAMLE

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------------|
| <i>Preface</i> | <i>vii</i> |
| Chapter 1 : Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 2 : Caste | 16 |
| Chapter 3 : Religion | 27 |
| Chapter 4 : Politics in India | 37 |
| Chapter 5 : Caste and Politics | 47 |
| Chapter 6 : Religion and Politics | 72 |
| Chapter 7 : Conclusion | 93 |

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Most of the new nations in South Asia which were able to shake off colonial rule find themselves in the same predicament. They are consumed by the urge for overall development and modernisation and, at the same time faced by the erstwhile traditional and colonial structures aggravated by poverty. It is true that in order to understand any society, it is necessary to dwell deep into its history. However, the attainment of Independence provides a useful cut-off point for the analysis of society in the case of India. In a way, it could be maintained that the present is shaped both by the past and the aspirations which people have about their future. There is a dialectic between the past and the future which shapes the present. In the case of India, the attainment of Independence provides a very useful cut-off point largely because of the framing and adoption of the Constitution which reflects the image of society which India would like to be. The Constitution symbolises the ideal society to be realised by suitable efforts. It was pointed out earlier that most of these new nations have been afflicted by poverty as well as by colonial rule. In the case of India, however, due to the development of modern education coupled with political and national consciousness, a good deal of thought was given to develop Indian society along the path of modernisation without unduly impairing the strength of its long tradition. And yet it is obvious that this desire to transform Indian society into a prosperous, socially just and equitable as well as modern society, gathered momentum only after Independence since without political independence proper measures towards that end could not be adopted. In a nutshell, one can say that the Indian Constitution provides a blue-print for transforming Indian society into an ideal society where there would be ample opportunity for everyone to realise one's best potentialities and to enjoy a certain degree of prosperity necessary for leading a cultured life. As a matter of fact, the Constitution envisages an economically prosperous society

2 *Caste, Religion and Politics in India*

governed by the scientific spirit and the judicious use of modern technology, while emphasising the importance of freedom and the dignity of the individual. The entire institutional structure has to be changed in order to attain this goal. As such, any institution or complex of institutions which either militates against prosperity, nationality, equity or social justice would have to be changed and modified in order to promote the goal. Of course, it must be also mentioned that while the Indian Constitution provides a blue-print for the transformation of Indian society into an ideal one, the question arises as to whether the constitution itself is sacred, since during the emergency we saw that the Constitution could be amended even in respect of its fundamental provisions. Thus, political mechanisms, not to mention expediency, also acquire considerable importance since the Constitution can be by-passed and even sabotaged, thereby diminishing its sanctity. Commitments have been made since the parliamentary elections of 1977 to reinstate the importance and sanctity of the Constitution, and yet one cannot altogether discount the eventuality of the Constitution being tampered with.

The Indian Constitution has to be understood in the context of India's poverty as well as its insistence on the democratic framework. On the one hand, is the fact of poverty, and on the other hand is the equally necessary effort to remove poverty, and to increase economic prosperity consistent with democracy and the freedom of the individual. To carry out both these objectives simultaneously is a well-nigh difficult task. Also, because of the framing of the Constitution, the aspirations of the common people and particularly of the erstwhile deprived and disprivileged sections have been unleashed so that there is a persistent demand for doing away with all manner of deprivations and disprivileges. On the other hand, there is a great need to enhance economic prosperity and to increase the G.N.P. and of course, the per capita income. Moreover, in India, one has to compress all kinds of revolutions simultaneously and quickly since we cannot afford to wait for the natural process of economic development and industrial and technological revolution to take place.

There is an increasing pressure of circumstances which is largely created by the Constitution as well as by the pressure of political ideologies and philosophies, particularly in the wake of the Chinese revolution. The aspirations of the people and their

legitimation by suitable ideology gives a new edge to the problem of quickening the pace of overall transmission. Under these circumstances, it is natural that recourse has to be taken to political mechanisms and to institutionalise change through the use of enactments and legal mechanisms. The goals as envisaged by the Constitution, which have also been sharpened by the external situation need to be attained definitely as well as expeditiously.

Therefore, Indian society can be characterised as a society with primacy of goal attainment to use the Parsonian categories. The utmost importance is attached to the functional prerequisite of goal attainment, involving therefore, a very high degree of reliance on the use of political mechanisms, since the normal functional prerequisites of adaptation and integration cannot be expected to promote the goals. Further, since the aim of the Constitution is to transform society, there is a deliberate playing down of the importance of the functional prerequisite of pattern maintenance. It is felt that by appropriate use of political mechanisms, the functional prerequisites of integration and tension management can be taken care of adequately. Moreover, due to the acceptance of the democratic framework, goal attainment has to be engaged in with the peoples co-operation. It is true that the adoption of political mechanisms means delegating authority to people's representatives. However, it is equally clear that people's representatives viz., the leaders, can not by themselves promote the attainment of such goals without proper co-operation. This creates many difficulties, problems and complications. For instance, while enlisting the people's co-operation one has also to take into account the fact of the deprivations and disprivileges attendant on any system of social stratification. While dealing with the problems of any society, the system of social stratification has to be kept in mind, particularly when efforts are to be made to change this very system of social stratification. Peculiarly enough, in order to change this system it is equally important to obtain the co-operation and support of all layers of stratification. The history of society does not allow its leaders and rulers to ignore or wish away the traditional structures.

While modernisation and overall transformation of Indian society is the avowed goal, one cannot forget that the traditional structures which have to be transformed have to be made use of for furthering this very process of transformation. To put this in a different way, one has to emphasise the solidarities and loyalties

which exist in any traditional structure. In the case of India, one can rightly mention these solidarities as based on caste and religion and further add that these very solidarities can not only be ignored or wished away, but have to be used for promoting goal attainment, which in the ultimate analysis would mean a transformation of these very solidarities. It would be idle to imagine that the political process itself would not be affected in the bargain as a consequence of using these solidarities for promoting the goal. However, one has to remember that due to the primacy of goal attainment as well as the utmost importance attached to the use of political mechanisms, the balance is more likely to be in favour of these mechanisms than in favour of the solidarities and loyalties which stem from the traditional structure; in this case caste and religion.

To understand and analyse properly this entire exercise of societal transformation with the use of political mechanisms, while making a simultaneous use of the traditional solidarities engendered by caste and religion, it would be useful and necessary to employ the interaction model rather than to regard politics as an independent variable and caste and religion as dependent variables or vice-versa. Here again, the way the Constitution has been framed and the modus-operandi of implementing it has also to be borne in mind. On the one hand, the Constitution envisages a radical transformation of society and on the other hand, it seeks to do so with people's willing co-operation. Therefore, while it is regarded as expedient to resort to political mechanisms for the attainment of goal, it is equally necessary to ensure the people's co-operation through the various existing groups and solidarities. Therefore, it is really a question of understanding and analysing the model of interaction between political mechanisms and solidarities as exemplified by caste and religion. The primacy of political mechanisms is reflected in certain goals viz., the goal of secular state and society. The adoption of this goal has important repercussions in dealing with the solidarities based on religion.

Similarly, the creation of a social order based on equality and social justice also has implications for the caste system which is essentially inequitable, and yet it would be unrealistic to ignore solidarities based on caste. The use of the interaction model would therefore enable us to judge the impact of such solidarities on the political mechanisms and processes, while the primacy of such

mechanisms and processes has been accepted and taken for granted. In a way, therefore, priorities have been established in favour of political mechanisms rather than in favour of the existing solidarities which stem from the traditional structure. Nevertheless, the mutuality of these two has to be emphasised rather than the adoption of an "either or" model. In the Indian case as mentioned earlier, paradoxically enough, political mechanisms have not only to contain solidarities based on caste and religion but also to make use of them for promoting the goal of transformation of society. It is not merely a question of the co-existence of these two sets, but a question of active and continuous interaction between the two, which facilitates a change in any of such solidarities through the continuous use of political mechanisms. The interaction model mentioned earlier would thus emphasise the dialectics of the situation rather than the static nature of the relationship between the two sets. This is how, an analysis of caste, religion and politics in India becomes a meaningful and significant exercise which helps us to understand the process of transformation and the methods used to promote such transformation.

It was mentioned earlier that the leaders and rulers of Indian Society insofar as they are representatives of the people, have been entrusted with this task of overall transformation, and that they have to do so with the help of the people's co-operation. These leaders and rulers therefore, have to continuously make use of the various solidarities and groups, while simultaneously seeking to transform these solidarities and groups in order to promote an overall transformation of Indian society. This can be attained in several ways. Wriggins¹ mentions several alternate strategies for attaining this goal viz., (1) by projecting personality (2) by building up organisation (3) by political ideology (4) by rewarding the faithful and intimidating the opponents (5) by developing economy (6) by expanding political participation and (7) by foreign policy, and further adds that these alternate strategies are not mutually exclusive but, in a given case, can obtain in various types of combinations at the same time.

In the case of India, at least during Nehru's regime, one finds that the projection of personality in terms of charisma was emphasised, as well as the building up of organisation and the evolving of political ideology. Simultaneously, by resorting to rewarding the faithful, by developing economy and by appropriate

use of foreign policy as also by extending political participation, the political process was sought to be made as efficient and result-yielding as possible. The various strategies listed above take into account the importance of leadership goals and the various kinds of groups in politics. In a way, these strategies are likely to be effective because of a realistic appraisal of the situation rather than by the adoption of an idealistic position. Ultimately, political reality cannot be made of one piece and there are various currents and cross-currents which one has to take into account, successively counteracting them in order to promote the ultimate goal. To use the existing groups means full awareness of the influence and pressure of tradition and the ability to use them for promoting the ultimate goal, thereby ensuring the transformation of such groups. Thus it is that when one speaks of caste, religion and politics in India one has to take into account the interaction between these three and also observe how the solidarities based on caste and religion get transformed as a result of employing the political mechanisms and processes. One can also, at the same time, appreciate certain limitations and restrictions on the use of political mechanisms which arise due to the operation of the influence and pressure exerted by such solidarities. It is really a question of a parallelogram of forces, and yet, as mentioned earlier, priorities have already been established because of the Constitution, and perhaps more so because of the sensitisation of the people to the ideology as envisaged in the Constitution. Therefore, one has to emphasise that as a result of the unleashing of new aspirations, the ideological and moral legitimisation of the two types of solidarities mentioned above has been shaken at the very outset, thus paving the way for their transformation.

In view of the approach indicated, it would be useful to scrutinise the discussion on tradition and modernity in the Indian context. Generally speaking, the tenor of any discussion pertaining to tradition and modernity seems to emphasise the opposition between the two and harps on the dichotomous nature of tradition and modernity. Thus, many authors refer to tradition as a static feature of society and to modernity as its dynamic element. It is further maintained that the static process is essentially conservative and attempts to maintain the status-quo of the social system. The dynamic process which creates structural changes in the

social system is branded as progressive.

However, one knows for a fact that it would be difficult to come across any society which is only dynamic and does not contain elements of tradition. It is true that some scholars have questioned the propriety of such dichotomous presentation. Thus, we find "that the recent literature on modernisation shows a growing disaffection with the 'modern versus traditional' typology of societies and cultures, and a search for new theories. At least, this typology is now increasingly recognised as a set of constructed ideal types and not as an empirical description of societies or a set of generalisations about them. Those who continue to use the modern-traditional contrast at an empirical level do so by mapping the statistical distributions of traits designated modern or traditional in different countries or by making lists of such traits for a single country. The implications of such lists and frequency distributions for a theory of modernisation as a process of social and cultural change are at best opaque."²

There is an increasing awareness thus, that the dichotomous nature of tradition and modernity which has been emphasised is really untenable in the light of reality. As Shils observes, "All the existing things have a past. Nothing which happens escapes completely from the grip of the past. Some events scarcely escape at all from its grip. Much of what exists is a persistence or reproduction of what existed earlier. Entities, events or systems physiological, psychological, social and cultural have careers in which at each point the set of the system stands in some determined relationship to the set of the systems at earlier points."³ The point has been well taken that no society can be completely modern. Rudolphs⁴ say that "the misunderstanding of modern society that excludes its traditional features is paralleled by a misdiagnosis of traditional society that underestimates its modern potentialities. Those who study new nations comparatively often find only manifest and dominant values, configurations and structures that fit a model of tradition and miss *latents deviant*, or minority ones that may fit a model of modernity. All civilisations and complex cultures predominantly traditional or modern encompassed a range of sentiments, psychological predispositions, norms and structures that "belong" with an ideal type other than their own."⁵ Tradition has thus been described as symbolising a static society where status is essentially ascriptive and the system of loyalties and groupings

is only particularistic, and where there is a pre-disposition on the part of its members to accept reality without any sense of dissatisfaction. On the other hand a modern society is depicted as being dynamic, where the status of a person is essentially achieved, the groupings and solidarities are universalistic and emphasis is placed on innovation and manipulation of the total environment. If one were to scrutinise the facts, one would find that even in a so-called traditional society there are elements which go against the "ideal type" of tradition and that even in a modern society such elements which are contradictory to "ideal type" of modernity exist.

Nevertheless this entire exercise of the distinction between tradition and modernity is useful because it enables one to plot change, say from a relatively traditional structure to a modern structure. In fact, modernisation is an unending process which is not finite because it means an unending capacity to innovate and to conquer the environment to suit people's needs, aspirations, ideas, values, beliefs etc. Of course, one has to also remember that in order to plot such change in the direction of modernity several theories have been offered, one being the evolutionary model which emphasises a law of progression from tradition to modernity in terms of definite stages and phases. Several others have tried to prepare a list of the various traits which are relevant to the specific stages of such development. However, one finds that such categorisation and pigeon-holing of traits seems to belie actual reality, because if modernisation is innovation and one's unending desire to innovate according to one's needs and aspirations, it would indeed be unrealistic to expect every society to experience the same kind of needs and aspirations and therefore follow a chalked-out path of innovation.

As a matter of fact, the demands for innovation vary from one society to another and as such the innovative enterprise would also differ from one society to another. Then again, there is the usual insistence on the importance of innovation and diffusion and so the latter is emphasised more. Again, it must be pointed out that as far as the latter is concerned, it is not practicable or even desirable that any trait, however important it may be, be directly accepted or imitated from a modern society. There is a logic of institutional and cultural patterns whereby it is not possible to transplant such structures from one system into the

other. Contact with other societies may spark the process of modernisation, and yet modernisation has to be attained by each society taking into account its own peculiarities, special needs, assets and liabilities. The evolutionary model earlier referred to, again tends to break down when modernisation becomes a value for the people, in which case the people concerned do not have the patience to undergo the process of modernisation by confining themselves to following the logic of stages and phases. Moreover, modernisation does not also mean a complete substitution of tradition by modernistic traits and characteristics. On the other hand, in order to achieve the goal of modernisation not only do the existing structures have to be taken note of and accepted, but they have also to be made use of in order to further the very attainment of modernisation.

Some of the characteristics of modernisation are said to be achieved status, universalism, individuality, rationality, a differentiated social system, social justice, equality, the capacity to innovate, and the ability to manipulate. In their discussion on modernisation, some authors have regarded religion as an impediment to rationality and therefore to modernisation. On the other hand, Max Weber regards religion, particularly Protestant ethics, as being largely responsible for the development of modern capitalism which in its turn facilitated modernisation. According to Weber⁶, the central value system underlying Calvinism was congenial to rationality, or rather, it goaded its adherents and followers to economic rationality. Thus religion which was, by and large, regarded as a force favouring tradition was pointed out to be, on the contrary, a force favouring rationality and modernisation. One could make use of this insight and look for certain structures which, *prima facie*, spell traditionality but may actually have the potential for promoting modernisation. As mentioned earlier, when a society wants deliberate modernisation and also does not want to upset the existing system, one has to emphasise the use of existing structures for furthering the goal of modernisation. "In India, it would be an impossible task to separate the element of continuity from the elements of change. For the two are inextricably woven together to form a seamless fabric of Indian existence."⁷

In respect of Indian society, it has been generally pointed out that Hinduism with its attendant-caste system would essentially be a

force in favour of tradition. Caste which is regarded as an integral feature of Hinduism is known to be discriminatory and inequitable and therefore, it is argued by many, that such a system would essentially dampen or even prevent the process of modernisation. Hinduism, again is equated with a monolithic structure as well as philosophy and such is regarded as being an impediment to modernisation. As we shall discuss in detail, Hinduism is a complex of mutually incongruent traits and characteristics. Nor has Hinduism remained the same over a period of time since it has been exposed to protest movements and revolts from within as well as attacks from without. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the theory of re-birth and the theory of *karma* for explaining the persistence of Hinduism. However, one should not fail to take into account the various protest movements which have arisen within Hinduism itself. Hinduism has also been exposed to forces from without such as Christianity, Islam, the western rule etc, which have necessitated a rethinking and re-examination of the social structure of Hinduism and its various components. It is further maintained that the importance attached to religion in India, not only to Hinduism, but to Islam, Christianity etc., is another force in favour of tradition and as such acts as an impediment to modernisation.

There are several aspects of modernisation which have been emphasised by various thinkers, such as the political, economic, cultural, structural and ecological dimensions. It was pointed out earlier that resorting to political processes and mechanisms for furthering modernisation has established priority in favour of the political process, and therefore attempts are made to overcome deficiencies in society in respect of economic, cultural, ecological and the structural dimensions in a certain way. It is admitted that in India political modernisation is sufficiently advanced in view of its democratic framework and its well developed political institutions. Besides, the political process in India is being used to further the process of modernisation in its various aspects like the economic, cultural, ecological, and the structural. Efforts are being made to modernise its economy. In the cultural sphere, an attempt is being made to introduce new ideas and values. Then again the social structure of India is sought to be changed so as to be consistent with modern notions and values. In the ecological sphere, efforts are being made to develop features which will ensure a revamping of its rural structure and to promote

development of urban civilisation.

India has declared itself a secular state and religion is sought to be made a purely personal matter. However a distinction has to be made between a secular state and a secular society. A state can be declared secular by appropriate enactments and declarations, while in order to transform itself into a secular society the changing of convictions of its members is required, which of course cannot be easily attained. Another trait of political modernisation is a growth of nationalism which is again evidenced in the case of India. Notwithstanding certain problems of boundary maintenance and integration, particularly where the border states are concerned, there is no denying the fact that a good deal of progress has been made in developing a spirit of nationalism amongst its various constituents. By and large, the diverse ethnic, religious and cultural elements have been welded into a common Indian nationhood.

India declared herself to be a secular state which has, to an extent, meant tackling the problem of religious diversities which could well have been an impediment in the development of nationhood. India is a veritable subcontinent and represents a diversity of interests which have come to be articulated in terms of the political process. Various groups and solidarities have succeeded in articulating their aspirations and claims by resorting to the political process. Therefore, the political process on the one hand can lay down a certain code of conduct and action for the diverse groups to represent and push their claims, and on the other hand, it has to increasingly enable such diversities in promoting the concept of nationhood. This results in a certain degree of compromise and acceptance and the formation of a plural society rather than a monolithic structure.

India with her long history has many complexities which can be traced back to the various historical developments to which it has been subjected, like the impact of Christianity and Islam, Islamic rule, British rule, Westernisation etc. All these external forces have affected the development of India in certain directions. The complexities introduced by religion have been in a way superimposed on the already prevailing complexities generated by the caste system. As a matter of fact, the partition of undivided India into India and Pakistan is largely a consequence of the complexities arising out of the disintegrative features of religion. Then

again, the caste system has also given rise to certain fissures in the social system which have impaired the process of integration, particularly in the wake of British rule and the consequent breakdown of the traditional economy. Moreover, as a result of British rule, there was a triangular interaction and even conflict between the Hindus, the Muslims and the British. "The brief review of the part played by the government in shaping Hindu-Muslim relations is, however, enough to prove to any unbiased student of Indian politics that the so-called Hindu-Muslim problem is a triangle. A hidden hand has played considerable part in intensifying discord and fomenting distrust".⁸

After Independence, the creation of Pakistan, on the one hand and the relative backwardness of the Muslims which is largely a result of their backwardness in respect of modern education and secular jobs, plus the memories of history have created a complex problem. It is not only the fact of Muslims being the biggest minority in the country whereby certain problems arise but it is because of its antecedents that the problem assumes importance. For this reason religion cannot be only a matter of personal concern but acquires a political dimension, which can be tackled mainly on the political plane. In the case of the caste system attempts were made to provide special facilities and representation to the disprivileged and deprived castes. Politicisation of caste and religion has thus in certain ways facilitated dealing with these two structures more or less in the open, and has also meant that they are treated on an all-India plane and regarded as national problems requiring urgent attention. Therefore it opens out possibilities for secularising these problems to a large extent and therefore to defreezing the traditional complications. The acceptance of the reality of a plural society, and deliberate efforts made to deal with this reality by resorting to political processes, also signifies an attempt to promote integration while respecting differences. Differences are not allowed to stand in the way of forging a new identity. In the case of the caste system, attempts are being made to remove its structural incongruencies in respect of the new values and beliefs.

As for religion, because of the political process, efforts are being made to narrow down the problem. In fact by resorting to the political process, the problems of both caste and religion have been narrowed down to their bare essentials instead of allowing

the problems to become diffused in nature. The creation of a plural society is also regarded as an important aspect or ingredient of modernisation, and efforts are being made to accept, maintain as well as to promote a plural society in India. One can say that, paradoxically speaking, forces which are regarded as the very antithesis of modernisation are not only being neutralised but also being used for promoting modernisation through the promotion of a plural society. This of course means certain compromises which generate impatience and resistance on the part of some, such as the refusal by the Union government to force a common civil code for all sections of the population.

While modernisation in its entirety has been accepted as a goal as exemplified by the Indian Constitution, yet there is no attempt to rush through the process of modernisation by resorting to compulsion. Persuasion rather than compulsion has been the strategy adopted, which is quite consistent with the democratic framework, particularly with the spirit of democracy which respects freedom of the individual.

The acceptance of structures which have been, by and large, categorised as antagonistic to modernisation and the attempts made to use these structures for futhering modernisation by employing political mechanisms, thus necessitate rethinking on our part in respect of formulations regarding the inter-relationship between caste, religion and politics in India. Several authors have taken for granted that caste and religion would remain antagonistic to modernisation under any set of circumstances. Furthermore, they have even maintained that politics in its turn would be contaminated by caste and religion, thus under-rating the importance or the capacity of politics to effect any changes in caste or religion. This represents a particular approach which is essentially one-sided and neglects the mutuality of impact between the two sides. It is our aim to examine impartially and with an open mind the mutuality of interaction between caste and politics and between religion and politics. We want to look for a new alloy which is being created as a result of such interaction. We do not accept the "either or" approach but deliberately adopt the interaction model to analyse the relationship between caste, religion and politics in India. It is our attempt to analyse such interaction in the context of the quest for modernisation and the deliberate attempts made to promote this goal as exemplified in

the Indian Constitution, the enactments made and the various measures taken towards this end. To repeat, we do not accept the dichotomous presentation of tradition and modernity but maintain that not only are these not mutually exclusive but also, that neither tradition nor modernity can either substitute or oust the other. What we mean is not a simple co-existence of the two but a delineation of the spheres of tradition and modernity in such a manner that the goal of modernisation can be promoted without unduly destroying tradition. In a plural society, where the democratic framework has been adopted as a matter of conviction, the antagonistic nature of tradition and modernity will not be encouraged to persist and features which have been dubbed as traditional will also be harnessed for promoting modernisation.

It may be argued that several authors have already addressed themselves to the discussion of tradition and modernity in the Indian context as well as to the analysis of politics, caste and religion in India. Most of the studies undertaken by Indian and foreign scholars relating to this area have been mainly based on empirical investigations and some of them have also been of a thematic nature. Therefore, it was our decision not to replicate any empirical study, since we felt that this was not necessary. Similarly it was our decision to steer clear of the traditional dichotomies which have been presented by several scholars, and to approach the whole problem from a different perspective provided by the interaction model as mentioned earlier. We propose to follow this interaction model, basing ourselves on the facts made available to us through the various existing studies instead of carrying out a fresh investigation. Our aim is limited to an analysis of the available material from the particular approach suggested above, and it is our belief that some of the usual gordian knots will at least be better understood, if not unravelled, by adopting our approach. While doing so one has to accept certain limitations arising from such an approach and also from basing ourselves mainly on the available material. It is quite likely that some material, which has not been available to us, might have adopted an approach similar to ours of which we are unaware. Therefore, when we suggest that the use of interaction model is our contribution, it has to be taken with a certain degree of caution.

REFERENCES

1. Wriggins, W. Howard, *The Ruler's Imperative*, Colombia University Press, New York, 1969.
2. Singer Milton, *When a Great Tradition Modernises*, p. 384, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi 1972.
3. Shils, Edward, "Tradition," in Desai, A.R., ed., *Essays on Modernisation on Under-developed Societies*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-39, Thacker and Co. Ltd., Bombay 1971.
4. Rudolph, Lloyd I and Rudolph, Susanne Hocber, *The Modernity of Tradition*, p. 5, Orient Longmans Ltd., New Delhi, 1967.
5. Weber Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London 1956.
6. Mital, P.N., "The Indian Political System", in Sinha, M.R., ed., *The Struggles of Modern India*, pp. 31-41, Indian Institute of Asian Studies, Bombay, 1967.
7. Mehta, Ashok and Patwardhan, Achyut, *The Communal Triangle*, P. 78, Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1942.

ADDITIONAL READING

- Singh, Yogendra, "Political Modernisation in India, Concepts and Processes" in Desai, A.R., ed., op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 592-610.
- Wertheim, W.F., "The Way Towards 'Modernity,'" in Desai, A.R., ed., op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 76-94.
- Coleman, James S., "Modernisation Political Aspects", in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, pp. 395-402.
- Parsons, Talcott, *The Structure of Social Action*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1949.
- Gore, M.S., "Education and Modernisation", in Desai, A.R., ed., op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 228-239.
- Kothari, Rajni, *Politics in India*, Orient Longmans Ltd., New Delhi, 1970.

CHAPTER 2

Caste

Although the caption of the chapter is caste, what is really discussed is the caste system in so far as it is relevant to the theme of our discussion. In the earlier chapter it was pointed out how we were interested in understanding and discussing the dialectics of caste, religion and politics in India. Obviously, we are concerned with understanding the dynamics of caste in so far as it has been affected by the employment of political mechanisms. A full length discussion of the inter-relationship between caste and politics will be undertaken in a later chapter. Even in this chapter it is necessary to bear in mind the inter-relationship of caste and politics, particularly the ideological and political consciousness created amongst the people as a result of constitution-making and institution-building. In our discussion of caste it is very necessary to bear in mind this perspective so that one does not get bogged down by unnecessary details.

Sociologists are notorious for their pre-occupation with caste and have indulged in hair-splitting theories about its origin and emergence, development and rigidification, its uniqueness, and so on. Similarly, sociologists have also engaged themselves in the exercise of defining caste over and over again. Whether caste is an all-India phenomenon or a regional phenomenon has also been debated time and again. With all such debates we are not directly concerned. We are not involved with the explanation of caste offered in terms of ritual purity and pollution as being its core. Nor we are interested in listing the characteristic features of the caste system. What is really significant about caste from our view will be discussed. It should also be pointed out at this juncture that in our delineation of caste, we are not interested in tracing the history of caste nor its capacity to persist in spite of many changes. Our discussion will be informed by our concern for understanding the impact on caste, on its functioning, of various factors such as the ideological, economic, cultural and political aspects.

Relevant features of caste

Before entering into an adequate description and analysis of caste, it would be necessary to emphasise one very important feature of caste, namely that it legitimises differentiation and discrimination, and both are derived from the suitable system of ideologies and beliefs. Then again, the ascriptive basis of caste is extremely important to bear in mind since caste-status is determined by one's birth. It is commonly accepted in sociology that by evolving the mechanisms for belief in the theory of rebirth and Karma, adherence to caste was rendered possible even in the case of those who suffered from the indignities attendant on castes of a lower status. Differentiation and discrimination on the basis of caste led to the segmental division of society, which again implied social distance and hierarchy.

Social distance and hierarchy in caste are not of an idiosyncratic type but reflect the structural features of social organisation. It is not merely a question of maintaining social distance and accepting superiority of certain castes but it also involves in reality enjoyment of power in its broadest sense. What is generally described as ritual superiority resulting in social distance and avoidance also connotes superiority in areas such as education and the cultural milieu, social and economic relations, political power, status and prestige in the broad sense of the term. Differentiation and discrimination also mean the concentration of advantages of various kinds mentioned earlier such as ritual superiority, cultural, social and economic superiority, prestige and power for the so-called higher castes, and the denial of the same to the lower castes. It was mentioned that such differentiation and discrimination are legitimised by a suitable system of ideologies and beliefs. One must hasten to add that they are also backed by appropriate political authority in the sense that the caste system is to be kept intact and not to be interfered with, meaning thereby that the privileges and disprivileges attendant on the caste system are to be safeguarded. Of course, as we shall see later, the shaking of the ideological foundations of the caste system, and any changes in attitude on the part of the political authority to the privileges and disprivileges pertaining to the caste system, would necessarily give rise to the erosion of the legitimacy of the caste system.

Varna and caste

While we are not interested in a detailed discussion of the inter-relationship between Varna and caste, we are only concerned with delineating caste in terms of its being an all-India phenomenon as well as in understanding the regional manifestations and peculiarities of caste. The Varna scheme of analysis enables us to comprehend the all-India nature of the caste system and its linkages as well the possibilities and prospects of moving up in terms of the Varna scheme of division. Thus, it is a common feature of the various regions in India that people belonging to castes lower down in the hierarchy, have tried to move up in the Varna scheme by resorting to appropriate reference-group behaviour. In fact resorting to the Varna scheme makes it possible for people to attain mobility within the caste system, which would not have been possible otherwise.

While it is useful to take cognizance of this all-India phenomenon by understanding the Varna scheme and its operation, it is equally important to understand the functioning of caste in the various regions. The regional aspects of caste lead one to enquire into the regional variations of precedence and power enjoyed by certain castes which may not pertain to other regions. Our concern for knowing about the regional variation is prompted by our desire to analyse the working of different principles, in so far as precedence and power go. Concepts like "dominant caste" and "majority caste" acquire importance in understanding regional variations because while in one case one could explain the fact of precedence and power enjoyed by certain castes in terms of the dominant caste, in other cases this concept may not be of any use. On the other hand, the principle of majority in so far as it has implication of the rule of the majority, as in the case of a democratic system, would be much more important in the other cases. The principle of majority can certainly explain to a great extent socio-political stability, and also can enable us to appreciate the understanding between the various castes vis-a-vis each other. In cases where neither the concept of dominant caste nor the principle of majority is acceptable to the people of a given region, there tends to be a continuous fight for asserting the superiority of one's caste, and thus the caste system tends to be both fluid and disturbed, giving rise to all kinds of manipulations.

Caste and division of labour

Division of labour and functional differentiation has been regarded as a very important feature of the caste system. Various functions and duties were allocated on the basis of caste, which ensured a smooth functioning of the division of labour and of course, guaranteed economic interdependence of the various castes. It is claimed that due to specialisation of functions, it was possible to excel in one's vocation and because of the process of socialisation which was carried on through one's family, it was possible for the new generation to inculcate the required skills. Moreover, the hereditary aspect of the division of labour assured a certain degree of economic security to every one and avoided unnecessary competition. What is not generally stressed, is the status vis-a-vis society, implicit in such an arrangement. It is customary to distinguish between society based on status from that based on contract, and it is obvious to anyone that the division of labour and economic interdependence of the caste-society meant that society was based on status entirely. It may be argued that there were certain occupations which were neutral, as for example, that of an agriculturist. On the other hand, it is also well known that even if an untouchable possessed a piece of land he would not till it himself. Moreover, there was a scrupulous grading of one's status in so far as vocations and careers were concerned.

There is no denying the fact that this division of labour meant rigidity of the economic structure with hardly any possibility of the individual changing his occupation. It also left no freedom for anyone to get out of the system of economic interdependence. Relative immobility, though not complete immobility, characterised such division of labour, with the result, that those on whom were thrust the duties of the so-called "lowly type", had to put up with them without any chance of change and improvement in their position. There was hardly any possibility of climbing up in the socio-economic scale. On the one hand the economic interdependence was eulogised as reflecting "organic solidarity,"¹ as mentioned by Durkheim, while in reality there was quite an element of "anomic division of labour,"² since the division of labour was not voluntary but compulsory and a result of the vested interests of the privileged few. Then again, the division of labour in the caste system was sought to be legitimised in

terms of the theories of rebirth and Karma, thus prevailing upon the minds of the participants concerned acceptance without any reservations or complaints.

Apart from the justification offered in terms of rebirth and Karma, the economic structure related to the caste system did not offer any avenues of employment in any other field, since it was a closed economy. The division of labour implicit in the caste system was therefore, essentially rigid and favoured a status-quo. A natural consequence of this arrangement was the deprivation of the lower castes not only in the socio-economic sense but more poignantly in the cultural sense, whereby they were deprived of acquiring any learning and knowledge which could improve their personality and open up avenues of socio-economic climbing. The socio-economic status was thus ascribed and it provided hardly any opportunity for achieving status. Occupations were divided into "pure" and "impure" in terms of the notions of ritual purity and impurity, which meant a permanent segregation between those who performed ritually pure occupations and those who performed ritually impure occupations like for instance, scavenging. Due to the foisting of notions of ritual purity and impurity on the occupational system, the caste system became closed and immutable. Even when people did not believe in the notions of ritual purity and impurity lowly occupations continued to stigmatise the performers of such occupations and perpetuated their deprivation in every sense of the term. Thus the caste system, and the division of labour it entailed, helped perpetuate misery for the lower castes and showered privileges on the higher castes. It is natural that those who have stood to benefit by such an arrangement, developed vested interests in it and refused to allow any kind of change for the better for those castes on whom lowly occupations were thrust.

One of the major reasons for the particularly harsh and cruel treatment meted out to untouchables in various villages and towns of India is largely a consequence of the desire on the part of untouchables, and the efforts made by them, to get out of the rut of the division of labour based on the caste system. Thus, wherever the untouchables have refused to perform their traditional duties, they have caused a great deal of resentment amongst the higher castes who naturally stood to benefit by the untouchables continuing to perform their traditional duties. Of course, monetisation

of economy and migration has facilitated emancipation from caste-bound duties. The cash nexus meant that a person could sell his commodities and services for payment of cash and was thus free from the traditional system. This also facilitated the transition from status to contract. There are many instances where such transition was effected, though on a strictly individual basis. Thus such transition did not materially affect the socio-economic system based on the caste-based division of labour. Wherever there was a threat of such an eventuality, it had always been successfully countered by those who had vested interest in such arrangements. All the same, the creation of this new consciousness amongst the people and the wearing out of the ideological foundation of such division of labour promoted greater efforts to get out of such a system. This is reflected in the efforts of several persons and groups to free themselves from the shackles of such economic inter-dependence based on status.

Ethos of the caste system

The caste system provides a gestalt for its role occupants. Everything is viewed and interpreted in the context of such gestalt: Every aspect of life and work is governed by the caste system right from birth the death, from inter-personal to inter-group relationship, from cultural to moral values and so on. There is hardly any aspect of one's life which is not governed by one's caste. The caste system also enjoins upon everyone the responsibility to play strictly according to the rules of the game.

It provides for psychological security by making a finite system wherein response or behaviour of alters can be correctly anticipated. There is nothing left to be guessed in so far as interaction between members of a given caste or between persons belonging to different castes are concerned. Everything can be anticipated and as such one's reactions and responses can be structured, leaving no room for unanticipated or unexpected responses or behaviour. This, of course, is the outcome of the process of socialisation. Social relations are governed by notions of inequality, which means superordination and subordination. The mode of address characterising either equal relationships or those reflecting superiority or inferiority are only too well known. The ethos of the caste system is facilitated by clear-cut definitions and nomenclatures, including family names attached to different

castes, so that there is no possibility of any confusion. Caste names and identities ensure maintenance of the expected social distance as between different castes.

Various studies have pointed out as to how the ethos of the caste system affects personality development and, in cases where persons are not able to live up to their castes expectations, how there is a danger of split personality, guilt complex and so on. As a matter of fact, the caste ethos provides a frame of reference for everyone to conduct himself or herself with relation to others, laying down specific injunctions in respect of familiarity as well as the avoidance of it. It is indeed very peculiar that the caste ethos so characteristic of the Hindu social organisation has made inroads even into other religions like Christianity and Islam, particularly in respect of persons who have been converted from Hinduism to Christianity or Islam. It is strange that the converts in particular tend to subscribe to caste divisions and scrupulously observe difference and discrimination based on caste, while simultaneously preaching equality as enjoined by Christianity and Islam. In Kerala for instance, there have been separate churches for those who are converted to Christianity but who were Pulayats (untouchables) earlier.³ As far as rural life and social interaction are concerned, Muslims for all practical purposes become a caste rather than a different religion, and as such, outside the pale of the caste system. Muslims in their turn also come to share all the prejudices⁴ of the caste Hindus, without accepting the caste system. Thus, the ethos of the caste system is all-pervasive and does not leave any aspect of life untouched. Efforts were made from time to time to create a counter ethos as exemplified in the Bhakti cult, and the various protest movements such as Buddhism, and Sikhism. Protest movements became particularly conspicuous as a result of India's encounter with Western civilisation and values. Even here one finds that it has always been a constant tug-of-war between the traditional caste ethos and the new ethos which is sought to be injected both from within and without.

The conflict between the traditional ethos and the new ethos is further complicated by the acceptance of new ideologies and values, simultaneously with the use of caste solidarities for building modern institutions. It was mentioned earlier how the caste system legitimises differentiation and discrimination. But when one finds that the ideology and the belief system which legitimised

differentiation and discrimination is being sought to be substituted by a new ideology and belief system which challenges the very base of the caste system, it is natural that the process of erosion of the legitimacy underlying the caste system is initiated. A system of ideology and belief which puts a premium on equality, social justice, dignity of the individual, rationality, secularism, etc. is bound to clash with the system which provided legitimacy to the caste system. In fact, by providing a counter-ideology, protest movements and reform movements acquire legitimacy, thus challenging the ascriptive basis of caste and trying to substitute it by the principle of achievement. Inevitably, the hierarchical structure of caste which has taken care of prestige and power — ritual, cultural, educational, socio-economic and political—becomes vulnerable and open to question. The vulnerability of the caste hierarchy becomes all the more pronounced when the political authority in question ceases to play the role, at least officially, of safeguarding such an hierarchy. In India, in the wake of the new Constitution, political authority, both at the central and state level, is wedded to the doctrine and philosophy of creating a casteless society, ushering a social order where no privileges of any kind would be encouraged or allowed, and where the development of personality and a full realisation of one's potentialities would be facilitated and guaranteed. This is where we find that the legitimacy of the traditional caste system is now publicly challenged as a matter of avowed public policy. As a matter of fact there is an avowed policy of substituting the legitimacy of the caste system by that of an open society based on achievement and governed by contract, freedom of the individual, notions of social justice and so on.

The Varna scheme has also been subject to a challenge in terms of new ideas and beliefs which do not accept it in so far as it is based on birth. Castes in their operation in various regions manifest peculiar features which allow for the inter-play of political and secular factors. It may be argued that the notion of democracy in the caste context means only the rule of the majority caste. However, one finds that hardly any caste enjoys a complete majority in any region and, therefore, there is a considerable necessity for winning over the support of the other castes for political purposes and specifically for the purpose of winning elections. This opens an avenue for an understanding

between different castes, thus obliterating or at least reducing the traditional distance between them. The electoral alliances between different caste groups are a case in point. It is well known how minority groups, of both caste and religion, have assumed importance in terms of their capacity to bargain. Moreover, at the regional level there are other avenues of mobility provided for the erstwhile deprived and disprivileged castes as a result of opportunities for modern education and secular jobs. The Varna classification and the existence of caste at regional levels thus come to encounter new forces and therefore cannot remain the same as they were.

Division of labour based on caste has been affected both by new ideologies and beliefs as well as the structure of opportunities, and also by the expansion of the communication network. Even a simple road building scheme and accessibility to urban influences makes a dent into the division of labour and economic inter-dependence which characterised the Indian villages. It is certainly well known how many occupations and careers which are caste-irrelevant have come into being, a fact which has not only meant economic progress for these who follow such careers but also a certain amount of social acceptability and status, even for those who originally belonged to the deprived and disprivileged castes.⁵ Modern education, secular jobs and migration provide a good deal of opportunity for emancipation from the traditional allocation of functions on the basis of caste.

The caste ethos has also been subjected to a similar challenge in respect of the new ethos sought to be generated by our Constitution. The Indian Constitution promotes a casteless and non-discriminatory society and emphasises achievement, rationality, social justice equality of opportunities and dignity of individual. All this is essentially diametrically opposite to the caste ethos. As a result of modern education and exposure to new ideas and values, the younger generation comes to accept the new ethos, rather than cling to the old one. Notions of ritual purity and impurity have been largely thrown over the board particularly by the deprived and the disprivileged sections, challenging, therefore, the legitimacy of the caste ideology. Therefore, it should be emphasised that the ideological foundation of the caste system has been challenged and is being increasingly rendered unacceptable. The new ethos is not a mere definition of ideas and beliefs but

also a matter of institution building, as well as an outcome of legislative activity. The new legislation which bans discrimination on any basis, thus challenges the old ethos and the discriminatory practices. Modern education and the expansion of opportunities for secular jobs, which are free from the traditional division of labour, have ensured a good amount of freedom from traditional constraints. Reference should be made to the reservation of seats both in educational institutions as well as in the employment situation, which have at least made a beginning in the right direction. Moreover, the political consciousness which has been created and which the various political parties are very keen to promote also means a departure from the traditional caste restrictions. The increasing interplay between political mechanisms and the caste signify a frontal attack on the caste system. Thus one finds that the traditional characteristics of caste which tend to persist are being defined by the new forces such as new ideologies, institution building, legislation, continuous use of political mechanisms and so on.

The legitimacy of the caste system is also being questioned by substituting the earlier ideology by an ideology based on social justice, rationality and secularism. One also has to mention that the so-called lower castes have not only become conscious of their rights but there is a provision in the Constitution for their special representation and for guaranteeing their safety and well-being. Thus structural mechanisms are available to challenge the earlier ideology and to substitute it by an egalitarian one which cuts the ground from under the feet of the caste system. Similar observations could be made in respect of the division of labour and economic interdependence since deliberate efforts are being made to evolve as speedily as possible, a transition from status to contract. In respect of the Varna division, the state had adopted a policy of encouraging the people belonging to the lower castes, to change their names and caste identities. Similarly, in respect of the operation of caste at regional levels, special privileges are being given to the erstwhile lower castes, and these castes have been afforded a bargaining capacity which did not exist before. Moreover, the earlier obsession with ritual purity and impurity is also being attacked in various directions so that the traditional repulsion towards the lower castes is on the wane. The use of political mechanisms will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

REFERENCES

1. Durkheim, Emile, *The Division of Labour*.
2. Durkheim, op. cit.
3. Alexander, K.C., *Social Mobility in Kerala*, Deccan College, P.G. and R.I., Poona, 1969.
4. Karve, I and Damle, Y.B., *Group Relations in Village Community*, Deccan College, P.G. and R.I., 1963.
5. Alexander, K.C., op. cit.

ADDITIONAL READING

- Dumont, Lous *Homo Hierarchicus*, Delhi, Vikas Publication, 1970,
- Karve, Irawati. *Hindu Society — An Interpretation*, Poona, Deshmukh Prakashan, 1968.
- Ghurye, G.S., *Caste and Class in India*, Bombay, Popular Book Depot, 1957.
- Beteille. Andre. *Castes ; Old and New*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1969.
- Bailey, E.G., *Caste and Economic Frontier*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Srinivas, M.N., *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1970, pp. 63 ff.
- Beteille Andre. *Caste, Class and Power*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Karve, Irawati, 'Caste and Modernisation', in Desai, A.R., ed., *Essays on Modernisation of Underdeveloped Societies*, Bombay, Thacker and Co. Ltd., 1961.
- Atal, Yogesh, *The Changing Frontiers of Caste*, Delhi, National Publication House, 1968 pp. 14-16.
- Damle, Y.B., *A Review of the Literature on Caste*, Poona, Deccan College, 1961.
- Hardgrave. Robert L. Jr., 'Political Participation and Primordial Solidarity The Nature of Tamilnad,' in Kothari. Rajni, ed., *Caste in Indian Politics.*, New Delhi, Orient Longmans Ltd., 1970.

CHAPTER 3

Religion

Religion has always been a favourite concern of sociologists and social anthropologists. By and large, economists refuse to touch religion with 'a pair of tongs', since it is regarded as *prima facie* arational if not actually irrational. It is true that psychologists concern themselves with religion because of the capacity of religion for providing mental succour and so on, while sociologists addressed themselves to problems of understanding and analysing religion. Some of the best minds in the field have done excellent work in the field of religion such as Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Pareto, Wach and Stark. Religion is said to be concerned with man's relationship with the supernatural forces and is primarily interested in understanding the problem of the ultimate meaning, which provides the *Weltanschauung* for human beings. The curiosity on the part of human beings to understand the phenomenon of universe and their place vis-a-vis the universe, has worried the human mind since time immemorial.

We are not concerned with tracing the history of religion, nor with how religion has evolved from notions of naturism, animism and magic to religion proper. We have however, to mention such emergence and evaluation in order to point out that what is generally known as religion is a later stage in evolution. Men have always worried about establishing a proper relationship between themselves and the supernatural forces. It has always been felt that the well being of mankind depends on the propitiation of supernatural forces and beings. As a matter of fact, the concept of God is largely fashioned in term of an idealist version of the human being, depicting the highest virtues, abilities and comparison. Moreover, the image of God was designed to exert both a salutary influence on human beings and to control their behaviour. It is in this context that notions about the good deed and the bad deed, and the theory that one pays for one's deeds on the day of reckoning were evolved. Apart from the aspect of social con-

trol and the internalisation of certain fears about indulging in misdeeds, religion provided the much-needed meaning both as to life here and now and life after death. It also concerned itself with the salvation of the soul. Thus, religion is concerned with the problems of ultimate meaning which has been emphasised by many sociologists like Weber. In fact, Weber has built his entire edifice of the sociology of religion by linking up the problem of ultimate meaning with work-a-day life.¹

Then again, religion also means a system of ideas and beliefs as well as appropriate action. Ethical notions are naturally included in the set of ideas and beliefs. Similarly ideas about culture and a way of life are part and parcel of a religion, lending homogeneity to the followers of a given religion. The sharing of common ideas and beliefs inculcates a "we-feeling" amongst its adherents. One's way of life is influenced by one's religious beliefs, which also influence the ethical notions, material culture and the art and artifacts of culture. Leaving aside monotheistic religions, religion caters to the needs of plural society by its polytheism. In fact, in polytheistic religions, religious notions and their practice differ from one stratum to another, making specific demands on people according to their place in the hierarchy. While religion is intended to be a common denominator, in reality, we find that there is a minimum common denominator which is expected to influence everyone, while the higher reaches of religious beliefs, experience and practice are supposed to be the privilege of the enlightened and virtuous few. This is how a differentiated society also needs a differentiated religion. In fact, such differentiation means stratification on religious basis and to that extent, the segmentation of society. Such segmentation is clearly reflected if we trace the history of religion and various sects all over the world. Religion, thus, has important implications for the way of life and, broadly speaking, for the culture of the people, keeping in mind religious differentiation and also the consequent cultural differentiation. Thus, no religion can be regarded to be of a piece, since it can mean different things to different people as well as make different demands on different sections of people.

The various kinds of stresses and strains by which human beings are afflicted, their desire to both explain these stresses and strains and to hold them in check, have also been regarded as an important explanation for the emergence of religion. Right from

the earliest times man has pondered agonisingly over the problem of death, since it meant a total deprivation and loss which could not be rationally explained. Moreover, people could not reconcile themselves to the phenomenon of death. To use the modern sociological argument, one can describe death as an extreme case of deviance beyond repair whereby a person who has died would no longer participate in the system of roles and as such would impair the working of the social system. There is also the fact of a grievous emotional loss and suffering on the part of those who were left behind. In fact such a loss and suffering sometimes had a paralysing effect on the survivors and therefore it was necessary to restore their earlier capacity in respect of their role-performance. In order to do so, religion was regarded as a "felt need". The state of helplessness and despair had to be overcome by providing an explanation of death in terms of religion. However, it was not enough to provide such an explanation alone, it also had to provide appropriate steps whereby the bereaved persons could be reinstated in their roles — familial, social, economic, political and so on. This is the reasoning behind the various rites and rituals which were devised to structure and delimit mourning as well as to facilitate resumption of normal behaviour and performance of duties, functions etc. Calamities like death or even serious illness and mishaps were sought to be made palatable by appropriate mechanisms to forge group solidarity. This provision of mechanisms for ensuring group solidarity, under such circumstances, made it possible for the sufferer to derive psychological and moral support from his fellow-beings, depending upon the intimacy of his relationship with them.

Explanation of stresses and strains as well as tension management was rendered possible not only through religious ideas and beliefs but also by evolving appropriate rites and rituals which would foster group solidarity. Various writers like Radcliffe Brown² and Malinowski³ have emphasised this aspect of religion with special reference to simpler societies. However, as we know, this holds good even in complex societies. Thus, group solidarity is an important aspect of religion with which we shall be concerned in our later discussion.

It was mentioned earlier economists among the social scientists refused to discuss religion, since notions pertaining to religion or religious behaviour did not conform to the canons of

rationality, as there was no means-ends relationship between religious ideas and beliefs and the outcome of such ideas and beliefs. Thus religion is branded as arational if not irrational action. Marx⁴ described religion as an opium of the masses and observed that because of religion, the masses could be held in control by making them accept various manners of social inequalities and injustices. Marx vehemently suggested that as a result of their religious beliefs the masses became complacent and oblivious to their own sufferings arising out of social injustice based on the class system.

Comte⁵ also propounded the stages of development from the theological to the scientific stage; the theological stage being regarded as the most primitive stage and the scientific the most advanced stage of human development. It was felt that with the development of rationality and the scientific spirit, religion would recede into the background even to the point of extinction. A firm faith in rationality and the fond hope that human beings would be governed by rationality almost entirely, would dispel religious beliefs and promote the discarding of religion altogether. Of course, as we know, neither of this has materialised. Pareto⁶ made a very significant distinction between the rational and the non-rational, the logical and the nonlogical, the scientific and the non-scientific as far as human society was concerned and emphasised that the categories of the rational and the non-rational are not only separate, but exist independently of each other. He asserted that it would be unrealistic to expect the non-rational to be completely substituted by the rational, because the so-called non-rational occupied a significant place in human society.

It should be pointed out here that ethical and moral values which are really non-rational exert a great deal of influence on human affairs. As a matter of fact, ethical and moral values have shaped history perhaps to a much larger extent than purely rational ideas. Religious ideas and beliefs and the relevant action, though non-rational, thus, have to be recognised as an important force in human society which cannot be explained by employing canons of rationality. Moreover, as pointed out earlier, religious ideas and beliefs and the appropriate action forges or promotes group-solidarity which is again very significant as far as human society is concerned. Even if religious ideas and beliefs are non-rational they can help explain and thus legitimise

a given social order and promote social stability.

Max Weber⁷ went further than other sociologists of religion and contended that a firm linkage could be established between religious beliefs and values and rational action. In his famous and controversial book "Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism". Weber maintained that certain kinds of religious ideas and values could promote rationality. In his effort to understand the development of capitalism, he hit upon Protestant ethics and the spirit of Calvinism as offering an important explanation for the emergence and development of capitalism in Western society. Weber propounded a thesis of the linkage between Protestant ethics and the rise of capitalism. After his initial work, mentioned earlier, he set about making a comparative study of various religions like Hinduism, Judaism and the Chinese religion to find out if there was any relationship between religious beliefs and ideas and the promotion or otherwise of the development of capitalism. He used the method of agreement and difference, and proposed his thesis about religion or rather certain kinds of religious ideas and beliefs as being directly conducive to the development of rationality, the scientific spirit, economic prosperity and so on.

Weber maintained that a firm linkage between ultimate meaning and values and work-a-day life was mainly responsible for the development of scientific and technological advancement, the inculcation of rationality, the capacity to innovate and so on. Not only did Weber not dismiss religion as a non-rational entity, he also developed a firm linkage between religion and economic rationality, and the overall spirit of scientific and technological adventure. Weber thus lifted religion from a psychological plane to the sociological plane by explaining the relationship between religion and the entire process of modernisation. Weber was not apologetic about his concern for the understanding of religion as an important social phenomenon, but tried to link it integrally with the entire developmental cycle. He maintained that unless religious ideas were linked up with work-a-day life, no development worth the name would be possible. By raising the problem of ultimate meaning, Weber introduced ethical and moral values and, to a large extent, helped secularise religious values. While Weber's formulations about religion and development are extremely significant, we are not directly concerned with his contribution in so far as the pre-

sent work is concerned, although the insight provided by him regarding the linkage between religion and the pursuit of non-religious, secular activities and interests is extremely significant for our purpose.

Religion has been looked upon as a force for integration and promotion of group-solidarity by virtue of a common system of beliefs and practices. Durkheim defined religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relevant to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them."⁸ Beliefs and practices thus provide a common forum and a plank for ensuring group-solidarity. As we have mentioned earlier the differentiation of religions ideas and beliefs could promote different sects and as such could mean different groups and solidarities instead of a single group-solidarity. This has to be taken into account while accepting or criticising Durkheim's emphasis on the integrative role played by religion. It is a matter of common knowledge and experience all over the world, that the various sects which obtained in any given religion meant promotion of diverse group solidarities, albeit within the umbrella of a given religion. Fights between various sects belonging to a given religion have also been quite often and acrimonious.

In his brilliant critique of functionalism, Merton⁹ refutes Durkheim's emphasis on the integrative function of religion as being unwarranted. Merton says that at the most one might concede the point to Durkheim that a particular religion may be integrative as far as that religion alone is concerned. However, to hazard a universal proposition about the integrative function of religion is absolutely unwarranted. Merton goes to point out how various wars and battles have been fought in the name of religion, emphasising thus the disintegrative aspect or function of religion. Merton is perfectly right when he suggests that, at best, a given religion may be integrative within itself. When two different religions are confronted with each other, however, more often than not, religion plays a disintegrative role. It is here that Marx's observation about religion as the opium of the masses is relevant, to the extent that group solidarity can be whipped up on the basis of a religion.¹⁰ A given religion provides a rallying ground for the various people to come together to "defend"

religion, when it is faced with real or imaginary danger. This is how a sense of group feeling and solidarity can be worked up amongst the people. Of course, one must also mention here that this process of working up group feeling and group thinking is to a certain degree, not generally accomplished by the masses but by the leaders, that is, the elite. Thus, the religious beliefs of the masses can be exploited by the elite for the furtherance of their own cause. Thus, we find that the integrative theory of religion does not stand scrutiny as a universal proposition but needs to be modified by confining it to a given religion at a point of time. We have also mentioned how even within a given religion the development of various sects also promotes diverse group-solidarities. When different religions co-exist side by side, and are confronted, religion can be a disintegrative force, particularly when this fact is used and exploited by the leaders and the elite. It was pointed out earlier how religion stands for a way of life and a totality of culture. Naturally, when different ways of life and totality of cultures are face to face with each other, there is every attempt made to guard one's way of life and culture from the interference of another way of life and culture emanating from another religion. It may be argued that basically all religions propound similar spiritual and ethical ideas and ideals, and yet we find that every religion wants to safeguard itself and its adherents from any kind of influence or interference by any other religion. Any one religion thus becomes an "in-group" and all the others, the "out-groups", are looked upon with suspicion and fear. This is particularly so when religion happens to be of a monotheistic nature and believes in converting people belonging to other religions. On the other hand a monotheistic religion can certainly guarantee a very high degree of group solidarity as against a polytheistic religion, because the latter does not have a single book or a single system of religious tenets, which are common to all. Confrontation between monotheistic religions or groups which share monotheistic religions and polytheistic religions is thus inevitable, giving rise to bickering, fights and tension.

As one can easily imagine, such tensions also fan group solidarities on the basis of religion and provide ample opportunities for the leaders and the elite to maintain a level of tension, and to create appropriate mechanisms for containing such tensions.

Also, such group solidarities are pitted against each other in order to acquire greater advantages for themselves. This is how, notwithstanding "purely" religious ideas and beliefs, there is a greater encroachment of secular ideas and desires in respect of such solidarities. Competition between such solidarities for various facilities, benefits and advantages in the sphere of education, employment, income and so on, are bound to develop into conflict. This is particularly so, when religion gets politicised and becomes a matter of a show of strength vis-a-vis other religions, and convinces its followers, that unless they accept political mechanisms, their religion would be in danger.

A careful scrutiny of the cry that 'religion is in danger', really signifies that a way of life or culture of the people is in danger, or more specifically, that the material aspects of their life and interests are endangered. In many instances one finds that what is really at stake is the material condition and prospects of the people concerned rather than the freedom of beliefs and performance. Of course, the cry that 'religion is in danger' provides a very convenient excuse for people to organise themselves against another group. As a matter of fact, the conflict and fighting between two groups is thus legitimised. Human history is replete with such instances, the latest being the creation of Pakistan on the basis of cultural differences between the Hindus and Muslim. The creation of Pakistan, as we know, was based on the plea of safeguarding the Islamic religion and way of life.

However, this is not to deny the co-existence of different religious groups simultaneously. But even under such conditions one cannot escape the diversities of belief systems and ways of life which again imply competition and struggle for the possession of material benefits and prosperity. Moreover, in the case of religious minorities, while it is as regarded the duty of the majority religious group to safeguard the interests of the minority, it also means the perpetuation of minority status for the reaping of certain advantages by the minority group. Minority status means special and continuous attention, which in itself paves the way for maintaining a certain level of tension among the minorities so that their interest can be safeguarded and protected vis-a-vis the majority. When religion or religious groups are politicised it becomes all the more necessary to maintain a certain level of tension and suspicion between different religious groups so as

to ensure support for one's political party. Electioneering necessarily makes demands for enlisting the support of various religious groups which can be done by guaranteeing the safeguarding of their interests, particularly those of the minorities.

While India has opted to be a secular state, the political process as adopted in India, namely, that of parliamentary democracy, meant that all the emphasis was on vote-catching which made it inevitable that the various religious groups were pandered to at the time of elections, every five years or less. It is inevitable that the various political parties, and particularly the ruling party, take upon themselves the responsibility of safeguarding religious minorities and thus make sure of their support in elections. Politicisation of religious groups is, thus not only inevitable but also functional, in the sense that the minorities in particular, acquire a bargaining capacity and as such are able to enhance their strength *vis-à-vis* the other groups. Thus when it comes to the crunch, certain advantages and benefits necessarily accrue to such groups which they would not have otherwise got, such as reservations of seats for elections, in educational institutions, in the employment situation, etc. Politicisation also means the inroads made by a common political ideology, notwithstanding the various religious differences. This is how an effort is made to reduce diversities and to promote common denominators. Politicisation of religion and religious groups thus on the one hand promotes diversities as well as a more fair distribution of the good things of life, and also helps promote the sharing of a common system of ideas and values.

Thus, the foregoing analysis of religion has pointed out the various ramifications of religion, ranging from the explanation of stresses and strains and the creation of group solidarities, to the role of religion in promoting rationality and modernisation. Similarly, the integrative and the disintegrative aspects of religion have also been emphasised. In the wake of the politicisation of religion, attempts are made to maintain group diversities on the basis of religion, as well as to simultaneously promote a common denominator in respect of secular ideas and values. Various religious groups are thus on the one hand arrayed against each other and on the other, also work in cooperation and unison with each other for promoting certain common goals. Politicisation of religion thus helps change the character of religious groups.

REFERENCES

1. Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1956.
2. Radcliffe Brown, A.R., *The Andaman Islander*.
3. Malinowski, *The Trobri and Islands*.
4. Marx Karl, *Collected Works*.
5. Comte, August, *Positivism*.
6. Pareto, Vilfredo, *Mind and Society*.
7. Weber, Max, op. cit.
8. Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1957, p. 47.
9. Merton, R.K., *Social Theory and Structure*, Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois; 1957.
10. Marx, Karl, op. cit.

ADDITIONAL READING

- O'dea, Thomas F., *The Sociology of Religion*, Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi, 1969.
- Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1957.
- Vernon, Glenn M., *Sociology of Religion*, Me-Graw Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1962.
- Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1956.

CHAPTER 4

Politics in India

Politics

To use a commonsense definition of politics, one could describe it as the "art of the possible". The idea underlying this definition is that politics has to be pragmatic and down-to-earth even though it could be actuated by high principles and ideologies. It is true that ideals and values provide a frame of reference for politics and yet, there can be no denying the fact that politics concerns itself mainly with the attainment of goals which are, by and large, acceptable to society. Politics has the primacy of goal attainment and is geared to this task by mobilising all resources, material, human and institutional. In fact, in its quest for goal attainment politics has necessarily to make do with existing resources, while it simultaneously makes an attempt to create new resources and modify the existing ones. Mobilisation, therefore, has been regarded as an important feature of the political process. The existing environment has to be taken into account in respect of this process of the task of mobilisation. However, the political process not only takes the environment into account, it also changes the environment so as to realise its goals. There is a continuous interchange and exchange between politics and the environment, environment being particularly understood in terms of physical, human, cultural and social-structural environment. As a result of the continuous exchange and interchange between politics and environment, change, or rather a dialectical relationship between the two, is established. Politics cannot function effectively if it were to disregard the environment in all its ramifications.

It is customary to emphasise the importance of power in respect of politics. In other words, power, its creation, distribution, and, of course, legitimisation are regarded as the central feature of politics. However, before discussing power, it is useful to remind ourselves that the political process has to concern

itself with popularity as well as performance, apart from the fact that power is legitimised by resorting to legal mechanisms. The criteria of popularity and performance cannot be ignored because those who wield power have to enjoy a minimum degree of popular acceptability and support. Similarly, political power cannot be conceived except in terms of performance in the last analysis because the political process is necessarily geared to goal-attainment, and as such, those who are at the helm of politics are answerable to the public in terms of their ability to deliver the goods.

Therefore, while power is regarded as being the central feature of politics one has to emphasise the importance of both popularity and performance. As far as popularity is concerned, it is necessary for those in charge of the political process to cater to public approval. They must enjoy a minimum degree of acceptability on the part of the public. Those who wield political authority have to create a favourable public image and there is inevitably, a give and take, or at least a feedback mechanism between the public and those who wield such authority. It can be said that, if coupled with popularity, there was no ability to create a favourable image in the minds of the public nobody can continue to wield political authority. Mere image-building and consequent popularity, cannot be enough the holders of political authority, because in the ultimate analysis it has to be matched by performance. Performance is judged in terms of explicitly expressed ideals and goals. Here again, there is a feedback mechanism between the public at large and the performance with which those who wield authority are entrusted. There has to be an element of acceptance of these goals. As far as the public is concerned, it is necessary that they be taken into confidence, if not in formulating the goals, at least by convincing them to accept these goals as worth attaining. This is where interchange and exchange between those who wield political authority and the public at large becomes meaningful and inevitable. Such an interchange is necessarily guided by the environment described earlier and as such power, popularity and performance are integral features of politics. Popularity and performance particularly make it obligatory on those who wield political authority to be sensitive to environment and to take the public into confidence in order to enlist their cooperation. They are also factors which make the

public change its ways of behaviour, inter-relationships and so on, so as to facilitate the attainment of the set goals. "Politics is not to be conceived just as a pursuit of power or as essentially a bargaining exercise in response to given pressures and interests, but rather as a responsible exercise in the service of man in which knowledge and reason are utilised for realising common goals and values."¹ Politics therefore cannot impose goals on the public, without taking into consideration the aspirations and desires of the people. Moreover, it means involvement of the people at every stage rather than mere use of power.

Social structure

It is thus very obvious that, in its concern for goal attainment, politics will have to take cognizance of the existing social structure while at the same time endeavouring to change it, in order to promote the attainment of goals in respect of the creation of an "ideal society". The aims and objectives, underlying such an image of ideal society, have to be scrupulously understood and efforts have to be made to realise them by appropriate action. The history of a society plays a very crucial part in defining its aims and objectives. For instance, in the case of India, as a result of the partition of the country on the basis of religion, secularism or rather the establishment of a secular state came to be regarded as a fundamental goal. This was to avoid any further split on the grounds of religion. Therefore, safeguarding the interests of minorities—religious, ethnic, cultural and so on—became the major task of the Indian state.

Similarly, the acceptance of a democratic framework and the aim of enlisting the cooperation of the people meant that the existing system of loyalties, as, for example, those of kinship, caste, language, religion, region, etc., had to be accepted and utilised for the furtherance of universalism. Thus, on the one hand, the social structural features have to be both known and accepted while at the same time the efforts have to be made to modify them so as to promote attainment of the accepted goals. Thus one has to remember that politics, however important it might be, cannot hope to be effective if it were to ignore the structural loyalties and also, if it were to refuse to put in the required effort to modify the existing structural features for the realisation of its goals.

Power

There can be no politics without power and there can be no power without proper legitimacy. Authority is essential for the wielding of power. Society vests politics with overall power and as such power is regarded as an essential feature of politics. Further, power is derived from society. "Politics, then, is the striving to share power, or influence the distribution of power, or the power to make 'authoritative decisions'. The criterion of a political question is concerned with the distribution, maintenance, or transfer of power in this sense."² As Weber would observe, power has to be legitimised by instituting legal-rational authority particularly in so far as a democratic political system is regarded as desirable. Power obviously vests in the state because of its desire and concern to do good for the entire society. It is here that the question of nationalism comes in. Nationalism demands the supercession of all kinds of pluralistic variations and interests in preference to the interest of the nation as a whole. It gives utmost priority to national interest by curbing regional and pluralistic interests. The authority of the state becomes viable and acceptable to the people to the extent that the people are convinced that the state can, under certain circumstances, accord topmost priority to the national interest.

Of course, the state cannot ignore regional and narrow interests because it can do so only at its own peril. There is a meaningful dovetailing of the interests and the priorities as between the nation as a whole and regional and local interests. In fact, there should be a proper allocation of authority as between the centre and the states, because these are certain needs which are specific to the states which cannot be handled realistically and efficiently by the centre. There is no denying the fact that the wielding of authority has to be effected in such a manner that the states, while they are entrusted with regional and local problems and interests, will also have to be governed by the centre in so far as the pursuit of common national goals are concerned.

If the nation is conceived as a system then the various states have to be treated as subsystems. The political process is thus concerned with a proper allocation of authority as between the centre and the state in order to both promote national as well as regional goals. In India, where the states are themselves large, the analysis of the political process within the states provides one simultan-

eously with both a microcosm and a macrocosm level. Weiner says "Each of the Indian states provides us with an unusual microcosm and macrocosm for studying processes of development: a microcosm since the states are constituent units of a larger system, and a macrocosm because the units are themselves so large that they can be studied as total system. We have, therefore, a rare opportunity to compare patterns of political development in large political systems functioning within a single framework. Thus, the states share a common legal system, a common constitutional framework, a common administrative structure, and a common international environment, but their internal political patterns vary considerably."³ Similar views are also expressed by Iqbal Narain.⁴

One cannot, however, disregard the importance of parochial loyalties and pressures, which naturally have to be given precedence, particularly at the state level and which to some extent also affects the political process even at the centre. Therefore, in understanding and discussing politics in India one has to take into account the three levels of politics, namely, the central, the state and the local level. As a result of the adoption of the democratic framework and, particularly, the decentralisation of political authority with a view to both providing representation to the lowest unit of the political process, namely, the village and, also, to enlist their cooperation in the entire process of nation-building, continuous interchange between the lowest and the highest political units has been introduced. Thus the centre has to take into account the aspirations and the wishes of the smallest or the lowest unit, building into the system a continuous interchange and exchange between the various levels. This of course means change in the quality of the political process in its actual working, which is reflected in the composition of the centre, the states and local authorities. It is really a question of the working together, at least to a minimum required degree, of the three levels of the political process as mentioned earlier. The vertical unity between the local, state and central political process is thus not a one-sided entity but represents mutual communication as well as the importance of taking into account even the lowest level in formulating programmes and policies at the highest level. Iqbal Narain sums up this fact in the following words: "Broadly speaking, the Indian political system can be called a three-tier

system with the central tier at the apex, the state tier in the middle and the local tier at the bottom. This somewhat commonplace description would perhaps yield an insight into the inter-locked mechanism of state politics which resembles a sort of 'inter-growth' between the union and local tiers, with the former by and large 'opening into' it and the latter tending to 'open out' to it, particularly after the establishment of *Panchayati-raj* at the grass roots level. Thus, while there is a sort of vertical pattern in the influence of the union tier on the state tier with frequent rebounding pulls and pressures from the state, there appears to be emerging the phenomenon of inverted impact of the local tier from bottom upwards."⁵

Democratic politics in India

India has opted for a democratic system and as such has accepted free elections. Adult franchise has also been accepted as an important plank to ensure the democratic process and the participation of all the citizens. A democratic politics acquires its legitimacy by obtaining the consent of all its citizens. Logically speaking, in a democracy, the ultimate power is in the hands of the citizens at large. All the citizens have the opportunity to enjoy political power because of free elections. Of course, democratic politics also means that there has to be a representation of the corporate groups, and such real power is vested in the hands of the elected representatives who act as the agents or representatives of the entire nation, representing various levels of the political process namely centre, state and local.

Free elections and the freedom to represent various points of view necessitates adoption of the party system which is regarded as a necessary adjunct of democratic politics. Through the party system, an attempt is made to represent different ideas and interests so as to ensure adequate representation of all the sections of the population. It is a matter of common knowledge that the party system differs from one nation to another. There can be a two-party system, a multiple-party system or a dominant party system. In the case of dominant party system, there is only one major party with many minor parties which are politically ineffective, in the sense, that they cannot hope to enjoy power by forming a government. The Indian political system is characterised by a dominant party system, the dominance being enjoyed by the

Congress Party in a pronounced fashion at the centre and, by and large in most states almost since 1947⁶. All the same, the existence of different parties and the theoretical possibility of their forming a government, at least in the states, necessitates a certain amount of compromise as regards the various goals and objectives and also the mechanism to be used for the working of the political process.

Pressure Groups or Interest Groups

Apart from the party system, which is one of the very significant features of the democratic political system, the presence of pressure-groups or interest-groups is also one of its characteristic features. Pressure-groups or interest groups do not directly participate in the acquisition of power or in its exercise. They act, however, to influence power while remaining apart from it. They exert pressure on it. The phenomenon of pressure-groups or interest-groups is represented in the various lobbies which are always present in a democratic political system.

Pressure-groups are based mostly on religion, caste, race, language and region. While theoretically speaking, pressure-groups do not enter politics it is inevitable, that because of their desire to exert pressure and influence political decisions, such groups get politicised. The political process inevitably brings pressure groups and politicises them. In India, we come across various pressure-groups in terms of the forces exercised by language, region, religion, caste and so on. A democratic system functions in such a manner that it has to accomodate the views and interests of such groups both in the formulation and the implementation of various programme and policies. Therefore, it can be safely said that the existence and functioning of pressure groups or interest-groups is built into the system.

It was pointed out earlier how the political process works not only for bargaining but also to make sure of a positive public policy geared to performance, and to the attainment of the common good rather than to serve the interest of the ruling party. Democratic politics requires that various political parties should try to promote universalistic loyalties as against sectional loyalties. Moreover, it is in terms of such universalistic convictions and appeals made by political parties that a salutary influence is exercised on the running of the state. Then again, power ceases to have an hierarchical character because of the involvement of the

masses and the broadening of the level of their participation through various interest groups. There is thus an increasing emphasis on role differentiation, reconciliation, ideological mobilisation and interest group formation in the political process of society. The various political parties and the interest-groups put together necessitate an attitude of compromise or give-and-take between the ruling party and other parties.

It was also pointed out earlier how the emphasis on adult franchise in India signifies an attempt to involve the masses and the elite in the political process. The masses can be made to feel involved in the political process by the various political parties catering to the people's immediate interests which may be governed by considerations of language, caste, religion and so on. Local issues and interests certainly play a very significant role in the voting behaviour of the people, particularly of the illiterate people who can be easily swayed by political parties. Thus, one finds that the political process as it functions has to necessarily accommodate the narrow interests and loyalties of the people. Of course, it should be added here that the political leaders namely the elite mobilise the support of the people at large by promising to represent their interests both at the state and centre levels. Of course, while doing this universalistic principles are not lost sight of. All India problems and policies are certainly emphasised. Democratic politics is thus essentially an accommodation of conflicting interest groups and principles, and as such can never progress in a straight line.

As a result of the change and the process of compromise and accommodation, certain dilemmas arise in the Indian situation. These dilemmas arise primarily because of the pressure and the counter-pressure of different points of view, ideologies and interests.

"The basic dilemma of relatively open political systems like India is that they are called upon to undertake functions that even "developed" political systems have been hesitant to undertake, while wholly lacking in economic, technological, and organisational resources of the latter. Historically speaking, the non-Western societies have taken over the ideological urges and social aspirations of Western societies without either the time the latter had to deal with primary issues of legitimacy or the economic and intellectual resources that were built up before they broadened their political

base to include mass functions. The "Shrinking of the World" has in this respect become a painful circumstance for developing regions as it has bequeathed to them social and political belief systems without the concomitant material and institutional props that are needed for stable and consistent change.⁷ Democracy as a pure type would demand that the acquisition and use of power would be only for the promotion of the common interest, although in reality one finds several compromises being made. It was also pointed out earlier, how, because of the working of the dominant party system in India namely, the uninterrupted sway and role of the Congress Party since Independence, particularly at the centre and also in many of the states, the Congress is called upon to accommodate under its umbrella, diverse ideologies and interests. This is largely because of the absence of a strong opposition party. In fact, within the Congress itself, one can say that by catering to various ideals and interests, the role and the prospects of a really strong opposition party is rendered unnecessary and impracticable, and to that extent the growth of a strong opposition is subverted. Moreover, being the dominant party, the Congress can accommodate various kinds of narrow and sectional interest-groups, which the various interest-groups also find to their advantage. The Congress party portrays the picture of a benevolent and protective party which ensures the well being of minorities, and various other groups which have narrow, particularistic loyalties. Then again, the Congress party can espouse the most radical views while in reality accommodating vested interests which have a stake in the traditional structure. On the other hand, the groups which have vested interests in the traditional structure are also persuaded to make certain sacrifices in favour of universalistic principles and ideologies, programmes and policies so that they can continue to obtain certain special privileges. This facilitates a gradual transformation of the groups. Thus the functioning of the democratic process, and the existing dominant party, has facilitated the simultaneous existence of conflicting ideologies and interest groups while at the same time changing them and making them accept universalistic principles, programmes and policies. This is the process where by what are *prima-facie* regarded as traditional and reactionary forces, like caste and religion, are in reality transformed in the democratic process.

A democratic system thus muddles its way through and refuses

to take a very sharp and uncompromising posture in respect of various principles, programmes and policies. Were it to do so, nothing could be attained. Further, as we have emphasised earlier the democratic process has to take into account diverse interest groups and make use of them in the furtherance of universalistic principles and policies. The interchange and exchange between the political process and the existing social structure including, of course, the vested interests, ensures both a compromise and a softening process whereby a rigid attitude is given up in actual practice, thereby facilitating change in the desired direction. It is in this sense that we have to understand and analyse the interchange and exchange between politics, caste, and religion in India.

REFERENCES

1. Kothari, Rajni, *Policy Planning and Political Performance—Study Design*, mimeographed, Delhi, 1973, p. 2.
2. Wiseman, H.V., *Political Systems*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Press, London, 1971, p. 99.
3. Weiner, Myron, ed., *State Politics in India*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1968, p. 4.
4. Narain, Iqbal, ed., *State Politics in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1957, p. 18.
5. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
6. Gopalswami, R.A., *Indian Polity*, Nachiketa Publications Ltd., Bombay, 1970, pp. 44 ff.
7. Kothari, Rajni, *Politics in India*, Orient Longmans Ltd., New Delhi, 1970, p.3.

ADDITIONAL READING

- Weiner, Myron, ed., *State Politics in India*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1968.
- Duverger, Maurice, *Party Politics and Pressure Groups*, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., London, 1972.
- Singh, Yogendra, *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, Thomson Press India Limited, Publications Division, Delhi, 1973.
- Sirasikar, V.M., *Sovereigns without Crown*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1973.
- Dean, Vera Micheles, *New Patterns of Democracy in India*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969, pp. 211 ff.
- Weiner, Myron, *Political Change in South Asia*, Firma K.L. Calcutta, 1963, p. 151.

CHAPTER 5

Caste and Politics

In the first chapter it was made clear that our interest in the description and analysis of caste is largely to the extent to which it is amenable to be influenced by, and to influence politics. The structure of caste and the changes which have come about in caste are not of relevance to the present study. Of course, it is necessary to mention that the traditional system of caste was also influenced by politics in the sense of the creation, distribution and legitimisation of power. According to the Varna scheme, the Kshatriyas were entrusted with political power and the task of administering the entire society with a sense of fair-play and justice in consonance with the Varna division of society. The king, who represented the highest political and secular power, was expected to ensure the smooth functioning of the caste system, taking into account the system of stratification in all its ramifications.

Of course, one knows that the Varna division of society was an "ideal type" one and that there were kings who did not necessarily belong to the Kshatriya Varna. However, the fact remains that the traditional social organisation based on the Varna division and guided by the functioning of caste system had also given thought to power and to the interplay between politics and social organisation. Political power was vested in the Panchayats, with both the caste-Panchayats and the village-Panchayats taking care of administering people in terms of accepted principles. After the advent of the British rule, the political power enjoyed by the Panchayats was eroded and, similarly, the association between political power and the Varna division was also disturbed. The British rulers monopolised political power. However, due to modern education, creation of secular jobs, industrialisation, urbanisation, the unleashing of new values and ideologies as well as the monopolisation of all these facilities by the higher castes, particularly the Brahmins,

the introduction of politics in respect of the caste system was necessitated.

Caste and modernisation

It was mentioned earlier that the Brahmins and other higher castes took avidly to modern education, the new occupational structure, the various opportunities prevalent, and new ideologies and values such as rationality, secularism, the scientific spirit and so on. This meant the domination by the Brahmins and higher castes in all walks of life excepting, of course, political supremacy which rested with the British rulers. The disprivileges of the lower castes, which were mostly of a ritual nature, were thus compounded with all kinds of secular disprivileges vis-a-vis education, jobs, careers, standard of living and so on. This state of affairs tended to become permanent because of the lack of modern education among the lower castes and the consequent immobility pertaining to the socio-economic dimensions. Moreover, due to the adoption of Western values and patterns, along with education and secular jobs by the higher castes, a new model became available for the lower castes to emulate. This model was secular and irrelevant to the model provided by the caste system emphasising its ritual dimension. Therefore, it created an opportunity for the lower castes to by-pass the structural rigidities inherent in the caste model. Soon however, they realised that even though the new model was theoretically open, in reality it had become the monopoly of the higher castes. In fact it became very difficult for the lower castes to avail themselves of the new avenues of progress, prosperity and power provided by this model. This point will be discussed later in the section 'On lower castes and their politicisation'.

Another consequence of British rule was the emergence of nationalism, with the consequent submerging of all manners of differentiation and segmentation. Again, this will be discussed later when we discuss the non-Brahmin movement and the working of the political process which encouraged such a movement. It was also felt that the segmental division of the society into castes stood in the way of the development of nationalism and, particularly, the participation in the national movement by the deprived and disprivileged sections. Then again, exposure to democratic ideas and the acceptance of political democracy necessarily meant

taking into account the fact of caste as a reality to be reckoned within the workings of political democracy.

This process, which had started even during the British rule in the shape of special representation to certain castes and groups and the constitutional provisions or safeguards to protect their interests and so on, acquired considerable momentum after Independence. Adult franchise which was regarded, and rightly so, as the king-pin of the democratic system, naturally opened new vistas of opportunity to the various caste-groups and, particularly to the deprived and the disprivileged to become an entity to be reckoned with. Similarly, the emphasis placed on modernising the social structure in India in the wake of Independence also opened out new avenues and opportunities for the various castes. It was felt that without necessarily going through the process of Sankritisation and Westernisation certain gains could be made by politicisation. The acceptance of new values created an awareness, a consciousness and a keen desire to improve their lot on the part of the so-called lower castes. There was an emphasis in favour of achieved status, decrying the ascriptive basis of the caste system. Naturally, the segmental division of society came to be resented. Politicisation thus created an atmosphere of emphasising secular status and power as against the ritual. Naturally, modern education, secular jobs and the freedom to choose one's vocation and career came to be demanded. This process promoted unification of castes on a regional if not on an all-India basis. It was felt by the various castes that unless they were united it would not be possible to muster sufficient strength to demand the removal of the inequity inherent in the caste system. It was very clearly realised that the theoretical freedom for the enhancement of one's prospects as guaranteed by the Constitution, would be meaningless without deliberate efforts to wrest such advantages from those who had enjoyed their monopoly. This is how the political process was unhesitatingly resorted to by many castes. Then again, democratic politics also meant that the higher castes, for the first time, experienced the necessity for wooing the lower castes, particularly when they were sizeable in numbers. The interchange of caste and politics thus became necessary for furthering the process of modernisation, and to promote the attainment of goals envisaged in the Constitution, such as the creation of a social order based on equality, justice,

freedom, secular considerations and prosperity.

Interchange and exchange between caste and politics

Several writers have concerned themselves with the question of what happens to caste when it is politicised or whether politics is dictated and dominated by caste. We made it clear in an earlier section that we would not raise such questions because any appraisal of the reality, as it exists, does not warrant the raising of such questions. What we really emphasise is the interaction between caste and politics, as was mentioned in the earlier section. It is interesting to know how "the primordial sentiments and loyalties", as exemplified by caste get transformed by virtue of the encroachment of the political process on castes, or rather the continuing necessity of interaction and exchange between politics and caste. Several studies of electoral politics have pointed to such an interaction, although the precise degree in which the one influences the other naturally varies from one caste to another. The primordial sentiments and loyalties, mentioned above, are brought into the arena of politics, being transformed in the process as a result of the exposure to, and the influence of, political mechanisms.

The political process succeeds in both using such loyalties and transforming them as well, and by even cutting across caste loyalties. Rajni Kothari has made very significant observations about the interchange and exchange between caste and politics. He admits that the traditional system in India was organised around caste structure and entity. However, he says that "Politics is a competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for the realisation of certain goals, and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging allegiances in order to mobilise and consolidate position. The important thing is organisation and articulation of support, and where politics is mass-based the point is to articulate support through the organisations in which the masses are to be found. It follows that where the caste structure provides one of the principal organisational clusters along which the bulk of the population is found to live, politics must strive to organise through such a structure. The alleged 'casteism in politics' is thus no more and no less than *politicisation of caste*. It is something in which both the forms of caste and the forms of politics are brought nearer each other, in

the process changing both. By drawing the caste system into its web of organisation, politics finds material for its articulation and moulds it into its own design. In making politics their sphere of activity, caste and kind groups on the other hand, get a chance to assert their identity and to strive for positions. Politicians mobilise caste groupings and identities in order to organise their power. They find it an extremely well-articulated and flexible basis for organisation, something that may have been structured in terms of a status hierarchy, but something that is also available for political manipulation and has a basis in consciousness¹. This continuous interaction between caste and politics therefore necessarily changes both. Consequently, it is very important to bear in mind this interchange and exchange because of which there is a qualitative difference both in the caste as well as in the political process. After all, the political process has to make use of the existing structures in order to promote the goals which it has set itself to attain which in the Indian case is the creation of a casteless, secular, just and prosperous society.

Caste and democracy

The adoption of the democratic framework and, particularly that of adult franchise, meant the opening of new opportunities of political participation to the masses. The lower section of the society, in particular, posed an immediate threat to the erstwhile dominant castes. These dominant castes could no longer enjoy political ascendancy, because they had to contend with the lower sections in order to get their support. Political power became diffused and, for the first time, the higher castes were compelled to contact the lower castes with a view to obtaining their support. This naturally meant a threat to the domination of the higher castes. The political awakening of the masses through the political parties meant that they would participate in the political process whereby they would be in a position to at least question, if not challenge, the position of the higher castes. "The locus of power shifts from the caste system itself to differentiated structures of power a vast body of new structures of power have emerged in India since Independence. Today, traditional bodies such as groups of caste elders (which are functionally diffuse) have to compete increasingly with functionally specific structures of power such as parties and statutory *panchayats*. Often there

are mechanisms which bring about the interpenetration of the two sets of bodies.”²

Politics thus demanded of the people acceptance of political party identities that went counter to caste identities. Of course the political parties could not and cannot afford to ignore caste-loyalties completely. Caste loyalties have not been completely abandoned though they are modified. Political parties have to make use of traditional loyalties for furthering their own ends. People who are used to caste-loyalties are now called upon to foster political party-loyalties and they learn to maintain both these. The role of kinship and caste in people's political preference cannot be wished away and yet the working of the political parties sensitises the people to a different system of loyalties and makes them opt for these loyalties willingly when it suits them. Various writers, in pointing to the persistence of caste loyalties, forget the impact of democratic politics and the functioning of the political parties on such loyalties. The case of the low castes obviously comes to the mind. The lower castes are offered an opportunity to get themselves heard, to air their grievances as well as to obtain sympathetic consideration and at least partial redress for their grievances because of the political parties.

The seclusion warranted by the caste system, tends to break down as a result of politicisation, because the state in a democracy represents the organised will of the whole community. It is again maintained by some that caste exercises a tremendous hold on politics which fact is exploited by some castes. Such a view however implies that politics is a passive factor, which is far from true. Politics implies continuous manipulation to realise aims and goals, as they are perceived and accepted, and as such politics can not remain a passive spectator. In fact it tries hard and also succeeds in influencing caste. Politics broadens the social basis, instead of trying to merely substitute caste by politics. “Caste identities themselves take to new forms of articulation thus changing the very ethics of the social system and diminishing the importance of its ritualistic and ascriptive bases. Caste on one side ceases to be an exclusive political support base and on the other side lends itself to increasing political articulation, both of which contribute to its participation in a broader network of relationship and a shift of its emphasis from a static system of

stratification to a dynamic base of competition and integration."³

Democratic politicisation has affected the various traditional aspects of the caste system and has made inroads into the power structure of caste. The rural structure is rendered much more open because of this process. Apart from the working of political parties, legislation has also given a jolt to the power structure of caste. Land legislation and land reforms in particular, have helped alter the traditional power structure. It may be argued that land reforms have not always been properly implemented and, yet there can be no denying the fact that, as a result of land reforms there is an upsurge on the part of the traditionally deprived and disprivileged sections to question the system and to fight for legally sanctioned facilities and benefits.

Democratisation has also affected the traditional functions of the caste because the hereditary monopoly of castes has been challenged. Functions that were out-of-bounds to some castes have now become the property of everybody. The opening of occupations and the availability of making a living outside the traditional economic interdependence dictated by caste, has naturally affected and impaired the caste system. There is a shift in favour of political power from ritual power. Once political power becomes an important value with the people, it is inevitable that they will enter into any kind of alliance to acquire political power. Similarly, those who want to acquire and maintain political power will have to cast their net much wider than in the areas of kinship and caste. This would imply shedding of particularistic and ascriptive elements associated with the caste system.

Democratic politics, thus, introduces universalistic features and makes it worthwhile for people to accept them. In this process of universalisation, caste competition and rivalry amongst various castes is inevitable because political power is a scarce commodity acquired only through hard struggle. Such competition and rivalry, however, is healthy in so far as the end or goal in view is universalistic, although the instrument through which it is sought to be acquired may be one's caste. Any caste which wants to compete for political power has to necessarily make various kinds of adjustments and compromises which take it away from the very basis of the caste ethos.

Caste and politics in village and region

India is predominantly a country of villages and it is necessary to bear in mind the peculiarities of the rural structure because of the lack of sufficient change in the villages. On the one hand, the villages are exposed to new ideas and ideologies and, on the other, because of a relative lack of the opening of economic opportunities, even now a great deal of premium is put on reliance on kinship and caste. It is indeed a commonplace of sociology that to understand any social structure one has to delineate the various tiers of loyalties, which in the Indian case are exemplified by kinship, caste, neighbourhood, language, region, religion, state and nation. Moreover all these tiers of loyalties are not necessarily applicable in the case of all the sections of population. Even then at the level of ideas, there is an awareness created of the wider tiers of loyalties.

At the village level, it may be possible for the dominant caste to control the village, and yet, there are various ways in which the villagers participate in the extra-village system, thus paving the way for external contact, influence and even opportunities for reducing the dependence on the village. Secular power has been made available to the rural masses who have been sensitised to the importance of political power. Political power naturally generates from numerical strength which makes it possible for various groups to assert themselves. This would have been unthinkable before. Super-imposition and domination of political power over ritual power is an extremely significant factor in freeing the people from the obsession and concern with ritual power. It was pointed out earlier that caste, because of its politicisation, becomes a new entity and force, to be used and manipulated in a deft manner. While it may be conceded that at the village level caste occupies an important place in one's voting behaviour and the choice of and support to candidates, it also means that in the absence of one's caste a candidate can enter into a meaningful bargaining position with other castes. As far as extra-village politics is concerned caste does not play the same role. When it comes to regional politics, caste plays even a less significant role than in the case of extra village politics. Somjee's⁴ studies of a village in Gujarat have brought out the difference between intra- and extra-village politics in terms of the significance of caste. His studies show that for the Panchayat elections in the village the

leaders tried to mobilise the members of their own caste, and those of other castes only when it became necessary. The voting pattern during the Panchayat elections was primarily determined by caste and kinship ties. Analysing the 1967 general elections, Somjee⁵ points out that politics had a cross-cutting effect on castes in the village studied. Voting in the case of state and national politics was relatively caste-free.

Within the village, caste plays an important role in politics. At the extra-village politics the interaction between caste and politics is mutual. While at the level of state and nation, the supremacy of politics can be clearly discerned. Yogendra Singh describes politics at the all-India level as the macrocosm while he regards politics at the local level i.e., the village level as microcosm. Yogendra Singh⁶ however mentions that the caste groups operating within the macro-system are a parochial phenomena of the micro system. The monopoly of higher castes can be successfully counteracted by making use of political mechanisms, which could be seen in the demands for the formation of linguistic states, and also in the demand on the part of the disprivileged to ensure that no caste could enjoy such hegemony over them. It was this fear which led Dr. Ambedkar to demand the formation of three Marathi speaking states in Maharashtra so that the Marathas would not dominate the Mahars. Similar instances could be quoted in the case of the erstwhile Madras state and the demand by the Telegu speaking people to split it, as well as the situation in Maharashtra and Karnataka. The hold of language and caste is the strongest at the level of local and regional politics, while at the level of national politics it is considerably less or even non-existent.

Caste and politics parties

The functioning of political parties gives a chance to the people to pick and choose a particular party in terms of their ideological preferences, not only with a view to voicing their problems but to tackle them by resorting to appropriate political action. Political parties are the channels through which individuals acquire power. They stand for certain ideologies and vow to adhere to them in the execution of political power, once they acquire positions of actual power. Granting the fact that there is always some divergence between ideology and practice, it cannot be denied that political parties help the people in airing their

grievances and also help them, at least to a certain extent, in rectifying them. Of course, political parties have to take care of various sectional interests and points of views, and therefore the working of the political parties, to some extent, helps to raise people to a slightly higher level by making them compromise in respect of their specific interests so as to fit them into the ideologies and policy pursued by any particular political party.

If caste wants to have effective political power, then it should see that it is represented by getting elected those of its members who can actually wield power. Thus, castes wishing to have political power are forced to struggle against one another in order to have their own candidates elected. Even as they succeed in getting representation for their castes, they make certain compromises in order to do so. Of course, acquiring such a support from a political party would depend on several factors. First of all, the unity of the caste is of crucial importance. Then again if a caste is weak, it will have to seek alliance with other castes in order to gain the attention and the support of the political parties. In the case of the numerically dominant caste, success depends on its own internal cohesion. In the electoral field, the relationship between caste and politics takes place in terms of various caste groups and political parties or politicians. In this interaction the masses encounter democratic politics not in terms of their individuality but in terms of traditional group identities. This is how caste still remains a channel of political life for most Indians.

Interaction between caste and politics consists in the mobilisation of caste and giving it a political orientation. Caste-mobilisation and orientation can take various forms. Roughly, we may categorise such mobilisation into two types—*intra-group* and *inter-group* mobilisation. By *intra-group* mobilisation is meant the involvement of a particular caste group in politics on its own strength and resources. Here, political mobilisation takes place within the caste group and it does not enter into alliance with other groups in the pursuit of its political goals. This is naturally found among the dominant castes as well as among the depressed caste groups. In *inter-group* mobilisation more than one caste group is involved. Inter-caste alliances are made for political action. This has become a common phenomenon now. At present, practically no caste can be considered to be enjoying a complete domination because of the lack of an absolute majority. Still one finds that a caste

group which forms the largest percentage of the population, naturally can ally itself with other castegroups or other groups based on interests or ideologies, in a very easy manner, as for example, the Marathas as a caste in Maharashtra. The caste groups joining hands with non-caste groups and forming relationships and alliances, is thus the order of the day. This understandably, changes both caste and politics in the process. "It is the secular potential of caste that is brought out by its adopting an associational form of organisation and then functioning in an interactional framework"⁷. Rudolphs also commented on this fact thus: "Differential mobilisation involves the marshalling of direct and indirect political support by political parties (and other integrative structures) from viable, but internally differentiated, communities through parallel appeals to ideology, sentiment and interest. The agent of mobilisation in this case is the political party rather than the local notable or community association, and its strategies of mobilisation vary."⁸

In the case of inter-group mobilisation, politics cuts across caste loyalties to a certain extent. That is why "the changes that caste has and is undergoing are carrying it beyond traditional ascriptive definitions. These changes include internal differentiation (fission) and the operation of integrative institutions upon it; federation of castes (fusion) into larger associations that express shared interests, symbols, and norms; and decompression of caste's village home."⁹ Through intra-and inter-group mobilisation, caste plays an important role in politics. But it does not get whatever it hopes to from this interaction between caste and politics. Although political parties make use of caste by rendering it some service, a political party can never be completely in the service of a sectional group. "No political party can be used exclusively for the articulation of caste interests if only because it has other interests to present (e.g., labour, peasantry, youth, etc.) which necessarily cut across those of caste."¹⁰ This is one of the reasons why often caste groups withdraw their support to political parties and also that caste groups change their support from one party to another.

Caste support of political parties/candidates may take various forms. Roughly, four forms can be distinguished. First, a caste group as a whole may have its own political party/candidate for election or, in the absence of a caste-party, gives support to one

political party/candidate. Second, a particular caste group may be divided in itself by supporting different political parties/candidates. Third, different caste groups join together and form an inter-caste party or give support to one political party/candidate. Fourth, a caste group makes alliance with a non-caste group in order to give support to a political party/candidate. In all these four forms of support, both caste and political party serve each other. Caste profits from it because it integrates the caste group and paves the way for its status as a pressure group in politics.

A caste group sometimes has its own political party to contest elections and to fight for its demands in politics. To be successful, here the caste must be well integrated. Where a particular caste as a whole is experiencing relative deprivation on account of little political power, it is likely to mobilise itself politically by forming a political party of its own. Such purely caste-political parties are not many in India. The Jatavs of Agra city present a good illustration.¹¹ The Jatavs are a scheduled caste group who were able to make their presence felt and influence their party by appropriate political action.

Where the formation of a caste based political party is not necessary or desirable, political involvement and assertion can take the form of a caste as a whole giving support to a political party which in itself is divorced of any caste bias. Sirsakar's study of Poona showed that in Poona the Marathas as a whole supported the Congress, and the Brahmins the Jana Sangh, to the extent the Congress being labelled a Maratha party and the Jana Sangh, a Brahmin party.¹²

Most of the political parties in India are not in themselves identified with any caste group. Typically, ideal political parties should be impersonal and universalistic. And yet one can always label a party as being supported solidly by a particular caste group. Moreover, political parties cannot afford to ignore the support lent to them by caste groups. There is always a struggle among political parties in their wooing of the caste groups, especially where the latter have no political party of their own. Here the struggle is two-sided. From the part of the caste there is an attempt to thrust itself on the political party. It also tries to put pressure upon the political parties to have its own members as candidates of the political parties. On the other hand, the political party comes out with big offers to the caste. It poses itself as the 'god-

father' of the caste willing to do anything for the welfare of such caste groups. This wooing naturally becomes all the more pronounced when the stakes are big. This is the reason why where a caste group is dominant, political parties vie with each other in getting its support. Contending political parties choose their candidates from the dominant caste. This fact has been well documented by Harrison's study.¹³ Thus, where there are no parties in the name of the castes, the election field is an arena of much bargaining on the part of the castes.

There is another type of relationship between caste and political parties. Various caste groups in a region may unite together in order to support a political party or candidate. This type of inter-caste political support is usually organised against the dominant caste and its political party or candidate. Here politics is at the same time functional and dysfunctional to integration. Inter-caste alliances have given a new dimension to caste. They have opened up new vistas of cooperation and adjustment between castes. Acquiring new dimensions, reacting to new structures and making adjustments between old and new patterns, the caste system has undergone a change in democratic India.

Inter-group political mobilisation need not always be between caste groups alone. It can take place between caste and non-caste groups. In most cases such non-caste groups are religious groups. We have thus to think of various types of inter-group political mobilisation, depending on the nature of the groups involved. There can, of course, be inter-group mobilisation on the basis of political preferences and ideologies; or even local issues which dictate certain kinds of political preferences for certain political parties under a given set of circumstances. Such alliances, however, may be unstable because of adhoc policy decisions. Such alliances are therefore likely to split once a particular objective has been attained, as happened in the case of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti in Maharashtra. It has to be, however, pointed out that due to such alliances, the boundaries of caste get blurred and many compromises are made whereby the identity of caste has to be put in cold storage. Such alliances have a latent dysfunction to the caste structure in so far as caste identities are to some extent sacrificed for the sake of political coalitions.

The various models of intra-group and inter-group mobilisation in terms of caste are to be found in operation in the Indian

political scene, particularly after Independence. In Kerala, for instance, during the last twenty-five years, one finds different models of intra-group and inter-group mobilisation, alliances, etc. In the other states also, such as Maharashtra, Punjab, etc. there have been instances of the transition from caste to non-caste and universalistic ideologies, a phenomenon which totally ignores the element of caste. Intra-group mobilisation is both very necessary and functional from the point of view of establishing a new position of equilibrium. It is qualitatively different from what is usually imagined in terms of bargaining between caste and politics. Political ideology in so far as it affords universal and secular principles, helps both to control and change the caste system in its actual working. That is how it is extremely important to delineate interaction between caste and political parties as a matter of conflict and cooperation. It has also to be remembered that because political power is a scarce value sought by all, castes have to give much more in the bargain than what they actually gain. This of course, implies, as mentioned before, a change in the relative position or strength of cast vis-a-vis politics. Politics thus has definitely brought about a qualitative change in the caste system.

Caste and pressure groups

We have already seen that caste has increasingly involved itself in politics in modern democratic India. Democratic politics is also interested in politicising caste groups. The interaction between the two is not a disinterested one. Caste as a micro-system enters into the micro-system of politics with specific interests. It pursues a number of goals in its interaction with politics. Rosenthal, enumerates three major goals or ends for the realisation of which caste involves itself in politics. These are: material benefits, status improvement or status defence ('status ends') and social reconstruction ('purposive' or 'ideological' goals).¹⁴ In order to secure these goals, caste acts as a pressure group in politics. Sisson uses the term 'Political pay-off', when a caste receives benefits for its political involvement — "the desired returns on one's own political investment".¹⁵ He further mentions that in most cases of a split in political parties and fall of governments where caste is involved, the cause is the failure of the "political pay-off". According to Hardgrave,¹⁶ interest groups or pressure groups are too few and weak in India.

Weiner, on the other hand, does not agree with the view, which he says is contrary to facts and asserts that organised interest-groups like caste associations have posed an important problem for Indian democracy. The purpose of such interest groups is, as noted before, interest articulation and exertion of pressure on the political system in order to obtain their own goals. Political parties and governments are often forced to make decisions and act in a certain manner in order to accommodate the interest groups.

As noted earlier, since the caste group is a regional phenomenon spread over a particularly linguistic area, caste representation and pressure is visible more clearly in state governments. After an election, such groups insist on their being properly rewarded for their help in the processes of election. Even the communists who hold the ideology of a casteless and classless society have been found to give in to the pressure of caste groups. For example, the Communist ministry in Kerala was pressurised by the Ezhavas on the question of accepting the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Committee on the criterion of backwardness. The Committee had recommended the economic criterion against the existing caste criterion. The Ezhavas, who had thus far enjoyed the privileges and reservations of the "backward" castes on the basis of caste criterion, opposed the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Committee. The Communist ministry, which was largely supported by the Ezhavas, rejected the recommendations of the Committee and retained caste as the criterion of backwardness.¹⁸

Elitism in caste politics

The interaction, or rather the interchange or exchange between caste and politics has been discussed above. In this interchange, there is no doubt that the elite in India have played a significant role. The elite control the various processes in the social structure and have often provided a lead in terms of new ideologies, values, patterns of interaction, mechanism of change etc. "Elite-structure of society represents not only its basic values but also the extent to which these values find a concrete expression in the power structure and the decision-making process in the society ... Elite represented the standards of value-excellence in different domains of life through their roles which are ascribed

to them, as in the tradition society, or have been achieved by them by meritorious performance, which is the norm of a relatively modernised society".¹⁹ Because of their leadership, the elite are able to institutionalise change, and to produce, cajole and even pressurise their followers into accepting such changes. It was also noted earlier that the educated elite in India who dominated almost till Independence, were also the political leaders and continue, to some extent, to be so even now. They always provide an important lead in respect of universalistic and secular values, ideologies and patterns of interaction. Caste groups also became involved in politics because they had their own leaders who were also political leaders, and were in many instances convinced of the importance of democracy. Such caste leaders, even though they are drawn from different caste groups, tend to share a common secular orientation. Such leaders transcend the social boundaries even while enjoying the leadership of their respective groups. A universalistic value system adopted by them enables them to contain and keep in check the segmental groups of which they are leaders. "Such an elite structure articulates interest differentiations and meaningfully represents the more organised segments of society, while allowing the mass of society to have its own pace of change and make its own adjustments with the modern world."²⁰ It is only through the elite that political modernisation spreads to the masses. This is especially true of the lower castes and the Harijans. It was, for example, Ambedkar who introduced the Mahars of Maharashtra to politics and affected intra-group mobilisation. The anti-Brahmin movement in Madras was led by E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, the founder of Dravida Kazhakam. The Nadars of Tamil Nadu became a political force under the able leadership of Kamraj Nadar.

The educated political elite of the nationalist struggle era are to be distinguished from the political populist elite of the post-Independence period. The present leadership certainly caters to very specific issues rather than involving itself in diffused issues. The elite are responsible for all types of political mobilisation of caste. Both fission and fusion of castes in terms of political mobilisation are affected by the elite. Intra-group factionalism of castes or inter-caste political rivalry and cooperation are spear-headed by the elite, who are modernised in terms of democratic politics and universalistic values, and at the same time

committed to parochial goals. The present elite, as they stand, present a combination of what Weber called rational-legal, traditional and charismatic types of authority. Political modernisation of caste or involvement of caste in politics, therefore, is the result of the efforts made by the new leaders who possess within themselves the modern universalistic values of democracy and capacity to be sensitive and sympathetic to parochial tendencies as exemplified by caste identities. One may say that the elite in this case have to compromise. But one should also draw attention to the fact that the elite are realistic and know how to accommodate universalistic values with parochial demands.

Reaction to elitism

The pre-Independence political elite were highly educated and belonged by and large, to the higher castes. Then again, they were men who belonged to the professions or higher salaried classes. It is true that they were imbued by the nationalistic urge, desire to attain political independence and to change the social system in order to make it broad based. There can be no denying the fact that these elite, by virtue of their caste and class composition, and also because of privileges which they enjoyed arising both from the traditional system and the modern system, such as their high caste background, their modern education plus their preponderance in secular jobs, vocations and profession, created a certain amount of distance between themselves and the masses. This gave rise to a lot of envy and jealousy among the lower castes. There was an all-India debate which rang with a special degree of sharpness in Maharashtra, as to whether priority was to be accorded to political reforms and independence or to social reforms. Of course, while this debate was initiated by the high-caste intellectuals and political leaders as well as social reformers, the implications of this debate were perceived by the leaders who were not so educated and who belonged to the lower castes. As a matter of fact, the leaders and champions of the so-called lower castes very vehemently asserted that national independence held no meaning for them unless and until there was a guarantee that there would be a significant improvement in the condition of the down-trodden masses. They realised that if national independence came without rectifying the

structural inequities and injustices particularly of the caste system, it would have absolutely no meaning for the common masses. This even as the movement for national independence was gaining ground, voices of dissent were being expressed against such a movement, and appeals were being made to the British government to ensure proper safeguards for the lower castes by getting them proper representation by way of reservation of seats in educational institutions, in jobs as well as in legislatures.

The caste and class composition of the earlier leadership necessarily promoted a non-Brahmin or anti-Brahmin movement to counteract the domination enjoyed by the Brahmins and the higher castes. The Brahmins had an advantage over other castes in modernisation, since they had easier access to the British rulers who represented what was modern, and also since they were the first to take to Western education, a crucial factor in the process of modernisation. Modernisation, thus, was confined to the Brahmins in the beginning. With the introduction of adult franchise, power began increasingly to depend on numerical strength. Thus, the higher castes, especially the Brahmins, sought support from the lower castes by offering certain positions to the leaders of the lower castes. In the beginning, when the lower castes entered politics, "most of these caste groups functioned as appendages of the main contenders in the upper castes; leaders from the upper castes co-opted men from the lower castes to leadership positions. The latter were for a time satisfied with their role as political apprentices of the former but slowly they succeeded in building their own autonomous support structure and emerged as leaders in their own right."²¹ Ambedkar typifies an example of a leader who hailed from a lower caste and provided it with brilliant leadership. There are several instances of this nature all over the country. In Maharashtra, the leadership of the Congress which was wrested from the hands of the Brahmins by the Marathas is a case in point.

Thus, the non-Brahmin leadership, while it became pronounced after Independence, has to be traced back to earlier protest movements spearheaded by the leaders of the lower castes, which directed the attention of the masses to the great importance of removing the Brahmins and the higher castes from political leadership. The non-Brahmin movement, started in many parts of the country, acquired special momentum in Maha-

rashtra and the erstwhile state of Madras. It is well known that Congress itself, dominated as it was initially by the Brahmin and higher castes, did not enjoy the support of the masses till such time as it was able to recruit non-Brahmin leadership. While it is not necessary to give statistics here, it is obvious that during the earlier years of the British rule, right up to 1951, there was a preponderance of Brahmins in all positions of power, educational, economic, secular, social, political, ritual, and so on. This was despite the fact that the Brahmins constituted a minority caste. Obviously enough, this monopolisation on the part of Brahmins created a sharp reaction which culminated in the non-Brahmin movement. The Justice Party and its contribution towards making the social structure more broad-based and the efforts of the Satyashodhak Movement, which later developed into a non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra, are too well known to need repetition. It should also be mentioned here that, once the so-called lower castes were given adequate representation, particularly in respect of leadership by the Congress Party, the non-Brahmin movement ceased to have an urgency and immediate appeal to its erstwhile supporters. The changing composition of the Congress Party as well as the influx of the majority caste groups into it reduced the edge of the non-Brahmin movement. After Independence, the non-Brahmins wrested power from the Brahmins and controlled the Congress, the dominant political party. The formation of linguistic states accentuated this process, and the non-Brahmin movement lost its vigour and even justification. In Maharashtra, for instance, to the extent that the Congress portrays an image as a Maratha party, the non-Brahmin movement loses its justification. Similar trends can be discerned in Karnataka and other states.

Anti-Brahminism in politics ceases to have meaning because the Brahmins are no more politically dominant. Moreover, because of their education and exposure to universalistic values and ideologies, Brahmins and the higher castes have been providing leadership to the Communist Party and the Socialist Party which espouse a radical transformation of society. As a matter of fact, the Brahmins are apologetic and guilty of their earlier domination and, feel that this has to be rectified and amended by not only allowing but also encouraging participation and leadership by groups which were denied such opportunities

earlier. It should be mentioned here that Brahmins and similar higher castes have shied away from power politics and contented themselves with the role of technocrats administrators, professionals and so on.

Scheduled castes in politics

The scheduled castes have been subjected to all kinds of disabilities and deprivations; ritual, educational, socio-economic, political and so on. However, scheduled castes in general, and in some regions of India in particular, were quick to sense an opportunity to uplift themselves by resorting to political mechanisms. A leader of the eminence of Dr. Ambedkar, led, the movement for the uplift of the scheduled castes first in Maharashtra, and later also founded the Scheduled Castes Federation for the whole of India. After several unsuccessful attempts made to get an honourable place in the Hindu hierarchy, or at least to do away with repulsion enjoined on them by the caste system, the scheduled castes gave up the idea of attempting to better their position within the caste system. In fact, the caste system became a negative reference group for them. Dr. Ambedkar had seriously considered the conversion of his followers to Islam or to Sikhism but finally decided to embrace Buddhism. As a matter of fact, Buddhism can be regarded as an off-shoot of the Protestant movement against caste inequalities, characteristic of the Hindu social system. The British government provided opportunities to the scheduled castes by way of reserving seats for them in educational institutions as well as in respect of employment. However, this did not provide the required amount of opportunity for the scheduled castes to improve their social position.

After Independence, a concerted policy was adopted for changing the position of the scheduled castes. However, even this was to no avail. It was only because of their politicisation that the scheduled castes in various regions of the country came to acquire a bargaining capacity. We have already noted how the Jatavas in Agra were able to make their presence felt due to politicisation. In Maharashtra, of course, the scheduled castes have been politicised. As usual, the ruling party can always buy over the leaders of dissident and minority groups. That is how in Maharashtra, as well as elsewhere, one could explain the disarray of scheduled castes organisations. As a result of their conversion to Buddhism

in Maharashtra, in particular, the scheduled castes have refused to participate in the traditional system of caste interdependence and as such are being harassed in the villages, particularly by the landlords and the rich peasants. This refusal by the scheduled castes, to participate in the traditional economic interdependence, will lead necessarily to their migration to the towns to obtain jobs which are outside the traditional structure. Their efforts to become an important force to be reckoned with will depend on secular jobs, modern education and urbanisation.

In regions where the scheduled castes have been able to successfully acquire modern education, secular jobs and urbanise themselves, they have been able to attain a much higher position in the Indian social system. Moreover, in order to be politically significant they have to close their ranks and present a united front. Factions among the scheduled castes would necessarily reduce their political efficacy. It is true that there is a considerable amount of political consciousness among the scheduled castes which is extremely crucial for their continuous fighting for increasing opportunities and better treatment. But that alone is not enough. They will have to rise up in the socio-economic scale and also maintain political pressure without relaxing it.

Interchange and exchange between politics and caste

We started our discussion of caste and politics by suggesting an approach, namely, that of interchange and exchange between caste and politics. In terms of the material we have presented, the double exchange between caste and politics is borne out. Politics, thus, provides caste with new forms of articulation, solidarity and stabilisation. By mobilising caste groups in terms of their identity, political parties tend to establish the fact of caste, and yet politics is also responsible for the disintegration of caste. Thus by thrusting political ideologies and rivalries upon caste politics creates factions within the caste group. Here politics succeeds in breaking down caste loyalties. This process has been referred to earlier as fission of caste or intra-caste factionalism. Fission can take place in two ways. Different political parties with varying political ideologies may approach the same caste-group. Here caste solidarity may be sacrificed for political ideology. Caste gets fractionalised in terms of differing political ideologies. This illustrates caste disintegration on an extra-caste political

basis, a case of political ideologies from without creating division within. Secondly, fission of caste can take place on an intra-caste political basis. Here individual leaders within the caste, who are competing among themselves for political power, struggle for political support from among their fellow members and create factions within the caste. There is yet another way in which caste loyalties are weakened by politics even though politics may not directly hit at caste solidarity. Political action contributes to the weakening of cast identities. When one caste group aligns itself with other caste groups or other communal groups, professes political ideologies, or attaining a certain specific goal acquires a minimum degree of individual group identity, 'caste' identity has to be superseded in favour of the common group identity. When politics cuts across various groups, the latter are forced to give importance to the intra-group unity rather than stick to their own separate solidarity. This means that caste identity and loyalty are weakened and sometimes abandoned in favour of a multi-caste alliance. Here politics promotes a fusion of caste, which has effects similar to that of the fission of caste. In fission, caste integrity is attacked; in fusion caste identity is to some extent sacrificed.

Hardgrave uses the concept of the double elaboration of differentiation in order to explain the phenomenon described above. "With the decline in the elaboration of caste ranking and the increasing differentiation within the caste, the political culture of the community is affected accordingly, rendering a breakdown in the caste solidarity in favour of new inter-caste associations. As economic interest within the community are differentiated and as the political culture becomes increasingly secular, so the political identity of the individual will reflect cross-cutting vertical and horizontal ties and a plurality of commitments, associations, and interests."²² Politics, thus secularises caste identities. When castes are brought into inter-group relationship with politics, it is the secular aspects rather than the ritual ones that are mobilised. Kothari says: "the politicisation of caste makes for outward-looking, upward-moving orientations and as this results in the phenomenon of multiple and overlapping identities, the emerging model of secularism is one in which caste is only one of many components entering into the political process. Meanwhile, the caste component itself undergoes a major organisational transformation and is subjected to new symbols of affiliation and

identity.”²³ Democratic politics has required certain significant actions which modified the structure and inter-relationship of castes. On the one hand, one finds that attempts are made to effect horizontal unity of castes. On the other hand, lower castes gain certain advantages in competitive democratic politics through united action. Sometimes one finds that caste groups are able to enjoy advantages and power which may even be disproportionate to their numbers. Ironically, caste associations have provided the necessary link between the mass electorate and the new democratic political processes. Hardgrave maintained that interest-groups like caste, although they stand for particularistic issues, have certain latent broader functions. “Interest groups in India are a form of linkage and a means of communication between the mass and the elite. They provide channels of access for expanding participation, and their institutionalisation is a critical element in the development of a responsive political system, for they are barometers of the political climate by which decision-makers can make and assess policy. . . . Interest groups not only act as agents of interest articulation, but they also increase the political consciousness and participation, of their membership-democratic achievements, although they may strain on the responsive capacity of the system.”²⁴ This is not to suggest that caste is altogether abandoned, because castes provide a familiar mechanism for mobilisation and providing solidarity. These very solidarities are used to work out the political processes, namely, that of democratic politics. “Caste has become a means to level the old order’s inequalities by helping to destroy its moral basis and social structure. In doing so, caste has helped peasants to represent and rule themselves by attaching them to the ideas, processes, and institutions of political democracy.”²⁵ It is not the constitutional provision which has given rise to a betterment of the position of the lower castes but united political effort on their part. The upper caste politicians are afraid of showing undue favour towards their own caste groups as against the lower castes, because the latter possess a bargaining power in politics. Moreover, ideological convictions and stances are also against the upper caste. In many cases one finds that, apart from the fear of populist pressure, the upper class suffer from a certain in-built complex whereby they want to be extra liberal to the lower castes. Factionalism within higher castes has also been a factor promoting the political uplift of the lower castes. When the

entrenched castes got split up in terms of political competition, the factions had to seek support from other ascendant and lower castes. On the one hand, it raised the position of the lower castes by giving them more political opportunities and on the other, reduced the political dominance of the upper castes. Similarly, factionalism within the political party on the basis of caste also serves the same function, opening up possibilities of change and improvement in the position of the lower castes.

Thus, in the light of our discussion, we find that it would be absolutely unrealistic to raise a question as to whether democracy can survive in India with its caste-ridden system, because we have answered the question very positively by pointing to the interchange and exchange between caste and politics. As a consequence of this process we have also emphasised the mutuality of influence of caste and politics as well as a change in the structures of both. Both the structures find articulation through interaction with each other. Caste as such will continue to be in the politics of India as a partner in the process of democratisations, "as a general rule, then caste is more likely to be subsumed and integrated by leadership and policies of parties than it is to threaten established political communities and structures." We are not in sympathy with those writers who continue to emphasise the importance of the continuity of the cultural idiom of Indian society provided by caste, because all the evidence at our disposal points out that the cultural idiom is rendered innocuous by one's bargaining capacity and power made possible because of the working of the political process. Thus, we find that the interchange and exchange between caste and politics require us to abandon the earlier dichotomy and to support the approach we have adopted. It allows us to understand the dialectics between caste and politics and also helps us to realise the qualitatively new position of equilibrium which has been developed in Indian society.

REFERENCES

1. Kothari, Rajni, ed., *Caste in Indian Politics*, Orient Longmans Ltd, New Delhi, 1970, pp. 4-5.
2. Beteille, Andre, "Caste and Political Groups Formation in Tamilnad", in Kothari, Rajni, ed., op. cit., pp. 259-298.
3. Kothari, Rajni, ed. op. cit., p 19.

4. Somjee, A.M., *Democracy and Political Change in Village India*, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1971.
5. Ibid.
6. Singh, Yogendra, *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, pp. Thomas Press India Limited, Publication Division, Delhi, 1973 58 ff.
7. Kothari, Rajni and Naru, Pushikesh, "*Federating of Political Interests : The Kshatriyas of Gujarat*", in Kothari, Rajni, ed., op. cit. pp. 70-101.
8. Rudolph Lloyd I. and Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber, *The Modernity of tradition*, Orient longman, New Delhi, 1967, p. 26.
9. Ibid., p. 88.
10. Bateille, Andre, *Caste : Old and New*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1969, p. 81.
11. Rosenthal, Donald B., "*Caste and Political Participation in Two Cities*", in Kothari, Rajni, ed., op. cit., pp. 340-370.
12. Sirsikar, V.M., op. cit., *Sovereigns without Crowns*, Popular, Bombay, p. 383.
13. Harrison, Seligs, *The Most Dangerous Decades*, Oxford University Press, Madras 1960, pp. 110. ff.
14. Rosenthal, Donald B., op. cit.
15. Sisson, Richard, "*Caste and Political Factions in Rajasthan*", in Kothari, Rajni, ed., op. cit., pp. 175-227.
16. Hardgrave, Robert L. Jr., *Indian Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1970, p. 104.
17. Weiner, Myron, *The Politics of Scarcity*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963.
18. Sharma, B.A.V., "*Secular State and Civil Service*", in Sinha, U.K. ed., *Secularism in India*, Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1968, pp. 44-70.
19. Singh, Yogendra, *Modernisation of India Tradition*, pp. 129-130, Thomas Press India, Limited, Publication Division, Delhi, 1973.
20. Kothari, Rajni, *Politics in India*, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1970, p. 241.
21. Roy, Ramashray, "*Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar*", in Kothari, Rajni, ed., op. cit., pp. 228-258.
22. Hardgrave, Robert, "*Political Participation and Primordial Solidarity, The Nadars of Tamilnad*", in Kothari, Rajni, ed., op. cit., pp. 102-128.
23. Kothari, Rajni, *Politics in India*, Orient Longmans Ltd., New Delhi, 1970, pp. 239-240.
24. Hardgrave, Robert L. Jr., *India : Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*, p. 104, Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., New York, 1970.
25. Rudolph, Lloyd I. and Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber, *The Modernity of Tradition*, Orient Longman Ltd., New York, 1969, p. 19.

CHAPTER 6

Religion and Politics

Relevant aspects of religion

We had mentioned earlier that only certain aspects of religion would be relevant to our discussion. We had also pointed out why Durkheim's formulations about religion were only partially acceptable to us and how Weber's formulation about religion and the rise of capitalism were not particularly relevant in this context. Durkheim's emphasis on the integrative role of religion and the function of religion in creating social solidarities is extremely crucial. However, when Durkheim tried to make universal propositions about the integrative role of religion, we were constrained to point out that when various religious groups are confronted with each other, religion can be a disintegrative force. Religious groups, for instance, are integrated entities. Durkheim, however, was interested in distinguishing between the sphere of religion and that of secular activity. He categorised religion as dealing with sacred entities, while, according to him, secular pursuits essentially dealt with profane entities. As a matter of fact, as we shall see later on, even this distinction made by Durkheim between the sacred and the profane does not hold good in reality, because the pursuit of religion and secular goals do coalesce in reality. It is here that the insights offered by the Weberian analysis of religion, particularly the linking up of economic activities with religion, paves the way for an understanding of the relationship between religious and non-religious entities. Weber, as we know, emphasised the role of religion in the relentless pursuit of secular activities.

Politics is very much a secular activity which we find tempered by religion. We also find how politics derives its justification and support from religious notions, or how religious notions and idioms are utilised for the furtherance of the political process, as we shall see later. Keeping in view our approach, namely, that of interchange and exchange between politics and religion, we have to discern a meaningful and dialectical relationship between the two,

To what extent are our social solidarities based on religion? To what extent are the various solidarities based on different religions which are antagonistic to each other? To what extent are these solidarities politicised, giving rise to political competition and conflict? To what extent does the political process bring together various such solidarities in furthering a common set of goals and objectives? These are some of the questions with which we shall be concerned in this chapter. The inter-twining of religion and politics and the consequent changes in the two would be our point of enquiry. As mentioned earlier, we do not accept the usual dichotomy presented between religion and politics, which categorises religion as traditional and politics as modern.

Religion and politics: a global view

Religion has been linked with politics, power as well as with religious wars. The history of humanity is full of instances where wars have been fought on the basis of religion. Thus Christianity and Islam, which are both monotheistic religions, tried to oust each other. When Islam failed to conquer Europe, its attention was turned towards South Eastern countries, notably towards India. Hindu religion being polytheistic and lacking in organisation could not withstand the force of Islam and succumbed to it, which gave a peculiar turn to the history of India. In the West, however, there has been a continuous struggle between religion and State for the control of society and the nation. The struggle between Church and State is an example of a struggle for supremacy over affairs of the world. Church was extremely powerful and there was no aspect which was not controlled by it such as, education, kingly power and so on. The acrimonious fight between the church and the king heralded victory for the king, thus clearly defining or delimiting the sphere of the power of the Church on religious matters and granting the control over the secular matters to the king. This, of course, had very different implications for a new order, promoting rationality, secularism, the scientific spirit, economic development, all kinds of innovative activities and a change from status to contract. A clear separation and demarcation between the powers of the Church and the State thus helped unleash many new forces which were responsible for the industrial and technological revolution, the economic revolution, social revolution and so on. This resulted in the formation

of a secular state, bolstered by the force of secularism which permeated every aspect of society. Renaissance preceded the industrial and technological revolution which again, paved the way for the social revolution, which is typified by the transition from status to contract. The emergence of a new social class and their availing of opportunities because of the delimitation of the power of the Church, is a very significant event in the development of modern, Western civilisation.

As mentioned earlier however, in order to attain this there had to be a continuous struggle between Church and State which meant the use of power and political force for attaining the end. The emergence of secularism has thus a historical context. The case of Western society, cannot be replicated in other societies like India, and a blind adoption of the Western model would not be of much use in our context. Nor would it be proper to judge secularism in India in terms of the Western model. As Weber would assert, each society is a unique configuration and mechanical comparisons between two societies are not particularly helpful. However, the relationship between religion and politics obtaining in other societies and civilisations is worth understanding in order to dispel the usual comparisons. It is not only in India that religion and politics have clashed with each other. Even now, the internecine warfare between Israel and the Arab nations goes to point out the conflict between religion and politics. On the other hand, there are instances where because of a meaningful dialogue, and interchange and exchange between religion and politics, the spheres of both have been enriched, paving the way for prosperity to the societies and nations in question. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics provides an admirable example of working out a meaningful coexistence and cooperation between different religions due to the intervention and influence of political forces.

Secularism

As mentioned earlier secularism emerged and developed in a particular context in the West. Secularism means a clear-cut segregation between the spheres of the Church and the State. It does not mean negation of religion. It only means that while granting freedom of religion to every individual, there would be no interference in the affairs of religion as far as the State activities and policies are concerned. One's religion becomes a matter

of purely personal concern. The cultural and group aspect of religion which gives rise to solidarities are kept in check so that there would be no interference by the one in the affairs of the other, thus precluding domination of one group by the other. Secularism does not have to mean negation of religion but only its being personalised. Religion is not allowed to interfere in secular matters, in particular, where public funds and resources are concerned. The Church or any religious organisation is not patronised by the State. This concept of secularism naturally developed in the historical context mentioned earlier. Secularism was backed by the technological, industrial and scientific revolution, economic prosperity, inculcation of rationality, individualism and so on. This correspondence between secularism and the various structural attributes mentioned above need not necessarily obtain in other situations, which is the reason why the concept of secularism differs from society to society. In the Indian case, for instance, secularism became an article of faith in the context of the division of the country between Pakistan and India on the basis of religious differences.

In India, therefore, there is a tremendous emphasis on the acceptance of all religions as equal, and every effort is made to ensure that various religious groups are treated as equal by the State with full freedom to pursue their religious convictions and carry on their activities without fear or favour. In India secularism emerged not out of a conflict between religion and the State but because of certain historical developments mentioned above, for which reason the entire flavour of secularism in India is different from that in the West. This is precisely why it would be futile or unrealistic to judge secularism in India in terms of the Western model. Moreover, one has to bear in mind that even in the West secularism is an "ideal type" rather than a completely realised entity. In the West also there is bickering between religious sects which calls for an intervention of political processes, as well as competition and conflict for the support of the State and so on.

Historical perspective

While it is not our purpose to enquire into the history of the relationship between religion and politics in India, it is absolutely necessary to emphasise the time period since religion came to be politicised. Before the Islamic invasion, Hinduism, Buddhism,

Jainism and tribal religion held sway in India. Of course, Christianity had made its inroads into India much earlier, but Christianity was mostly interested in evangelical and proselytizing activity. The Islamic invasion was however of a political nature and Islam was interested in establishing political supremacy and power in India. For Islam, there is no separation between religion and politics. The establishment of Islamic rule in different parts of India was rendered possible because of the use of power and since the Hindus came to accept Islamic rule by and large except in certain parts of the country, there was no question of the politicisation of religion. Politicisation of religion, or any other institution for that matter, means acceptance of peaceful mechanisms for winning over support to one's ideology and conviction. Muslim rule did not offer any such peaceful mechanisms for converting adherents of other religions to the point of view of Islam and the Islamic way of life. Moreover, Hinduism, by and large, is not a proselytizing religion. It is very important to realise that politicisation means the use of peaceful mechanisms and the capacity to bargain and compromise, which, of course did not exist during the Islamic rule.

The advent of the British rule necessitated a reappraisal of Hinduism. Islam also had to find out new avenues and mechanisms by which it could hold its own under the changed circumstances. Hinduism and Hindu society were faced with a tremendous challenge, which became an eyeopener to the Hindus and set the Hindu mind enquiring into the internal structure of Hinduism, especially its many weaknesses. The Hindus, particularly the higher castes among them, took kindly to Western education and culture and were profoundly impressed by it. On the one hand, these intellectuals were convinced of the finer points of intellectual Hinduism and at the same time were against all manner of orthodoxy, ignorance, prejudice, and narrow-mindedness.

As a result of their exposure to Western ideas and knowledge, the Hindu intellectuals, in particular, tried to understand the factors which they felt were responsible for their downfall and the advent of the British rule in India. They were concerned, therefore, with trying to make up for the deficiencies of Hindu society and to rid it of its ignorance, prejudice and narrow mindedness. Some of the important leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy, who were greatly impressed by Western civilisation, felt that it was

necessary to divest religion and society of its non-essential, non-intellectual and unprogressive elements without which it would not be possible to attain any progress. He strongly advocated the need for social reforms of a structural type. Thus, he wanted to undermine the unwarranted prestige and power enjoyed by Brahmins and also to root out certain irrational practices like child marriage, *sati*, and so on. With a view to cleansing Hindu religion and society of its weaknesses and incongruities, he founded the Brahmo Samaj. The purpose of Brahmo Samaj was to restructure Hinduism in terms of modernity. He wanted to get rid of orthodox Hinduism. Raja Rammohan Roy was the precursor of the social reform movement started by Ranade and others, and the political reforms movement initiated by the early Indian National Congress. "The religious reform movement thus prepared purely secular, social and political movements in the country."¹ The Brahmo Samaj was not a mass movement but a movement of the elite. It was a social, religious, intellectual, humanist and, by implication, political movement. "It was the first important intellectual movement, which spread the ideas of rationalism and enlightenment in modern India. By taking a cosmopolitan and universal approach towards religious questions, it facilitated the introduction of Western political doctrines into the country. By rejecting dogmas it promoted the spirit of toleration. Its attack on hereditary priesthood, and Raja Rammohan Roy's translation of the sacred books from Sanskrit into a popular language bridges the gulf between the 'learned few and the rest of the people'. This indirectly helped the growth of the democratic spirit. The organisations Rammohan founded and the discussions they organised, introduced into the Indian public life the practice of forming associations and holding debates. In the political field, where they found their most concrete expression, this was a healthy development. It is not an accident that many of the early leaders of the Congress were members of the Brahmo Samaj."² Even though this movement did not take deep roots in India since it did not appeal to the masses, yet it played a significant role by creating a new political elite.

Historically, political awakening and the nationalist movement under the British rule followed the religious reforms, and, to a certain extent even revivalism both among the Hindus and the Muslims. The Hindus, it might be mentioned, were more

concerned with reforms than revivalism. Of course, the efforts made by Hindus to reform their religion and social system had its repercussions on Muslims. "In the early phase of the Indian national movement the interrelation between religion and politics manifested itself in two different directions: one, in the social and religious reform movements which had a political bearing, and the other, in the political movement whose leaders made appeals to the religious traditions of the people and to the social institutions connected with them. The social and religious reform movements came first, and, in one sense, they were a necessary prelude to the political awakening in the country."³ Weber's insights about the organic relationship between religious and non-religious elements are thus very clearly perceived in this situation. "These religio-reform movements were national in content but religious in form. It was in the later stages of our national existence, that nationalism found exclusively or predominantly secular forms."⁴ The religious reform movements were the result of Western education. The nationalist movement, therefore, was a joint product of both Westernisation and religious movements.

Minority communities and their politicisation

The Hindus who constituted the majority community and who were so actively engaged in the religious and social reforms movement, as well as in the nationalist movement, naturally invoked a certain amount of suspicion on the part of the minority communities, particularly among the Muslims. The nationalist movement came to be looked upon as being dominated by the Hindus and the Muslims kept away from it. On the other hand, the majority community namely, the Hindus, who spearheaded the nationalist movement, felt it necessary to enlist the support and cooperation of the minority communities. There is no denying the fact that several minority communities like the Parsis, Christians and the Muslims participated in the nationalist movement and associated themselves with the Indian National Congress from its inception.

However, the mistrust of the Indian National Congress which tended to persist among the Muslims, took a very serious turn as years passed, ultimately resulting in the partitioning of the country. It is necessary at least to enquire into the reasons for

this feeling among the Muslims, their hesitation in joining the Congress and their refusal to support it. Sir Syed Ahmed, who was the spokesman of Muslims' point of view, reasoned that his advice to the Muslims not to join the Indian National Congress was based on the following consideration. He held that the aims and objects of Indian National Congress were based upon an ignorance of history and present reality, and that the Congress did not take into consideration the fact that India was inhabited by several nationalities. Then again, because India lacked homogeneity, resulting from differential educational background and political consciousness, it would not be in the interest of the Muslims to cast their lot with the Indian National Congress, which was largely dominated by the Hindus. The Indian National Congress, according to Sir Ahmed, represented the interests of the middle class, and therefore he felt that the Muslim masses which had not yet reached the status and position of the middle class would have very little to gain, and much to lose by joining the Congress. Sir Syed, therefore, laid the utmost emphasis on the class composition of the Indian National Congress and the class differences between the Congress and the Muslims.

There is no denying the fact that the Muslims had lost power, wealth, prestige and prosperity in the wake of the British rule because they were dislodged from power. Moreover, the class structure of Islamic society was imbalanced, in the sense that there was hardly any viable middle class, which could profit by Western education and the new occupations which were being opened up.

Thus, consciousness of a separate identity and the different problems which confronted the Muslims made them politically conscious, and this may be regarded as the beginning of their politicisation on the basis of religion. Such consciousness was accentuated, as mentioned before, and resulted in the partition of the country. It was pointed out earlier, that an equation between religion, culture, solidarity, economic interest and political consciousness has to be taken into account in order to properly assess the significance of the politicisation of religion. It should be mentioned here briefly that other minority communities like the Parsis and the Christians did not develop a similar feeling of deprivation largely because they were able to enjoy prosperity by taking advantage of the new openings offered by trade and com-

merce, modern education, secular jobs and so on. The Parsis of course, took to Westernisation very easily and as such, did not face any problem. The Christians also, partly because of their religion, their linguistic skill, as well as acceptance of modern education and secular jobs did not suffer any deprivation. The Muslims on the other hand, felt deprived and nursed the feeling which necessitated the creation of political consciousness and politicisation on the basis of religion, a process which was to sharpen in the years to come. Further, it should be pointed out that the British rulers also fanned this consciousness by offering the Muslims various kinds of privileges, thus alienating the Hindus — the majority community — from the Muslims. Such alienation caused reaction on the part of the Hindus, and became responsible for the Hindu revivalist movement. The backwardness of the Muslims, thus, was emphasised and exploited to keep them apart from the majority community. It should be mentioned here that the establishment of British rule meant that the Muslims came to experience minority status because of the various losses they suffered. During Muslim rule the other communities were not conscious of their minority status because of the political domination of the Muslims, who were not in the least bothered about their numbers vis-a-vis the Hindus. Also, being the ruling community they did not bother about the different cultural pattern of the Hindus although the Muslims' insistence on conversion meant that they did not really appreciate a different culture and way of life.

After the advent of the British rule, however, because of the loss of their power, Muslims could no longer object to Hindu culture and way of life. The monopolisation of the nationalist movement by the Hindus who had a culture different from that of the Muslims, created nervousness among the Muslims as to the future of their own culture should the Hindus succeed in attaining Independence. Moreover, the large-scale participation by the Hindus in the nationalist movement inevitably put a stamp of its own on the movement. The various symbols used for promoting nationalist movement like the national anthem 'Bande Materam' were symbolic of Hindu culture. It was not really so much the threat of an encroachment upon their culture as the sense of deprivation nursed by them which again, had various facets. All this drove a wedge between the Muslims and the Hindus and became

more acute due to politicisation. The minority religious group, the Muslims, because of their politicisation, came to acquire and enjoy power beyond all their numerical strength, which again further estranged the Hindu majority community. In fact this became a snow-balling process.

Hindu politics

It is really difficult to discuss Hindu politics because various movements and organisations were not directly political insofar as their aims and activities were concerned. A case in point would be of the Arya Samaj. While Brahmo Samaj was a movement which sprang in response to Westernisation, the Arya Samaj had its background in the decline of Hinduism on account of Muslim domination as also in the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. It was felt by the founders of the Arya Samaj that Hindus would have to close their ranks to avoid the fissiparous tendencies. They also wished to cleanse Hinduism of all kinds of impurities and narrow-mindedness in order to restore the Vedic religion to its purest form. This, they felt, would strengthen Hinduism. It is generally pointed out that this effort on the part of the Arya Samaj to resist activities of conversion to Christianity and to shake off Muslim domination had repercussions on both Muslims and Christians, particularly the former, who sensed the danger from such a movement. To this extent one might concede the point that the Arya Samaj movement had consequences which were of a political type, although the movement was not politicised in itself.

The Hindu Mahasabha, founded a year later than the Muslim League, became a powerful organisation of the Hindus against the communalism of the Muslim League. The Hindu Mahasabha could properly be regarded as a political activity to ensure the support of the Hindus as far as both organisation of the Hindus as well as electioneering were concerned. The Hindu Mahasabha was a proper political organisation and concerned itself mainly with guarding the interests of the Hindus. It sensitised Hindus to the danger inherent in Muslim politics, particularly the support which Muslim politics enjoyed at the hands of the foreign rulers.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which was founded in 1925 and which was regarded as the cultural wing and activity of Hindu Mahasabha, cannot be properly regarded as a political

organisation although it also had repercussions which were political in effect. The RSS concerned itself with mobilisation of the Hindus in order to counteract the influence of Islam and particularly, to undo the effects of the favoured treatment enjoyed by the Muslims under the British rule. As is only too well-known the Hindu Mahasabha as well as the RSS suffered a great set-back due to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh was formed in 1951, with a view to safeguarding the interests of the Hindus by providing them a political platform. Although non-Hindus were also welcome to join this organisation and become its members, the Jana Sangh largely upheld the aims and objectives which were put forth by the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS. The Jana Sangh had the backing of the middle classes.

It was mentioned earlier that the Indian National Congress was essentially supported by the Hindus and also dominated by them. The Congress had, throughout, a Hindu majority. The cultural idiom which the Congress accepted was mainly that of Hindu culture, as was pointed out earlier, which in fact estranged the Muslims in particular from the Congress. The preponderance of Hindus in the Congress both in terms of its membership and leadership, was, in a way, inevitable because Muslims stayed away from the Congress. On the other hand, it was convenient for the Muslims to brand Congress as Hindu-dominated and to legitimise their staying away from the Congress. Thus this is a curious example of the same factor being both the cause and the effect. The Hindus, including those who participated in the Congress movement, also felt that if Muslims refused to participate in the nationalist movement, there was no way of either enlisting their cooperation or to assimilate them in the mainstream of the Indian struggle and its aspirations.

There was, thus a separation between Hindus and Muslims at all levels which was politically very significant in the sense that such separation could not be bridged. The separation which developed all through the pre-Independence period continues to persist even now, notwithstanding the efforts made by the Congress, albeit in a haphazard manner, to reduce and undo it. The separation and the ensuing tensions between the Hindus and the

Muslims culminated in the partitioning of the country. Even after partition, the suspicion and tensions continue to exist if in a much lesser form. Thus, the separation of the Hindus and Muslims, politically and otherwise, and the fear on the part of the Muslims of the cultural and political domination of the Hindus, coloured politics and religion, throughout the nationalist struggle. To a certain extent, it continues to do so even to this day. Although India has opted to be a secular State, it cannot be said that the various communities and groups enjoy a sense of assimilation and a sense of participation in the mainstream of life. In fact, the resurgence of the Muslim League in Indian politics is a clear indicator of this fact.

Muslim politics

The Islamic religion does not make a clear-cut distinction between religion and politics. From the time of its establishment, the religious heads of Islam were also its rulers. "Religion and politics are subsumed into one uniform ethical system"⁵ as far as Islam is concerned. The spread of Islam was more through political invasion than through missionary proselytisation. In Islam there is no divergence between religion and secular power. The Muslims ruled India for seven centuries and naturally felt deprived after the advent of the British rule. The coming together of the Muslims and the Hindus in the revolt of the 1857 signified a last attempt on the part of the Muslims to overthrow the British. The Muslims were henceforth, subject in the eyes of the British rulers. Also, in addition to their sense of total deprivation, the Muslims felt that they had come in for specially harsh treatment by the British rulers. The Muslim leaders who were exposed to Western education naturally started looking inward to diagnose the problems and the ills which affected their society. On the basis of such diagnosis, it was realised by the Muslim leaders that it would not be worth their while nor practical or possible for them to oppose the British rulers, and that they would have to make attempts to evolve a proper understanding with the British rulers. This naturally suited the latter because the Hindus, who too had lost a great deal because of British rule, had started developing a nationalist movement for its ultimate overthrow. The nationalist movement spearheaded by the Hindus was, however, open to all. It was mentioned earlier how the Muslim leaders felt that

it would not be in their interests to join the Indian National Congress and to cast their lot with the nationalist movement, because they felt their problems and interests were different. The Hindus, particularly the higher castes, who had taken to Western education, stood to gain by their modern education and were thus able to enjoy a modicum of prosperity because of the opening up of new jobs and careers. On the other hand, because of lack of modern education, the Muslims did not gain anything from Western civilisation or the new occupational structure.

It has also been mentioned that Muslim society lacked a powerful middle class and with the impoverishment of the nobility, the Muslims as a community stood to suffer economic deprivation as a result of the British rule. Moreover, it was felt that if the Muslims were to cast their lot with the nationalist movement, they would not have much to gain because in the event of Independence the advantage would be monopolised by the majority community. Therefore, the leaders of the Muslim community deliberately tried to keep Muslims from joining the nationalist movement. They also felt that the interests of the Muslim community would be better served by supporting the British rulers. The British rulers on their part were quick to sense this feeling and to cash on it by driving a wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims. Thus, they deliberately made many concessions to Muslims and offered them all kinds of special facilities, which accentuated the Muslim feeling that their culture and religion would not be safe under Hindu domination. Thus, the equation of religion and culture gave rise to an insistence on politicisation of religion. Muslim politics can be largely explained in terms of couching under the name of religion and culture what in reality was economic interest and prosperity. The differences in education and economic prosperity as between the Hindus and the Muslims became thus a major source of the rift between the two.

However, there are serious scholars who dispute such formulations. In fact, Aparna Basu⁶ states, very rightly, that Muslim separatism and educational backwardness are not really tenable because the Muslims of Uttar Pradesh, Madras and Bombay were by no means averse to English education. The Muslim University in fact represented a continuation of Sir Syed's policy of increasing trust between his community and the govern-

ment. It is not even correct to say that British rule in Uttar Pradesh was economically disastrous to Muslims. Similar observations have been made by P. Hardy⁷ who says that the purpose of Aligarh was to further the temporal progress of the Muslim community. In fact, the British treated the Muslims as a distinct political interest. Muslims were nominated to the Viceroy's Legislative Council and the Public Service Commission. There is nothing to suggest that Muslim were either educationally or professionally backward although the myth of their backwardness was perpetrated. There was as much difference among Muslims on the basis of education as between the Hindus and the Muslims. It was very handy for the Muslim to accept the myth of their backwardness and thus support the claims of their separate identity. Paul R. Brass⁸ who has investigated into Muslim separatism in Uttar Pradesh, states very categorically that "the objective differences between Muslims and Hindus and the objective circumstance of the Muslims in the North were less important in creating solidarity than the subjective process of manipulation and myth creation." This difference was communicated to the Muslim masses by the elite. The elite and politicians were responsible for the future course of events, in this case Muslim separatism. Such consciousness finds expression in the adroit use of political mechanisms, which is written large in the history of Hindu-Muslim relationships and the final creation of Pakistan. Islam and Urdu were regarded as coterminous, which provided a handle for the creation of Pakistan. In the process of symbol selection from the past, it was often necessary to ignore inconvenient aspects since "the process involves deliberate selectivity in search of myth, not truth."⁹ Thus it is clear that the objective reality gets by-passed to create suitable and appealing myths. The Aligarh movement persuaded Muslims to join modern professions and led them to believe firmly in Muslim solidarity. Therefore, one comes to the conclusion that objective reality does not necessarily determine the shape of events as shown by the case of the Muslim in India, particularly before the creation of Pakistan. The creation of Pakistan was really the culmination of concerted efforts to ensure Muslim separatism.

This meant resorting to political mechanisms in order to do away with 'such differences' by obtaining special facilities and

concessions from the British rulers. Muslim politics, thus, is characterised by separatism on all counts. It was pointed out earlier as to how there was a snow-balling effect between the Muslim and Hindu reactions to each other. The efforts made to counteract each other's move, of course had the disastrous consequence of the partition of the country. Even after partition it cannot be said that the feeling of a separation and the sense of deprivation amongst the Muslims has ceased to exist.

In spite of the fact that India is a secular state and no discrimination is supposed to be made on the basis of the religion, creed, belief, caste and so on, the differences which existed in the educational and economic conditions of the various groups mean, in reality, that while constitutionally there is no discrimination, there are significant differences which promoted a sense of separate identity, lack of assimilation and participation in the mainstream of life and so on. It is true that many Muslims opted to stay in India as against migrating to Pakistan. It should, however, be pointed out here that the well educated Muslims, such as the technocrats and the educated elite migrated to Pakistan. Thus those who opted to stay back did not possess higher education and therefore, did not also possess the facility of socio-economic mobility and advancement. A mere glance at the statistics of education, employment and the occupational structure would bear out this point. The Muslims who stayed back in India could not, therefore, benefit much by the processes of industrialisation, technological and economic growth which have taken place in India after Independence. It would be quite correct to say that under the circumstances the Muslims, by and large, have suffered relative deprivation. Then again, the deprivation becomes all the more acute when compared with the previous privileges and facilities which they had enjoyed during the British rule. Thus, objectively speaking, the deterioration of the economic condition of the Muslims is certainly responsible for the revival of separatism and in creating a feeling of their being an aggrieved party.

There is another complicating factor, which should be mentioned, namely, the creation of Pakistan and the consequent suspicion about even the Muslims who opted to stay in India. Besides, the none-too-happy relationship between India and Pakistan has further aggravated the problem coupled with Pakistan's allegation that the Muslims in India are meted out harsh and unjust treat-

ment. Infact clever use is made of the objective economic situation of the Muslims in India in order to emphasise and drive home this allegation. To a certain extent, Pakistan acts as a reference group for the Muslims in India, which again complicates matters. Further, Islam is an international religion unlike Hinduism which is confined to a nation or two at the most. The extra-territorial loyalties of the Muslims in terms of their religion make them suspect.

After Independence the Muslims tried to support the Congress because they felt that it was the only party which stood for a secular society and thus offered them maximum protection. However, this also resulted in the perpetuation of the separateness of the Muslims and the Hindus because of electioneering. The Congress takes upon itself the responsibility of safeguarding the interests of the minorities and as such has to play the role of a guardian, trying to guard them against the ill-will of others. On the one hand, it is understandable that the Muslims would, therefore, tend to support the Congress but it also meant that they would have to depend on the support of the ruling party as against other parties and the common people. The participation by Muslims in various walks of life has been receding, a fact which worsens their position and further entrenches separatism. The resurgence of the Muslim League and the amount of success which it has been able to enjoy in election has, on the one hand, offered some protection to Muslim interests and, on the other, aggravated separatism. Thus, one can say that the objective conditions, namely, the economic deprivation and backwardness have been compounded by separatism, necessitating the politicisation of the entire problem. Thus, in secular India where religion cannot be a source of discrimination, in reality, differentiation on other counts can be felt as discrimination, which in turn exacerbates feeling and emotions.

Christians in India

The Christians naturally enjoyed a good deal of support from the British rulers. The major aim of Christianity in India was to do evangelical work and to convert people to Christianity. Unlike Islam, it had no political aims. However, the Christians in India as mentioned above, enjoyed many facilities because of British rule and because of the fact that English became their mother-

tongue in turn made many advantages available to them. However, there was no politicisation of the Christian religion in India. It is only after Independence that the Christians were politicised particularly because communism was an anathema to them. Communism represented a threat to their religion and way of life. Similarly, Communist rule also posed a threat to their monopoly of higher education, good jobs, economic prosperity acquired through the ownership of plantations and so on. The Christians have been concentrated in certain States like Kerala. In Kerala, the Christians monopolised higher education and had a proprietary interest in institutions of higher learning. This provided another basis of confrontation with the communist rule. Thus the Christians in Kerala in particular were politicised and became an active political force. In addition to their politicisation due to the communist rule, the effort made by the Government of India to introduce Hindi as the official language also made the Christians extract a declaration on the floor of the Parliament that English would also continue to be the official language. Then again, the Christians and the Anglo-Indians were successful in obtaining a guarantee from the Government that there would be no interference, whatsoever, in their missionary activity. Christians in India therefore, except in Kerala, do not really constitute a political force nor are they politicised. Of course, as mentioned earlier, because of the advantage of education which the Christians had reaped and because of the support lent to them by the British rulers, there was no real need felt by them to resort to politicisation. Even after Independence, unlike in the case of the Muslims, there was no special need for politicisation.

The Sikhs in India

The Sikhs had also enjoyed political power before the advent of the British rule. However, later on, the Sikhs took to agriculture, mechanical and engineering activities of all kinds and enlisted themselves in the British army, where many of them rose to senior positions. This is not to suggest that the Sikhs did not take to higher education, but their major preference was for a career in the army, airforce and navy, agriculture and industry, which meant that they did not have to compete with other groups in employment and economic prosperity. It was only at the time of the formation of the linguistic states, that the Sikhs came to assert their

separate identity, based on religion and language, and demanded the creation Punjabi Suba. In order to realise their demand, the Sikhs made excellent use of their religious organisations to press the point. This is the time when Sikh religion and Sikh religious organisations became highly politicised, and became a major force ultimately forcing the Government to concede their demand. Otherwise, the Sikh religion, as such was not highly politicised and even now it is localised to a certain region.

As far as the minorities are concerned, in terms of the discussion above, we find that the maximum amount of politicisation of religion has been in the case of the Muslims. As we also pointed out, politicisation of the Muslims resulted in politicisation of the Hindus and the spiralling process went on unabated. The peculiar nature of the majority-minority relationship and the various kinds of suspicions on the part of both aggravated the problem. As pointed out earlier, Muslim communal politics was the inevitable consequence of a sense of deprivation resulting in separatism and the increasing use of political mechanisms. Even after Independence, this process has not been completely halted, although one finds that it has been considerably reduced. A peculiar blending of the objective situation and subjective feelings and emotions has resulted in the politicisation of the whole problem which cannot be adequately controlled. Thus, we find that once religion starts getting politicised, it is very difficult to stop the process, because politics also acquires a stake in religion in order to ensure political support and power. Consciousness about grievances, real or imaginary, results in politicisation, particularly when culture and the way of life of a group are concerned. Of course, there is no denying the fact that due to politicisation of religion, religious groups acquire a bargaining power and as such, there is a significant reduction in the sphere of religion. This is how politics and religion affect each other.

Concluding remarks

We had stated initially that the views of Durkheim about religion were only partially acceptable to us. Thus, on the one hand, religion is an integrative force and creates social solidarities, and on the other, when different religions are confronted with each other, religion can be a disintegrative force. Weber's important insight that religion is significantly linked up with the non-

religious entities and aspects of life, is also borne out by our discussion on the relationship between religion and politics. In the Indian case, we have found that nationalism which is essentially a political process was encouraged by religious and social reforms. Thus religion and politics, insofar as the nationalist movement was actively meant to promote the attainment of political independence, were organically linked. Then again, the linkage of religion and nationalism also simultaneously promoted religious revivalism both among the Hindus and the Muslims and was responsible for bringing about a separation between the two. It is true the Hindus were more concerned with religious reforms, whereas the Muslims were more worried about religious revivalism which, as mentioned earlier, became a matter of vital importance for preventing their culture and the way of life from being engulfed by the Hindu way of life. The linking up of religion and politics, thus, gave rise to different reactions and responses which again accentuated the process of separatism. The Church in India did not get greatly politicised, although even the Church had to make use of political mechanisms for maintaining its own autonomy and prosperity. Thus again, religion got involved in the political process and became politicised in order to realise its aims in the State. Thus, we find a linkage between religion and politics, interaction between the two, and very clever use being made of politics by religion. In the Indian case, we find that the process of modernisation and nationalism were promoted by religious and social reforms. Thus, there was no antithesis between religion and modernisation and nationalism. However, the separation between two religious communities gave rise to conflicts and animosities between them which was politically exploited. As a result of this conflict, and the very grave consequences arising out of it secularism became an article of faith in independent India. It was also pointed out earlier that secularism in India is not the same as elsewhere because it is not based on the secularisation of various aspects of life, as in the West. It merely emphasises acceptance of different religions on an equal footing. Here thus, is an instance of religious freedom and non-interference by the State in matters of religion. One finds therefore, that due to historical circumstances, secularism in India has acquired a different meaning and significance. The interplay of religion and politics thus has been responsible for evolving a different attitude towards religion and other activities, separating

the two as far as the state is concerned. In a way, the linkage between religion and non-religious entities is, to that extent at least officially severed. Of course, one finds that due to the politicisation of the religion even now such a linkage tends to obtain in reality.

REFERENCES

1. Desai, A.R., *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1966, p. 289.
2. Karunakaran, K.P., *Religion and Political Awakening in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1969, p. 44.
3. Ibid., p. 19.
4. Desai, A.R., op. cit., pp. 286-287.
5. Singh, Yogendra, *Modernisation of Tradition*, Thomson Press India, Limited, Publication Division, Delhi, 1973, p. 78.
6. Basu, Aparna, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, 1898-1920*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974.
7. Hardy P., *The Muslims of British India*, South Asian Studies, Cambridge University Press, 1972.
8. Brass Paul R., *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1975, p. 178.
9. Ibid., p. 412.

ADDITIONAL READING

- Derrett, J., Duncan, M., *Religion, Law and the State in India*, Faber and Faber, London, 1966.
- Tyabji, Badr-ud-Din, *The Self in Secularism*, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1971.
- Kabir, Humayun, *Minorities in a Democracy*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1968.
- Pandey, Dhanpati, *The Arya Samaj and Indian Nationalism*, S. Chand and Co. New Delhi, 1972.
- Hartmann, Horst, *Political Parties in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1971.
- Jhangiani, Motilal A., *Jana Sangh and Swatantra*, Manaktalas, Bombay, 1967.
- Mushir-ul-Haq, *Islam in Secular India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1972.
- Madhur, Y.B., *Muslims and Changing India*, Trimurti Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1972.
- Mankekar, D.R., *The Red Riddle of Kerala*, Manaktalas, Bombay, 1965.
- Shakir, Moin, *Secularisation of Muslim Behaviour*, The Minerva Associates, Calcutta, 1973.
- Singh, Ajit, *Punjabi Suba*, U. C. Kapur & Sons, Delhi, 1970.
- Nayar, Baldev Raj, *Minority Politics in the Punjab*, Princeton University Press,

- New Jersey, 1966.
- Baig, M.R.A., *The Muslim Dilemma in India*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1974.
- Gauba, K.L., *Passive Voices—A Penetrating Study of Muslims in India*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1973.
- Dumont, Louis, *Religion/Politics and History in India*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague, 1970.
- Swanson, Guye. Quoted in Schneider, Louis, *Sociological Approach to Religion*, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, 1970.
- Smith, Donald Eugene, *India as a Secular State*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1963.
- Flint, John T., "India as a Secular State", in Sinha U.K. ed., *Secularism in India*, Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1968.
- Luthra, Ved Prakash, *The Concept of Secular State and India*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1964.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

Theoretical approach

It is not the purpose of this chapter to summarise the findings of the foregoing chapters but to highlight the important theoretical issues raised, the approach adopted, and to discuss how far the approach adopted has been borne out by the material presented. It is thus an exercise in gathering together the various threads, or rather, to link up the central idea with the material presented.

In the first chapter, it was mentioned that Indian society has gone in a big way for a deliberate change of the social structure with a view to realising the goals enshrined in the Constitution. Some of the major goals are equality, social justice, rationality, prosperity and secularism. In consonance with the desire to realise the various goals, a premium has been put on goal-attainment. Goal-attainment signifies the use of political mechanisms and the political process for realising the aims. Every society has structural peculiarities, both in terms of its assets and liabilities. However, it is not possible to attain the goals without making intelligent use of the existing structures, as for example in the Indian context, caste and religion.

Caste and religion are customarily looked upon, not only as representing forces of tradition but also as being kind of obstacles impeding the process of transformation of society. However, no society can transform itself without making use of its own structures or in disregard of such structures. Even while one may borrow certain goals and aims in respect of societal transformation, one cannot borrow the structures from other society.

We have also discussed as to how the usual dichotomy, which is believed to exist between modernity and tradition, does not exist in the Indian case. The dichotomous model, thus, is not helpful in our understanding of Indian society, because here

we find that the operation and working of tradition and modernity has been superimposed on tradition. We also find that traditional structures are used for furthering the process of modernisation. We have already discussed how caste and religion, presumably forming the traditional structure, have been utilised for transforming society. It was also emphasised that the use of such traditional structures for transforming society results in the change of such structures themselves.

Therefore, instead of treating either caste, religion or politics as an independent variable, we chose the inter-action model, or the model based on interchange and exchange, to study the inter-relationship between these. The dialectics between these three, particularly between caste and politics and religion and politics, have been the main focus of our study. It was felt that the adoption of such an approach would enable us to understand the inter-relationship between the three in a much better way than by posing the causal relationship between one set and the other. Thus, we deliberately opted in favour of an interaction or interchange model and rejected the "either/or" model, wherein one set is treated as an independent variable and the other set as a dependent variable.

Keeping in view our objective and the approach we have adopted, we enquired into those aspects of caste which were relevant from the point of the inter-relatedness of caste and politics, particularly those aspects or features of caste which have been utilised for the purpose of goal-attainment. In the first place, we pointed out how the legitimacy of caste had undergone a change in terms of the erosion of its ideological basis. The entry of power—secular, economic and political—has certainly produced a change in the structure of caste. Then again, the refusal on the part of the State or political power to uphold differentiation and discrimination on the basis of caste has been an important factor in impairing the legitimacy of caste. The Varna scheme of division also enabled people to attain mobility by appropriate reference group behaviour and opened out avenues for caste being manipulated by secular force. The local variations in the caste system also made it more amenable to change and manipulation. The economic interdependence characterised by the caste system and the inroads made into it by urbanisation, migration, and exposure to new values, and the vigilance of the

political authorities introduced many changes in the caste system. Even the caste ethos has undergone changes in terms of exposure to new ideologies and their acceptance by the people, as well as by the withdrawal of the State support. Similarly, the introduction of education, availability of secular jobs free from the traditional caste-system, and migration as well as politicisation have brought about a significant change in the caste system. Thus, caste is much more amenable to manipulation by secular forces and as such is much more prone to change than is normally believed.

In our treatment of religion also, we have confined ourselves to the discussion of religion both as an integrative and a disintegrative force. It is true that religion promotes social solidarities but it is equally true that it can also be disintegrative when diverse religious groups are confronted with each other. Religious convictions and loyalties can be used by the elite not only to promote social solidarity, but also to put one solidarity against the other. Then, again, the linkage between religion and the non-religious aspects of life, either economic or political, make religion amenable to the use of secular forces and processes. Thus, the mutuality of the linkage of religion and secular factors is emphasised.

Politics is concerned with goal-attainment and politics is the art of the possible. It deals with power, popularity and performance. Political processes cannot function, however, without taking into account the structural features, while utmost importance is attached to the aims and objectives which have been accepted. In the first place by adopting the democratic political system, the hierarchical nature of power has to be modified. Then again, the declaration of India as a secular state means that no discrimination would be made on the basis of religion, and that religion would be a matter of purely personal concern. Because of the introduction of adult franchise, increasing attention has to be paid to the views and notions of the masses in order to enlist their cooperation and support. Further, there is to be a mobilisation of all the resources—material, human and institutional—for the attainment of the goals. It is not enough to use the existing resources. New resources have to be created in keeping with the goals. In order to mobilise the existing resources and to create new resources, use and manipulation of the existing

structures has to be made. Solidarities based on caste and religion have to be utilised for the promotion of the avowed aims and objectives. The working of political parties means promotion of universalistic loyalties, and various solidarities have to give up some of their particularistic elements in order to participate, and particularly, to gain advantages from the political process. Even the pressure-groups or interest-groups characterised by caste and religion are compelled to sacrifice something in favour of universalistic aims and goals. This is the process whereby politics affects the working of hierarchy, and social solidarities, uses them, influences them, and transforms them in order to promote its aims and the objectives.

Caste and politics

The caste has been exposed to the forces of modernisation and as much the ideological basis of caste has been considerably impaired. To the extent that caste is concerned with the attainment of secular objective, it is amenable to influence from without. The interrelationship between caste and politics is that of interchange and exchange. As a result of the acceptance of the democratic framework, the numerical strength of a caste has acquired importance and the hierarchical nature of the caste has also been questioned. It is true that the relationship between caste and politics at the village, regional and the national level differs, but still one has to accept the fact that the intervention of politics has made a dent in the caste system. Caste has been both compelled and encouraged to bargain with political parties, and in the process has sacrificed some of the features, in order to benefit by political support. The working of political parties has caused fusion and fission within the caste. In both the cases, caste has undergone a change as a result of its interaction with politics. Caste have worked as pressure-groups and even then have been required to change as a result of the benefits which accrue to them. There is no denying the fact that there has been elitism in caste politics, in the sense that higher castes have tended to politically dominate the lower castes. However, such elitism has always evoked sharp reactions and responses from the castes which were dominated. Thus, the emergence and development of the non-Brahmin movement posed a serious challenge to the supremacy of the Brahmins, resulting in the

successful diminishing of their power and position. Then again, the role of scheduled castes in politics also meant a challenge to the domination of the higher castes because of which significant concessions had to be made to the scheduled castes. There has been a considerable amount of interchange and exchange between politics and caste which has resulted in a change in both, with neither of them remaining quite the same as they were before the process of interaction began.

Religion and politics

In this section, we have dealt with the nature of religion and its implications for the social solidarities, as well as its being a disintegrative force, particularly when different religions are confronted with each other. Such a situation leads to assertion of superiority by the various religions or a competition between them for the scarce resources, not only economic but also in terms of political power. Religion is integrally linked with non-religious factors. In this context, we made a very brief survey of relationship between religion and politics in the rest of the world and discussed the evolution of secularism which really meant separation of the State from the Church. In India, on the other hand, secularism developed in a different context, namely, with a background of religious conflicts which ultimately resulted in the partitioning of the country. Thus in India emphasis is placed on the acceptance of various religions on a footing of equality and freedom to pursue one's religious beliefs and convictions. In the West, secularism was the outcome of secularisation while in India we have a secular state but not necessarily a secular society.

The role played by religion in the promotion of nationalism was therefore in the shape of religious and social reforms. Religion thus promoted nationalism and national politics, contrary to the usual reactionary image of religion. Religious reforms and revivalism also gave rise to communalism on the one hand and nationalism on the other. The domination by a particular religious communal group of the nationalist movement created a rift between the Hindus and the Muslims which got accentuated over the years. The class character of the leadership of the nationalist movement also deepened the rift between the two. Religious revivalism created tension and reaction-formation between the two major groups, namely the Hindus and the

Muslims. The use of politics tried by both the groups further worsened the situation.

The politicisation of various religious groups and communities like the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Christians has been partly responsible for perpetuating the differences between these groups, and has, at the same time brought them together for the purpose of acquiring gains from the political processes. Thus, one finds that people belonging to different religions tend to patronise the same political party. On the one hand, communal groups have been politicised and as such have acquired a new power. On the other hand because of their politicisation, they are also compelled to effect certain compromises and to accept each other. Politicisation, or resorting to the political process, means adopting peaceful methods of bargaining with each other without resorting to actual conflict and fights. On the one hand, therefore, the various religious and communal groups make use of politics and on the other, for being allowed to make its use, they are compelled to accept a common frame of reference, such as peaceful bargaining and acceptance of certain universalistic principles. The interchange and exchange between politics and religion point to the fact that both politics and religion have been affected in the bargain, even while using each other.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the interrelationship between caste, religion and politics has not been one-sided in the sense that none of those can be treated as an independent variable. The mutual interaction between these three vindicates the use of the model which was suggested in the beginning, namely the interaction or the interchange model. A study of the dialectics between these three components, enables us to understand the qualitatively new positions of equilibrium which has been evolved in India, instead of trying to fit the situation into the usual category of 'traditional versus modern'. Thus in studying Indian society one has to take into account the continuous interaction between the so-called traditional forces and those of modernity. The product that emerges from such interaction and the resultant societal transformation that takes place bear a stamp and individuality all its own.