Features of Indian Society

India is a vast country and has a long history. Its society has evolved through the ages and has also been affected by foreign influences giving it extreme diversity and made unity amidst diversity a characteristic of the Indian society. However, to understand the process, we need to understand the meaning of diversity, unity and pluralism as well as their relevance to the Indian society.

Diversity

In literary terms, diversity means differences. However in social context the meaning is more specific; it means collective differences among people, that is, those differences which mark off one group of people from another. These differences may be of any sort: biological, religious, linguistic etc. On the basis of biological differences, for example, we have racial diversity. On the basis of religious differences, similarly, we have religious diversity. The point to note is that diversity refers to collective differences.

Institutionalization

Indian society is institutionalized in nature in the form of well developed systems like Family, Marriage, Gotra and Caste System.

Multi-class

Indian society is a multi-class due to several classes exists in India. This classification is based ones birth as well as his achievements.

Multi-ethnic Society

Indian society is multi-ethnic in nature due to various racial groups coexists in India. Almost all the races of the world can be seen in India.

Multi-Religious Society

Although Hinduism is the major religion in India, there exist various other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity, Bahai and Parsi etc.

Multi-Lingual Society

There exist more than 1600 languages in India. Major languages are Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, Odia, Assamese etc

Unity

Unity means integration. It is a social psychological condition. It connotes a sense of one-ness, a sense of we-ness. It stands for the bonds, which hold the members of a society together. There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Uniformity presupposes similarity, unity does not. Unity is of two types, first which may be born out of uniformity, and second which may arise despite differences. French sociologist has termed these two types as mechanical and organic solidarity respectively.

Unity in diversity

Inspite of diversities, Indian community shares certain bonds of unity. The first bond of unity of India is found in its geo-political integration. India is known for its geographical unity marked by the Himalayas in the north and the oceans on the other sides. Politically India is now a sovereign state. The same constitution and same parliament govern every part of it. We share the same political culture marked by the norms of democracy and secularism. The geo-political unity of India was always

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visualized by our seers and rulers. The expressions of this consciousness of the geo-political unity of India are found in Rig-Veda, in Sanskrit literature, in the edicts of Asoka, in Buddhist



monuments and in various other sources. The ideal of geo-political unity of India is also reflected in the concepts of Bharatvarsha (the old indigenous classic name for India), Chakravarti (emperor), and Ekchhatradhipatya (under one rule).

Another source of unity of India lies in what is known as temple culture, which is reflected in the network of shrines and sacred places. From Badrinath and Kedarnath in the north to Rameshwaram in the south, Jagannath Puri in the east to Dwaraka in the west the religious shrines and holy rivers are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Closely related to them is the age-old culture of pilgrimage, which has always moved people to various parts of the country and fostered in them a sense of geo-cultural unity. As well as being an expression of religious sentiment, pilgrimage is also an expression of love for the motherland, a sort of mode of worship of the country. It has acted as an antithesis to the regional diversity and has played a significant part in promoting interaction and cultural affinity among the people living in different parts of India.

Indian culture, has a remarkable quality of accommodation and tolerance. There is ample evidence of it. The first evidence of it lies in the elastic character of Hinduism, the majority religion of India. It is common knowledge that Hinduism is not a homogeneous religion, that is, a religion having one God, one Book and one Temple. Indeed, it can be best described as a federation of faiths. Polytheistic (having multiple deities) in character, it goes to the extent of accommodating village level deities and tribal faiths. For the same reason, sociologists have distinguished two broad forms of Hinduism: sanskritic and popular. Sanskritic is that which is found in the texts (religious books like Vedas, etc.) and popular is that which is found in the actual life situation of the vast masses. Robert Redfield has called these two forms as great tradition of Ramayana and Mahabharata and the little tradition of worship of the village deity. And everything passes for Hinduism. What it shows is that Hinduism has been an open religion, a receptive and absorbing religion, an encompassing religion. It is known for its quality of openness and accommodation. Another evidence of it lies in its apathy to conversion. Hinduism is not a proselytising religion. That is, it does not seek converts. Nor has it ordinarily resisted other religions to seek converts from within its fold. This quality of accommodation and tolerance has paved the way to the coexistence of several faiths in India.

Indian society was organized in such a way that various social groups were independent of each other. One manifestation of it is found in the form of Jajmani system, i.e., a system of functional interdependence of castes. The term “jajman” refers generally to the patron or recipient of specialised services. The relations were traditionally between a food producing family and the families that supported them with goods and

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services. These came to be called the jajmani relations. Jajmani relations were conspicuous in village life, as they entailed ritual matters, social support as well as economic exchange. The whole of a local social order was involved (the people and their values) in such jajmani links. A patron had jajmani relations with members of a high caste (like a Brahmin priest whose services he needed for rituals). He also required the services of specialists from the lower jati to perform those necessary tasks like washing of dirty clothes, cutting of hair, cleaning the rooms and toilets, delivery of the child etc. Those associated in these interdependent relations were expected to be and were broadly supportive of each other with qualities of ready help that generally close kinsmen were expected to show.

Sociologist M.N.Srinivas has called this 'vertical unity of castes'. The jajmani relations usually involved multiple kinds of payment and obligations as well as multiple functions. No caste was self-sufficient. If anything, it depended for many things on other castes. In a sense, each caste was a functional group in that it rendered a specified service to other caste groups. Jajmani system is that mechanism which has formalised and regulated this functional interdependence. Furthermore, castes cut across the boundaries of religious communities. We have earlier mentioned that notions of caste are found in all the religious communities in India. In its actual practice, thus, the institution of jajmani provides for inter linkages between people of different religious groups. Thus a Hindu may be dependent for the washing of his clothes on a Muslim washerman. Similarly, a Muslim may be dependent for the stitching of his clothes on a Hindu tailor, and vice-versa.

Efforts have been made from time to time by sensitive and sensible leaders of both the communities to synthesise Hindu and Muslim traditions so as to bring the two major communities closer to each other. Akbar, for example, founded a new religion, Din-e-Ilahi, combining best of both the religions. Some bhakti saints like Kabir, Eknath and Guru Nanak, as well as some sufi saints made important contributions in forging unity among to communities. At the time of independence struggle, Mahatama Gandhi laid extreme emphasis on Hindu Muslim unity which was instrumental in India becoming a secular state and moving on the path of progress.

Concept of Social Legislation

- Legislation is an instrument to control, guide and restrain the behaviour of individuals and groups living in society. Individuals and groups left in absolute freedom may clash with each other in the pursuit of their self interest at the cost of others.They cause grave harm to society leading to chaos. Legislation is one of the many institutions which controls and directs individual action into desirable channels.
- Others being social customs, traditions, religious prescription etc. Law is a vast subject having many branches. In a broad sense, all laws are social in character, in a narrow sense only those laws that are enacted for the purpose of social welfare are categorized as social legislation. There are several types of legislations such as taxation, corporate, civil, criminal, commercial etc.

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- Social legislation is that branch of law which is an aggregate of the laws relating to the various socio-economic condition of the people. It is a social institution that embodies the social norms created on the initiative of a competent legislative agency. These laws are enacted keeping in view the needs of the time, the circumstances of the nation and its socio-political ideals.

OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION :

- Social legislation derives its inspiration from our constitution and has the following specific objectives: i)Removal of discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion, caste, class etc. and promotion of equality to all. ii)Safeguard the rights of the weaker section such as women, children, elderly, widows, destitute and the backward classes. iii)Eradication of traditional malpractices and social evils such as untouchability, dowry, child marriage, female infanticide etc. iv)Provision of social security.

AIM OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION :

- To change and reorganize society by improving its social and economic condition. Each individual of the society has to be given equal rights and equal opportunities. § Social legislation aims to address social problems through legislative means, and initiates process of social reform and social change based on sound social rules. § Since the process of social change in fast social legislation also provides desired direction to changes.

NEEDS FOR SOCIAL LEGISLATION :

- to ensure social justice, to bring about social reform, § to promote social welfare, § to bring about desired social change, § to protect and promote of rights of socioeconomically disadvantaged groups of the society.

NATURE OF LEGISLATION IN WELFARE STATE:

- Women welfare Child welfare § Schedule caste development § Welfare of OBC § Welfare of disable person § Labour welfare § Housing welfare

Child welfare:

- After the formation of legislation, child labour act-1986 was come into force. According to which no child below the age of 14 years should work in any hazardous place. In July 2006, the Indian Govt. brought an amendment according to which, “no child below the age of 14 should work in any hazardous place or in dhaba, hotels as servant or work as a domestic servant. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2001 said that if a child below the age of 14 saw any deviant behavior shouldn’t be punished & treat friendly behavior in adjudication.

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Women welfare:

- The total workforce in our country is about 314 million, out of which women constitute 90 million & man 224 million. To maintain the dignity of women, equality of sexes & establishment of special justice, women welfare programmes such as Janani Suraksha Yojana, MCH, Maternity Benefit Leave, ICDS, formation of SHG, micro finance are some of the keys which has provided welfare majors to the women.

Schedule Caste development:

- The Ministry of social justice & empowerment is the nodal ministry that overseas the interest of the schedule caste. Besides this the national commission has been set-up to look-after the interest of SCs & STs under article 338. To achieve their social development to protect them from exploitation, the protection of Civil Rights Act, 1995, the SC & ST Act 1989 were enacted. Article 330 for reservation of SC & ST, Article 15 for abolition of untouchablity is ensured by the legislation.

Welfare of disable person:

- The Comprehensive Law namely the equal opportunity, protection of rights & full participation act-1995 has been enacted & enforced in February 1996. The Mental Health Act 1987 & Lapers Act 1898 are working for the prevention & promotional aspects of the disable persons.

Labour welfare:

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) was set-up in 1919, as a part of the League of Nations for the promotion of Universal Peace through social justice. The study group of 'National Commission' on Labour on 2002 has brought out the new changes and welfare majors for women, children & self employed workers who work as labourer.

THE CONTRACT LABOUR (REGULATIONAND ABOLITION)ACT, 1970:

- The Objective of the Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 is to prevent exploitation of contract labour and also to introduce better conditions of work. A workman is deemed to be employed as Contract Labour when he is hired in connection with the work of an establishment by or through a Contractor.

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