- Polity and Society are interlinked with each other.
- All societies have some ways and means to organize its members on the basis of certain social, political, economic criteria.
- These could be based on age, or sex categories, on criteria of birth in a social group i.e. based on ascription, as in simple tribal societies or caste societies.
- Power and authority are two dimensions based on which polity or political relations of a certain kind are established.
- The political institution that exists in all societies is based on certain set of relationships which are formally established and which constitutes the political system.

POLITICAL SYSTEM & ITS COMPONENTS

- The social relationships people interact with one another.
- In doing so, they very often pursue their self-interests. These self-interests sometimes run contrary to the interests of others as also to the interests of the society.
- To serve their own interests people use the means of power and they control the interests of others.
- This situation invariably leads to conflict. For maintaining an orderly arrangement of social relationships, we need to both resolve the conflict and coordinate diverse activities of people.
- This is generally done by exercising power and imposing some kinds of constraint on people's behaviour.
- When social relationships are organised around the dimension of power, we say that we now move from the general area of social interaction to a more specialised area of power relationships.
- When the power relationships are systematised & ascribed specific functions, we speak of them as a political system.
- Thus, political systems develop whenever the relationships among individual and groups are organised according to the exercise of power and its various manifestations
- These might range from sporadic meetings of village elders in simple societies to highly organised states.

THE NOTION OF POWER

- The ability to do something or anything, or to act upon a person or things, is the definition of power
- Viewed in this way, power is a basic concept in social sciences.
- It implies the influence that any person, group or organisation brings to bear on the actions of others.

- In this sense, anyone seeking to serve an interest by eliciting a response from others is described as exercising one's power.
- This means that one has social power, which can be used to make another person do what is wanted.
- This social power is essentially an aspect of interpersonal relationships.
- Almost all human actions and interactions would fall in the domain of politics.
- This would be the widest possible definition of politics. The political scientists do not accept it.
- Delimiting the domain of the politics :- The political scientists argue that this view of politics reduces it to the level of a very commonplace and broad subject.
- They therefore delimit the domain of politics and reserve the term politics' to designate the domain where social power is used in public sphere rather than in private sphere.
- Thus, for example, what happens within the family, in terms of power relations, is not included in the category of politics.
- When the family or its representative participates in the affairs of the neighbourhood or the village by influencing others' opinions and actions, it is described as politics.
- Concept of Authority: For further delimiting the special field of political relations, it is useful to apply the concept of authority.
- It refers to the legitimacy of the use of power.
- When power relationships in the public domain become regularised, and therefore to some extent predictable, they are also closely guided by the appropriate norms.
- People acknowledge the right of the political authority to exercise power.
- This implies the existence of a clear system of acceptance of the political institutions through which the authority of power is exercised.
- The power becomes authority because the actors involved in this relationship accept the legitimacy of those issuing commands. They do so willingly. Such systematised political relations are generally referred to as political systems.

MOST RESTRICTED VIEWS ON POLITICS

- Sociologists, like Max Weber, confine the political relations to an organisation of individuals.
- For them, this organisation is to be territorially defined.
- Secondly it has to be based on the ultimate sanction of physical force.
- Max Weber is referring to the notion of state as it has emerged in the modern sense.

- For the purpose of describing political relations at the national level, we need to focus on this restricted meaning of politics.
- The political relationships are also present in those societies, which do not have a specialised political institution like the state.
- In a large number of tribal societies, political authority is not based on territory.
- For example, the nomadic tribes like the Gujjar in India and the Roma or Gypsies in Europe have councils to regulate the behaviour of deviant members, to settle disputes, to provide social security to their members. Yet, they do not have a state.

STATE , NATION & SOCIETY

STATE
- In the context of Western European experience – three terms - state, the nation and the society are somewhat coterminous.
- This is not so in the case of many other places.
- The state is a political association, which is characterised by : –
a) Territorial jurisdiction,
b) More or less non-voluntary membership
c) A set of rules which define the rights of its members by way of a constitution
d) Claims to legitimacy of power over its members.
- The member of a state is usually referred to as a citizen.
- More often than not, the state is coterminous with nationality.

NATION
- The term refers to group of people who have developed solidarity on the basis of common identity of culture, religion, language and state etc
- The national identity of any group, which defines itself as such, may be based on any number of criteria, such as the place of residence, ethnic origin, culture, religion, language.

SOCIETY
- It is the broadest category of social organisation which includes a large number of social institutions, like kinship, family, economy and polity.
- In this sense, the term society refers to social relationships which are interlinked.
- In interacting with each other people form social relationships.
- Repeated and regularised patterns of social relationships become institutionalised and hence as a relational concept society includes the study of social institutions.
- The term society is a general term which may encompass the state or the nation.
- It can also be coterminous with either or both of them. For example, the Germanic Society may include the German speaking people of East Germany, West Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland etc.

- The Hindu society may include the citizens of Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- The state may similarly include a number of societies. For example, the Indian State includes diverse societies based on region, religion or language.
- The tribal societies, such as the Bhil, the Gond or the Naga, form an integral part of the Indian State.

EMERGENCE OF A STATE

NO IDEA OF NATION BEFORE 1858
- Indian national politics is influenced by the historical experience of nation-building.
- This experience is marked by efforts to bring together a large number of social groups in a common national identity.
- Before the British establishment in 1858, India was characterised by a large number of small and large political units.
- These units waged a constant struggle to maintain their authority.
- Although there were some large scale empires such as the Maurya, the Gupta & Mughals, the entire country was never united politically under any rule.
- But even without a politically unified territory, many factors combined and gave the country an identity of oneness.
- The awareness of commonality, however may be nebulous
- This awareness grew out of one's participation in the world which existed beyond one's immediate geographical area.
- This consciousness did not, however, get translated into the political domain & people had therefore no national identity
- The identity of the commonality that we had before the British can perhaps be best expressed as a cultural identity.

GROWTH OF NATIONALISM
- Although people were always divided in numerous ways in terms of language, religion, ethnic composition, two factors facilitated the emergence of Indian nationalism.
  i) The presence of a common enemy, i.e., the British rule, and
  ii) The common cultural identity that preceded the unification of India as one state.
- The various struggles, violent, non-violent, constitutional, extra-constitutional against the British further unified the diverse groups in India
- The process of nation-building was not complete on attaining independence.
- It is a continuing process and is reflected in the nature of politics
- It is a process of translating cultural identity into a political national identity

NATURE OF POLITICS IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

- The political organisation involved in the activity of nation-building, was mainly the Indian National Congress Party.
- This political party consisted of diverse sections of population and activists, even with diametrically opposite political ideology.
- The members of the Congress Party belonged to different strata of society (Accommodative nature)
- The leaders of the party were drawn from the urban professional classes.
- They were convinced that nation-building was as important as political independence.
- Hence the major thrust of their political activity was to bring together as many diverse groups as possible.

THE CONSTITUTION
- The Constitution, adopted in 1950, was the first attempt at nation-building.
- It is a written constitution, which is a comprehensive document.
- It provides the foundation or the design of the government.
- India has a federal govt. A federal government in India implies that authority is divided between the centre and the states.
- The Constitution has established a parliamentary system of govt at both the centre and the states.
- The word 'parliament' has different connotations, that it is an assembly of representatives of the people and it is a body of persons gathered for discussion.
- The parliament refers to the legislative organ of the government.
- The President is the constitutional head of the country and the council of ministers headed by the Prime Minister.
- The Prime Minister is the head of the executive which is responsible to the Lok Sabha.
- The parliament consists of the President and the two Houses, namely the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the House of the People (Lok Sabha)
- In the states, the council of ministers is headed by the 'Chief Minister' who is responsible to the Legislative Assembly.
- Every state has a legislature – Where there is one House it is known as the Legislative Assembly or Vidhan Sabha and where there are two Houses, one is called the legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad) and the other is known as Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha).
- India is a parliamentary democracy and this means that the government is derived from public opinion.
- It requires political parties, rule by the majority and a responsible government through discussion.
- The Constitution also lays down, some "Fundamental Duties" of Indian citizens. Some of them are

a) To abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem,
b) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all people of India,
c) To protect natural environment,
d) To develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform,
e) To value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture and so on.

- The Constitution not only provides fundamental rights to citizens but also gives directives to the state to provide the necessary economic, social and political benefits to the citizens
- The adoption of socialist pattern of society in order to reduce inequalities in society
- This too helped to contain divisive tendencies.
- The inclusion of as many segments of the population as possible was achieved by granting special privileges to the scheduled castes, the tribals, the backward classes, the other backward castes and the religious minorities.

ECONOMIC STRATEGIES
- Any political regime gains legitimacy when it can satisfy the needs of the people.
- The satisfaction of the people depends upon the availability of goods to be distributed.
- Hence the first task for the Indian state was to build the economy.
- The colonial policies of the British were largely based on exploitation
- India was used as a hinterland & a market place for their finished goods.
- Formulation of Five-Year Plans for regulating the economic activity was one such step.
- For this purpose the Government of India established the Planning Commission
- The planning process is not merely an economic activity. It is also a political activity.
- The Planning Commission not only decides about which sector has to produce how much, it also allocates projects to various states.
- The Commission takes into account the costs and benefits in economic terms and it also considers the decision in terms of possible offsetting regional imbalance in location of industries.
- Similarly, the balance has to be maintained between the various interest groups, which have emerged around different sectors of the economy.
- Indian state concentrated on : – 1) making available goods for distribution & 2) the path of distributive justice.
- Distributive justice refers to achieving a fair and equal distribution of goods and services among all people.
- A socialist pattern of society denotes that people have equal opportunities and equal rights

- It distributes goods and services equally and fairly for the welfare of the people.
- It also strives for elimination of rigid systems of control.
- The instances of distributive justice in many social legislations, such as the Industrial Disputes Act, which protects the rights of the industrial workers, or, the Untouchability Offences Act, which protects the untouchable castes from discrimination or the Hindu Marriage Act, which grants rights to Hindu women.

CHALLENGES TO THE NATION BUILDING

DIVERSITY OF GROUPS
- The diversity of groups which constitute Indian society, Regional and cultural identities & Casteism.
- The British were able to somewhat control the diverse groups by following the policy of pitting one group against the other.
- But the divisive tendencies were sharply manifested even during the nationalist movement

REGIONAL & CULTURAL IDENTITIES
- The national politics is still marked by emergence of regional nationalities.
- This is quite evident in the formation of states on linguistic basis
- It is also evident in demands by some regional identities such as the Gorkha for Gorkhaland
- The politics of reconciliation harmonises the diverse interests of various groups in a national framework.

CASTEISM
- It is widely observed that caste has become the major basis for political articulation.
- This is so mainly because caste provides the mechanisms for bringing people together
- Political parties in India are formed on the basis of caste alliances and voting behaviour of the Indian electorate can be described in terms of caste identity.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION
- National integration is a process of developing the different parts of the national social system into an integrated whole.
- In an integrated society, social institutions and values associated with them have a high degree of social acceptance.
- However, linguism, communalism, social inequalities and regional disparities are some of the factors, which threaten the ideal of national integration
- Language has become, a powerful source of political articulation
- For instance, in the South, particularly in Tamil Nadu, language sentiments have been propagated among the people for getting power within state politics
- The language problem has two aspects, namely

(i) medium of instruction at the level of school, college and public service examinations, and
(ii) meeting the demands of non-Hindi and Hindi-speaking radicals

LINGUISM
- The Government of India passed the Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1967.
- This Act decided that English will continue to be the official language of the Indian union
- Thus, Hindi is today only one of the official languages of the Indian Union.
- The provision made under the above mentioned Act and the three-language formula have helped to reduce the possibility of conflict on the basis of language.

COMMUNALISM
- The communalism refers to the tendency of any socio-religious group to maximise its economic, political and social strength at the cost of other groups.
- This tendency runs counter to the notion of the secular nation that India purports to be.
- Secularism in the Indian context is defined as the peaceful coexistence of all religions without state patronage to any of them.

SOCIAL INEQUALITIES
- Social stratification refers to inequality in society based on unequal distribution of goods, services, wealth, power, prestige, duties, rights, obligations and privileges.
- Being a hereditary and endogamous system, the scope for social mobility is very little.
- Social privileges and financial and educational benefits are by and large accessible to only upper caste groups.
- Processes of change, such as democratisation, westernisation and modernisation, have helped to broaden the accessibility to privileges to a wide range of people.
- Today caste and politics are also very closely associated.

REGIONAL DISPARITIES
- The unequal development has become the major cause of many social movements after the independence.
- For instance, the erstwhile Jharkhand movement, which involved tribal groups from Bihar, M.P, Bengal and Orissa
- While demanding a separate state, people involved in this movement argued that the rich natural resources of the area have been drained out to benefit others
- Finally the National Government conceded their demand for a separate state and the three new States of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh were formed in November 2000.

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