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# UNIT 11 CHANGING NATURE OF THE INDIAN STATE

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## 11.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

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After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- Appreciate the changing role of the State in India
- Understand the structural and functional evolution of the State, and
- Analyse the issues confronting the State in India

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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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We have all read about the nature, scope, perspectives and evolution of the State in our previous Units. The discussions have basically been in theoretical terms. In this Unit, we propose to study the role of the State in the Indian context. You will appreciate that the issues involved in the kind of discussion are pretty complex. One has to take into account the special nature of State-society relationship in a developing State like India. Besides, there are other issues such as the evolution of the idea of Indian State as evolved during the national movement, the Constitutional mandate for it, the goals as set out by the Constitution makers and the working of the Indian State as reflected in its experiments with federalism, coalition government, bureaucracy and development administration, judiciary and judicial activism etc. All these issues need to be discussed and analysed. In the process, the problems of democratic participation, socio-political mobilisation and the crisis of governability need to be probed and some future direction explored.

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## 11.2 THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN INDIA

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The role of the State is perhaps the most dominant theme of political disagreement among thinkers, reflecting different views about the proper relationship between the State, society and the individual. While all political thinkers, with the exception of anarchists, have regarded the State as a worthwhile or necessary association, they profoundly disagree about the exact role that the State should play in society. At one extreme in this debate, Classical Liberals have argued that individuals should enjoy the widest possible liberty and have therefore insisted that the State be confined to a minimal role. This minimal role is simply to provide a framework of peace and social order within

which private citizens can conduct their lives as they think best. Such minimal States, with institutional apparatus restricted to little more than a police force, court system and army, commonly existed in the 19th century. In the 20th century, however, they have become rare, and the dominant trend has been for the State's role to expand. Progressively, this has occurred in response to electoral pressures for economic and social security, supported by a broad ideological coalition including democratic socialists, modern liberals and paternalistic conservatives.

Indian society tried to create a space for the idea of the modern Nation State in the Indian culture along with the traditional concept of the State. While doing so, they could not visualise that this imported concept of the State will eventually totally marginalise the indigenous concept and become the hegemonic concept. The process was helped by the colonial inheritance of the imperial State structure which has shaped much of the relationship of the State with the rest of Indian society. A crucial component of the inheritance is the concept of the State as the ultimate pacesetter and protector of the society, a moral exemplar, and as an arbiter among social groupings having conflicting interests. The nationalist movement, under the leadership of the Congress, sought to transform the colonial political legacy into a powerful State with the aim of firing the engines of capitalist economic development and establishing a just, socialistically inclined, civil society capable of overcoming poverty.

The Indian Constitutional State emerged in 1947 after one of the world's most novel and long-drawn-out struggles for political emancipation. The leading elite in Indian nationalist struggle and the founding fathers of Indian National Congress were profoundly enamoured of Western influence. The Party developed a nationalist, State-centred, and secular ideology. Its conversion to Socialism was actually concomitant with its accession to power. This conversion gave the party a way to adapt to the requirements of State construction. It led to the creation of a strong State for the precise purpose of overcoming the traditional order, which was segmented both regionally and socially.

The new State marked a significant departure from the values and institutions of traditional India. The Constitution adopted in 1950, turned India into a secular, parliamentary democracy with a bicameral parliament and a multi-party system, an indirectly elected president, an independent judiciary, and a federal structure with partial separation of the powers and responsibilities between the Centre and the states (See: Austin, 2004). State aimed at a comprehensive form of justice, equality and dignity of the individual. It rooted in the people the ultimate source of its legitimacy and provided them certain Fundamental Rights that could not be alienated or abrogated even by the Parliament. They, however, were subject to national security and general welfare. The Constitution also contained Directive Principles of State Policy under which the State was to strive to secure a social order oriented to people's welfare, ensure means of livelihood for all citizens, achieve a use of the material resources of the community that promoted the common good, prevent harmful concentration of wealth, ensure equal pay for equal work for both men and women, and protect children and youth from exploitation.

Adopting a federal form, the Constitution demarcated those subjects that could be legislated upon by the Centre i.e. the Union government, those by the States, and those by both. Defence, foreign affairs, inter-state communication, trade and commerce, currency, banking, control of industry, etc. were reserved for the

Union government. Public order, police, public health, education, agriculture, professions, etc. were reserved for the states. The concurrent list included such items of legislation as marriage and divorce, transfer of non-agricultural property, contracts, civil and criminal procedure, monopolies, welfare, social security, price-control, factories, electricity and food adulteration. The states were to have autonomy in enacting legislation on these subjects, but not in contravention of any law passed by the Parliament. The Constitution also demarcated the means of raising revenues between the Centre and the states. The Union government could raise its revenues from corporation and income tax, capital gains tax, customs and excise, coinage, currency, foreign exchange, taxes on stock exchange transactions, etc. The states could raise revenues through land revenue, agriculture, income tax, electricity and water rates, taxes on vehicles, taxes on trades, professions, land and property taxes, sales and purchase taxes, entertainment tax etc. Besides, to provide help to the poorer or less developed States, the Constitution provided for grants-in-aid to the states by the Centre (Austin, *op.cit.*).

The post-independence elite also cherished certain values and set certain goals to achieve. The main goals in India were national integration, economic development, social equality and political democracy. All these goals could be achieved through a centralised bureaucratic State which Nehru sought to build. The State also undertook the construction of atomic power plants, massive dams and huge steel plants. Emphasis was also laid on the coordination between the class relations in Indian society and power relations in the state structure which culminated in shaping a strong state structure in India and the state could solve the linguistic and regional tensions/problems initially through a policy of consensus. Thus, the post-independence ruling elite sought and to a great extent was successful in forging a strong state on the basis of a full acceptance and even glorification of India's regional, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversities.

This kind of attempt promoting a unifying and legitimising conception of a strong and powerful State also became an effective way for the leading elite to establish their monopoly on legitimate physical violence (Badie, 2000). Accordingly, the socialist reference promoted egalitarian principles that, in the context of India's construction of a State, became a major asset for the governing political elite. The removal/diminution of inequalities in a society of castes and profound regional disparities also provided opportunity for diminishing the resources of the competing traditional elite and thus establishing the political arena as the privileged space for the exercise of power. Moreover, socialist ideology offered the new elites of the State the means to establish influence in society and economy. The setting up of Planning Commission (1950), launching of Five Year Plans (1951), National Development Council (1952), the (Industries Development Regulation Act) 1951 etc. were notable steps in this direction (See: Chatterjee, 1997).

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### **11.3 EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN STATE**

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Modern States tend to displace all other ordering mechanisms of society, and become the sole source of mandatory rules. When the modern State arose in Europe, it had a very limited conception of itself, and therefore did not participate systematically in social engineering. In India, the colonial State was the first form of the modern State, and it assumed its title to sovereignty emphatically. But it remained ambiguous in its position on the relation between the State and society in British India. Broadly, the response of the State

oscillated between a stance of non-interference in the affairs of an alien society and a converse one of energetic reformism, but it did not enter into a direct intervention in the structures of caste society. However, the post-independence Indian State could not maintain a similar attitude of distance. It was committed to social reform as the Constitution itself introduced large programmes of social engineering and entrusted these to the State as their principal agency of realisation. The State, therefore, undertook serious legislation introducing positive discrimination in favour of deprived communities, giving them relative advantage in State employment and education. It led to the growth of a highly interventionist State (Kohli, 1997).

Despite considerable continuity with the past, the governmental structures, which were established after British rule introduced complexity into relations within the State and of the State with, society. For instance, the All-India Services of the Indian State were the major institutional legacy of the British colonial State, yet they also became the principle instrument that laid foundations for the successor bureaucratic and managerial State, whose functions, powers and personnel grew exponentially once India embarked upon its strategy of planned economic development so much so that by 1980s, the bureaucrats manning the public sector were far more powerful than their counterparts in the large private business houses by virtue of their presiding over the economy in the organised industrial sector, and administering a formidable regulatory apparatus for the licensing and expansion of private enterprises, import and export of capital goods, allocation of foreign exchange and clearances to raise capital (Frankel, 1987).

The result was a disproportionately large involvement of the State in managing the economy. Not only did the Indian State emerge as the major employer, it also played a prominent role in managing the flow of international finance from aid, loans and foreign investment. The State became the main source of capital and it controlled the use of that capital. An extensive State apparatus had to be developed to support the State in its responsibilities. Public sector management; State marketing and rationing of scarce foreign exchange and consumer goods; State ownership; the provision of an infrastructure of communications, energy supply and transportation; the creation of a legal structure for commercial transactions; maintenance political stability to create confidence among investors—all became the responsibility of the State. It like all modern States, almost took the Weberian principle of monopoly of coercive authority which sent signals to social groups to route their demands against each other through its agencies. Consequently, there was a steep rise in the demands made by social groups on the State. The Rudolphs analysed this by highlighting the distinction between ‘Demand’ and ‘Command’ Polity (See: Rudolph and Rudolph, 1997).

The ‘Demand’ polity, according to the Rudolphs, is oriented towards short-term goals, competitive processes for determining policies and the public interest, as well as the provision of private goods. It is constrained and directed by electoral verdicts and through the demands of organised interests and classes, political parties, social movements and agitational politics. It is also oriented toward the ‘rationality’ of incremental policy choice. The ‘Command’ polity, on the other hand, is oriented towards State-determined long-term goals and formulations of the public interest and the provision of public and collective goods. The preferences of political leaders and bureaucrats largely determine investment divisions and policy choices. They favour, repress, license, or co-opt economic classes, organised interests, and elites. The role of the State in the ‘Command’

polity is like that of monopolistic or oligopolistic producers who can determine what and how much is produced because they can control investment and shape consumer preferences and structure their choice in accordance with their investment decisions. Accordingly, the Rudolphs distinguish four periods since Indian independence, which are further classified into those of 'Command politics' (1956-66 and 1975-1977) and of 'demand politics' (1966-1975 and 1977 to 1980) (Rudolph and Rudolph, *op.cit.*).

Like most post-colonial societies, India inherited a distorted State structure with an overdeveloped bureaucratic State apparatus reflected in certain highly developed institutions like the bureaucracy, the military and the police. A universal feature of the colonial government was that it developed bureaucracies while neglecting legislatures, parties, local councils and other bodies able to maintain control and accountability. Although the Indian subcontinent has been credited with the longest history of democratic development, yet even here the bureaucracy has been found to be overdeveloped (Smith, 1996). The bureaucracy was associated with power, prestige and status, monopolising the knowledge and expertise required for running a government and developing a society. It was the main source of employment for the highly educated and professional people.

The basic apparatus of governmental administration in independent India was also inherited from the colonial era, although it soon expanded hugely in size. It consisted of a small elite cadre belonging to the All-India Services and a much larger corps of functionaries organised in the Indian Civil Service. The Indian members of the Indian Civil Service, the much acclaimed 'steel frame', were retained after Independence, in the form of a new service called the Indian Administrative Service, which was constituted after 1947. The crucial unit of the governmental apparatus was the district administration which, under the charge of the district officer, was primarily responsible for maintaining law and order as in colonial times, but was also to become the principal agency for development work.

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## **11.4 THE STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL EVOLUTION**

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The structural-functional pattern of administration that India inherited was based on colonial ideas and philosophy. Indian State was constrained to establish new administrative structures and functions in the immediate post-independence phase. Thus, it adapted to an administrative system that was actually suited to British requirement rather than ours. The basic structure of civil and criminal law as well as of its administration was inherited from the colonial period besides, of course, the creation of a Supreme Court and its position in the new Constitutional scheme. Similarly, the British model of a professional army strictly under the control of the political leadership was successfully maintained in post-independence India.

The bureaucracy in India is neither monolithic nor homogenous (Vithal, 1997). The heterogeneity of the bureaucracy usually reflects the social and class composition of society at large and of the ruling class in particular, but in the case of India, it was consciously planned by the British in view of the peculiar circumstances of their rule. It consisted of three distinct echelons of administration, namely the covenanted services, the gazetted services and non-gazetted services. Each of the three echelons has evolved in its own way since

independence. Interestingly, the higher civil service is not the only site occupied by the 'political elites' a significant faction of it has, over the years, become involved in intra-coalition conflicts at the state level. The post-independence political process has given rise to changes in the class composition of the political executive that was more rapid and far-reaching than those in the social composition of the civil services. It has resulted in disparity and conflicts at times and horizontal links between the two. Sometimes, one comes across a great deal of skepticism about the integrity of superior officers as well as political bosses and corresponding readiness to believe allegations of misappropriation as well as misbehaviour.

The role of the State is determined largely by its structural and functional evolution. The same is true of the Indian State. As a conceptual entity, the Indian State is based on universally accepted moral principles, humanism and democratic ideals. Its structure is elaborately laid down in the Constitution in its various parts, chapters and articles. It has evolved over the years, as guided by usually a core charismatic leadership, epitomised for a long initial phase of one party dominance.

Gradually, one party dominance has paved way for polarised pluralism and more and more elements have entered the State system through free and fair elections. In spite of the turmoil of partition and consequent political chaos caused by ethnic riots, India has sought to emerge as a 'Union of State'. Power has been vested in the people of India who are regarded as the makers of 'Sovereign Democratic Republic'. Thus, the Indian Constitution has constituted the principal site for the elaboration of the political discourse of the Indian State and also become central to an analysis of the changing role of political and bureaucratic structures.

Over the years, political contestation has increased in India. For instance, in the first general elections, held in 1952, on an average 4 candidates per parliamentary seat were in fray, the number rose to 16 in the 10th general elections in 1991. Interestingly, while the national parties have more or less held their own, independents have lost out to regional parties, which have grown incredibly in number as well as in significance. The rise of regional parties and increased contestation have also meant that the chances of any one party winning a majority of parliamentary seats have declined. Coalition government at the Centre has tended to become inescapable. This has led to the concept of governance on the basis of a Common Minimum Programme accepted by all the constituents of the coalition government. And, since even the coalition governments may need outside support to survive, consultation and consensus politics have tended to become the norm and may well give rise to a 'Consociational State' (Lijphart, 1989), which could make it possible to have a reasonably stable democratic polity despite a deeply divided or segmented society.

With increased social mobilisation and political contestation, the Indian State has been facing what is usually termed as the crisis of governability (Kohli, *op.cit.*). Personal rule has replaced party rule at all levels and below the rulers, the entrenched civil and police services have been increasingly politicised. Various social groups have pressed new and ever more diverse political demands in demonstrations that often have led to violence. The omnipresent, highly interventionist but feeble State, in turn, vacillates; its responses are varied in form of indifference, sporadic concessions, and repression. Such response and

vacillation fuels further opposition. The growing political and communal violence tends to periodically bring the armed forces into India's political arena. All this puts into question the capacity of the Indian State to govern which, in turn, concerns primarily the State's capacity simultaneously to accommodate disparate interests and promote development in view of the persistent feeling that over the last few decades, India's institutional capacity to deal with conflict and initiate solutions has declined (ibid).

However, if one focuses exclusively on the formal aspects of the Indian Constitution, one could miss fundamental changes in Constitutional ideas and practices that distinguished the Indian State of the 1990s from that of the 1950s. Neither the party system nor the Planning Commission are mentioned in the formal Constitution, though both have played a central role in creating the Constitutional order. Attention to the conventional Constitution directs us to analyse changes in the party and federal systems, as well as the changing balance of power between branches and units of government. It also highlights the erosion of the centralised Nehruvian State and economy that prevailed for four decades after independence in 1947. The analysis reveals that in the 1990s, a multiparty system, including strong regional parties, displaced a dominant party system; market ideas and practices displaced Central planning and controlled economy; and the federal system took on a new lease of life with the regional units gaining ground at the expense of the Centre. With the launching of economic reforms in 1991, a centralised, interventionist State was challenged and ultimately displaced by an increasingly decentralised regulatory State (Rudolph and Rudolph, *op.cit.*).

The Indian Constitution has withstood the test of time (Austin, 1999). At the same time, it has been an evocative document with 98 Amendments made to it between 1950 to 2004. Many of these Amendments have tended to bolster the arbitrary powers of the State. Some of the Amendments, on the other hand have moved the nation forward in terms of greater enfranchisement and empowered local self-government. Several court decisions have sought to restrict the ability of the parliament to tamper with the basic character and essential features of the Constitution. Public Interest Litigation permitted by the Supreme Court since 1985 has tended to restrain arbitrary behaviour of the State. Thus, over the years, the balance of power between Central institutions that was provided by the formal Constitution has been reshaped by the practice of actors responding to historical challenges. The balance has shifted in favour of the Supreme Court, the Election Commission, and the President at the expense of the Parliament, the Prime Minister, and the Cabinet. Not long ago, the Central government decided to appoint a National Commission to comprehensively review the Constitution of India. The Commission has come up with several recommendations to reform the legislature, executive and judiciary. We will discuss these in Unit 18 of this Course. Let us now examine some of the issues before the Indian State.

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## **11.5 ISSUES BEFORE THE INDIAN STATE**

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During the last 50 years, the State in India has witnessed the struggle for democratic transformation in which, there has been the rise of democratic consciousness among the people and a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of democratic revolution. Various identity groups seek autonomy and self-determination, and demand social, cultural, economic and political guarantees to fulfill their aspirations. The deprived people such as the dalits, adivasis, poor peasants, workers and women have come to acquire an

unprecedented level of awareness of democratic rights and their creative potentiality. The intensity of the challenge has shaken the State to such an extent that it has resorted to many measures such as liberalisation, globalisation, religious mobilisation and authoritarian repression to meet this situation.

The issues that will confront the Indian State in the new millennium will be of much greater complexity and sophistication, dealing with highly demanding requirements of the new technological age. We have become a nuclear weapons State, there are challenges posed by new technologies of satellite broadcasting, and the Internet, also there are complex international trade and investment issues before the World Trade Organisation (WTO), or the global environmental negotiations which require levels of analysis and understanding that is hardly present in our public discourse. The problem before the Indian State is that “It is being called upon to confront all the challenges of a new technological age, with the worn out instruments and apparatus of a post-colonial State, which has still not progressed much beyond its traditional role of collecting the revenues and administering the laws”. To meet the challenge, the Indian State has to take certain urgent steps such as trains forming its bureaucracy into a technocracy, and also creating a new work culture that is responsive, agile and capable of understanding the complexity of the problems of the technological age and solve them in the matrix of long-term national interest (Khandwalla, 1999).

With a population which is second largest in the world, Indian State represents a mind-boggling diversity and continuity. Continental in size and geographical variety, it consists of a medley of religions and religious sects, races, linguistic groups, castes, communities and political groupings. Such systems are often found to be extremely differentiated, ‘loosely coupled’ and ‘soft’ to the point of near Anarchy (Orton and Weick, 1990); these operate in highly turbulent social, political and economic environments, filled sometimes with frustration and anger and paralysed at others by alienation and consist of two distinct but highly interdependent layers namely the ‘democratic populist’ and the ‘bureaucratic regulatory’ that often work at cross-purposes. While the Indian State may not exactly be in such a grim condition, the corruption and criminalisation of its political system, the corruption and inefficiency of its bureaucracy continue to erode its credibility (Khandwalla, *op.cit.*).

The political sociologists feel that the Indian State is barely visible and when visible or evident, “It appears as a weak form of oriental despotism, destined to disappear as suddenly, and as casually, as it emerged” (Dirks, 1997). Weber, Maine, and Dumont have all confirmed this conception by holding that in India, the State was epiphenomenal. Marx had referred to the Indian villages/village communities as the solid foundation of oriental despotism. He observed that “While States came and went, village communities endured” (Khandwalla, *op.cit.*). The State always seems about to dissolve into fragments made up of various caste and communal elements. It is this background which makes India’s needs to invent the nation, the State, and to find the basis for a society, which is neither narrowly religious nor ethnic but far more difficult.

The critique of the State based on a cultural nation of India sees the secular, modern State of India as universalising and homogenising in the name of unity. According to a privileged position to State over people, it is seen as deigning the social space to plurality of traditions, religion, language, and the like. This view projects the agenda of the State as inherently repressive. Alternatively, India is seen as a cultural nation imbibing multiplicity and as a civilisational unity rather

than a modern Nation State (Kumar, 1989). This view emphasises the plural cultural identity of India based on the plural cultural ethos. The modern State tries to remove this plurality and togetherness in-built in Indian culture and creates a single political entity out of it. Thus, the State is identified as the root of intolerance and communalism in modern India.

In a recent study of Indian State from a 'Managerial Perspective', Pradip Khandwalla (*op.cit.*) observes that the performance of Indian State presents a paradox as a disaster and as one of the world's more effective developmental States. For him, the Indian State can be seen as a disaster due to its failures in the field of planned economic development due to which India has been rated as one of the most regulated and black-market-infested of the World's States, it ranked 86th among 101 countries as per the 1995 Index of Economic Freedom. Many Commissions appointed by the Government of India have identified the malaises in the bureaucracy which is huge and has become notorious for its corruption, slowness, elitism, and inefficiency.

The developmental Indian State has failed to reduce stark economic inequalities and combat poverty, political violence and inter-caste violence which have increased, the judicial and legal system remains in a mess delaying justice for common man to a distant dream, police-brutalities remain common, and sustainability of its economic development also remains doubtful leading to a crisis of governability as described by Atul Kohli (*op.cit.*). Thus : "...A democratic developing country is well-governed if its government can simultaneously sustain legitimacy, promote socio-economic development, and maintain order without coercion. The growing incapacity in India to perform these tasks is what has been conceptualised...as a manifestation of a crisis of governability".

The nature and the depth of crisis of the Indian State has been analysed variedly by various authors, schools and methodologies. They see the crisis as emanating from different sources, and therefore would expect radically different solutions. One line of argument finds that the difficulties of the modern Indian State stem from its alien provenance, the forms and procedures of which largely remain unintelligible to the common people of India; and the solution of the crisis must be sought in some more understandable, or indigenous form of political construction (See: Madan, 1989 and Nandy, 1991).

Another line of argument sees the crisis as stemming from the narrowness of participation which is reinforced by the hierarchies inherent in the western structure of political parties (See: Kothari, 1989). The Marxist analysis persistently links the crisis to the capitalist development in India, which destroys earlier structures without providing the advantages of a mature capitalism, the contradictions of which get reflected in the political conflicts evident in modern Indian society (Vanaik, 1990). According to yet other line of argument, the roots of the crisis can be seen in the arrival of a democratic society, which is making the functioning of democratic government more problematic (Kaviraj, 1991).

The power struggle between the rising social classes and the Indian State has resulted in weakening of the latter. The inability of any national party to remain decisively in power at the Centre has resulted in the Indian State coming under the control of a shifting political coalition. The vertical contradiction between the dominant segments of Indian society and the mass of the people has also

been affected by the competitive and conflict - ridden interplay of the horizontally related segments of the dominant elite in the recent decades.

In such a scenario, certain forms of mass opposition on the one hand and the regional opposition on the other have shown themselves to be capable of withstanding the pressure of the Centre and of mounting a challenge, albeit partial but earlier unknown, to the Indian State. Although the State continues to wield preponderant power as an arena of conflict between upper and lower classes, it has shown itself to be weak as an arena of competition between classes or class fractions in horizontal contradiction with each other (Satyamurthy, 1999).

The Indian State pursues a policy of dualism with regard to religion. In the case of the religions of Indian origin, particularly the majority religion (Hinduism), the State intervenes as a reformer whereas it pursues a policy of expedient retreatism in the case of minority religions. Two most outstanding examples of this are the Sati Prevention Act and the Muslim Women's Bill. An unstated assumption and a projected expectation seem to underly such a policy. The assumption seems to be that the State has the moral authority to intervene in the case of native religions and its intervention is acceptable to them. The expectation is that the native religions will identify themselves and cooperate with the State. But it is clear that both the assumption and expectation have been faulted (Oommen, 1990).

However, the performance of the Indian State after independence seems vastly superior to that in the first half of the 20th century. Operating within a democratic framework, it has outperformed most other developing countries, with the exception of China and some of the East Asian countries. Among the strengths, we can count "The institutionalisation of democracy; a federal structure with governance at several levels, an independent judiciary; a mixed economy; economic planning that funnels increasing resources to poverty alleviation, human resource development, infrastructure development and a highly effective, phased liberalisation of the economy" (Khandwalla, *op.cit.*).

In the globalisation context, the Indian State is trying to take up the responsibility of facilitating and promoting economic policies that are in consonance with the norms of global free trade, privatisation of public sector, tax reforms, environment and nuclear disarmament related agreements. Despite the accent on minimalist State, the Indian State is repositioning itself in order to adopt to the changing scenario through rightsizing bureaucracy, streamlining public sector, promoting welfare of the disadvantaged and encouraging efforts toward human rights, social justice and economic equity.

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## **11.6 CONCLUSION**

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The achievement of the Indian State operating democratically in a very poor society is almost unprecedented, as put forth by Sunil Khilnani (1997), "The past fifty years have trenchantly displayed the powers of the State and of the idea of democracy to reconstitute...caste and religion-and to force them to enter politics.... within a very short time, India has moved from being a society in which the State had for most people a distant profile and limited responsibilities, and where only a few had access to it, to one where State responsibilities have swollen and everyone can imagine exercising some influence upon it...A return to the old order of castes, or of rule by empire is inconceivable : the principle of

authority in society has been transformed” (Khilnani, *op.cit.*). The strength of Indian State lies in its overall democratic framework, civil liberties, the federal structure, the independent judiciary, some form of economic planning, graduated liberalisation, the mixed economy, and the luxuriant organisational diversity of public, private, cooperative, voluntary, associational, institutional, and other non-governmental actors, which have not only stood the test of time, but also provide continuity with the past and a sound platform for future revitalisation. The impact of globalisation on the Indian State assumes significance in the contemporary context. This Unit tried to discuss these issues.

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## 11.7 KEY CONCEPTS

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### **Consociational State**

Political scientists define a Consociational State as a State which has major internal divisions along ethnic, religious or linguistic lines, yet nonetheless manages to remain remarkably stable due to consultation between the elites of each of its major social groups  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consociational-state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consociational-state).

### **Public Interest Litigation**

It means litigation filed in a Court of Law, for the protection of ‘public interest’. It is not defined in any Statute or Act. It has been interpreted by judges to consider the intent of public at large. Prior to 1980s an aggrieved party could not knock at the doors of justice personally. The efforts of Justice P.N. Bhagwati and Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer were instrumental in this juridical revolution. As a result, any citizen, consumer group or social action forum can approach the apex court of the country seeking legal remedies for their grievances.

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## **11.9 ACTIVITY**

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1. Try to go through as many recent newspapers / magazines / journals as you can on the changing role of Indian State. Enlist at least six distinguishing features of State in India.