
UNIT 30 NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE DALITS*

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30.1 INTRODUCTION

The challenge before the leadership of national movement was to integrate the divergent interests of different social groups in India in a united movement against the colonial rule. In this Unit we will explain the initiatives taken by the Indian National Congress to take up the issues affecting the lives of Dalits in order to have their support in the movement against colonialism. Administrative, political and economic changes in the wake of the British rule in India and specifically the initiative taken by the colonial government to protect the interests of Dalits gave an impetus to the latent discontent and resentment of Dalits against the oppressive caste system. Dalit intelligentsia at the regional as well as national levels tried to mobilise people belonging to their social groups in order to assert their social and political rights. Liberation from internal oppression rather than liberation from the British rule was the desired goal of Dalit intelligentsia. Indian National Congress realising the need of addressing the sufferings of Dalits advocated for the abolition of untouchability and also believed in social equality and justice. Attempt was made by the nationalists to support the demands of Dalit leadership for democratic rights. In this Unit you will be introduced to Dalits' efforts for creating an alternative ideological tradition in opposition to Brahmanical tradition. You will learn about the initiatives taken by nationalist leadership to address the problems faced by Dalits and how ultimately Dalit leadership agreed to the Poona Pact accepting joint electorate in place of their demand for separate electorate. You will also learn about the ideas of Gandhi and Ambedkar on the issues pertaining to the liberation and empowerment of Dalits and about the reservation of Dalit intelligentsia towards national movement.

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30.2 CONTEXTUALISING CASTE IDENTITY

Dalits in India faced different forms of oppression in the name of caste system irrespective of the province they belonged. It is also true that at various points of time people raised voices against exploitation in the name of caste. One can refer here to Buddhism, Bhakti movements and other anti-caste egalitarian movements. However, since late nineteenth and early twentieth century we witness the emergence of organised movements by Dalits in different provinces of India challenging their given social identity and also claiming their rights in decision making process. The great revolt of 1857 shook the foundation of the colonial rule and the British bureaucracy was seriously engaged in devising strategy to prevent any form of discontent in the local society which may become a threat to the empire. Analysing the complexities of indigenous society the colonial authority decided to make use of internal oppression within local society in the name of caste hierarchy. Along with identification and legitimisation of caste division through official documentation the colonial government adopted specific measures for the benefit of the socially oppressed groups. This friendly gesture of the colonial government aroused aspirations among Dalits to voice their grievances and with the support of government they wanted to defy the authority of upper castes. The policy of colonial government to protect the interests of Dalits and the values of liberty, equality and justice that educated Dalits had learnt from western education gave birth to a new consciousness among Dalits. Nineteenth century socio-religious reformers cautioned about social oppression in the name of caste system but in their criticism they could not come out with an agenda of action which could win over the confidence of Dalits. Early nationalists and even their successors were preoccupied with the oppressive nature of imperialism and their prime concern was to mobilise Indian public opinion for political liberation of India without giving much space to the concerns of Dalits. The aspirations of Dalits, independent of mainstream Indian polity, found expression in the writings of Mahatma Jotiba Phule (1827-1890) who in modern India first raised voice for the liberation of Dalits. Phule is considered the first ideologue of anti-caste movement in modern India. Re-interpreting Indian history and mythology he tried to demolish the ideological foundation of Brahmanism which he considered the key of upper caste hegemony. The journey towards nation building can not be possible so long the oppression continues in the name of caste hierarchy. In his book *Gulamgiri* (1873) he described Brahmans as Aryans who came from outside and subdued the indigenous people who were Shudras and he gave a call to discard caste. Through his writings and speeches Phule tried to construct a new history with the help of symbols and local stories situating Dalits in a powerful position delinking them from the past depicted in the Dharma-shastras and itihasa-purana tradition. Given his understanding of history Phule was a natural critic of nationalism which he equated with another form of Brahmanism. He made it clear: 'There cannot be a 'nation' worth the name until and unless all the people of the land of King Bali – such as Shudras and Ati-Shudras, Bhils (tribals) and fishermen etc., become truly educated, and are able to think independently for themselves and are uniformly unified and emotionally integrated. If a tiny section of the population like the upstart Aryan Brahmins alone were to found in the 'National Congress' who will take any notice of it?' Phule was critical of the reform initiatives taken by Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj and others to rationalise Brahmanical system and strongly argued that without emancipating the oppressed the reform initiatives ensured

domination of upper castes in other forms. Phule wanted to unite the 'bahujan samaj', the Shudras and the Ati-Shudras. Nationalism was seen by him an ideology created by upper castes to downplay the internal divisions within Indian society.

The colonial rule opened up educational and economic opportunities by making provision of reservation for socially oppressed groups. A small section of the oppressed people could take advantage of the new opportunities and became conscious of the exploitation they suffered over the years. They became vocal about the disabilities imposed over them in the name of caste hierarchy and took initiatives by mobilising their fellow caste members to challenge their existing sufferings. Thus in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in different provinces we find the sudden growth in writing of caste histories and establishment of caste associations to assert for new identity as well as protection of the interests of their respective caste members. The government initiatives of bringing administrative changes by involving local people through various reform acts further encouraged the socially oppressed groups to demand for political rights which they were denied so far. Phule and Ambedkar in Maharashtra, E. V. Ramaswami Naicker and M. C. Rajah in Tamil Nadu, Narayana Guru in Kerala, Bhagyareddy Varma in Andhra, Mangu Ram in Punjab, Acchutanand in Uttar Pradesh, Panchanan Barma, Rasiklal Biswas, Jogen Mandal and others in Bengal challenged the caste-based discrimination and domination and were critics of the anti-colonial struggle by the upper caste elites without abolishing internal oppression in Indian society. The new political awakening of Dalits is reflected in the writings and activities of Dalit intelligentsia of that period. Emancipation and empowerment of Dalits became the major concern of Dalit intelligentsia which was not in the immediate agenda of mainstream political leaders whose immediate concern was political liberation from colonial rule.

30.3 NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND INTEGRATION OF DALIT ISSUES

As we have explained in the previous section that from the beginning of the twentieth century the Dalit leadership became very vocal for their rights. It is generally argued that the policies of the colonial government like the inclusion of caste status in the census, provision for welfare measures along caste lines, nomination of Dalits in local bodies, etc. encouraged the Dalit leadership to assert for social emancipation as well as empowerment. Take for example the resolution passed in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1928, 'This assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council to issue directions to Local Governments to provide special facilities for the education of the untouchables and other depressed classes, particularly by reserving seats in teachers' training classes for them and also for opening all public services for them'. In its early phase the nationalist leaders engaged themselves in taking up political and administrative issues rather than addressing social problems. There was the National Social Conference which was expected to deliberate on social issues. At individual level the Congress leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Lala Lajpat Rai were of the opinion that removal of untouchability and social reform were necessary for national regeneration. In its annual session at Calcutta in 1917 for the first time Indian National Congress passed the resolution for abolition of untouchability and appealed to the people for removing all disabilities imposed by custom upon Dalits. Emergence of Gandhi brought a significant change in

the character of national movement by bringing masses in the mainstream national movement. Gandhi was particularly concerned of the sufferings of Dalits and made the removal of untouchability an integral part for national liberation. In the Nagpur session of Indian National Congress held in 1920 it was resolved that

‘...the movement of non-co-operation can only succeed by complete co-operation amongst the people themselves, this Congress calls upon the public associations to advance Hindu-Muslim unity and the Hindu delegates of this Congress to call upon the leading Hindus to settle all disputes between Brahmins and non-Brahmins wherever they may be existing and to make a special effort to rid Hinduism of the reproach of untouchability, and respectfully urges the religious heads to help the growing desire to reform Hinduism in the matter of its treatment of the suppressed classes.’

Gandhi firmly believed that removal of untouchability was essential to attain Swaraj and he played a key role in incorporating the removal of untouchability in the resolution of the non-cooperation. Following the suspension of non-cooperation in 1922 the Congress party workers were instructed by the party working committee to encourage Dalits to send their children to national schools, to provide them same facilities as given to other citizens and also to assist in improving their social and moral condition. As president of the Belgaum session of the Congress in 1924 Gandhi said that Hindu Congressmen in particular should devote greater attention to anti-untouchability movement because the British government was exploiting Dalits for a political end. In 1924 Gandhi supported the Vaikom Satyagraha movement organised by the Kerala Congress Committee to secure the rights of untouchables for using the forbidden roads to the temple. The Congress Working Committee in its meeting at Delhi in 1929 appointed an Anti-untouchability sub-committee with Madan Mohan Malaviya as its president and Jannalal Bajaj as the secretary to ensure Dalits’ rights to enter temples, to use public wells, to provide sanitary living and to remove restrictions which Dalit children were facing in schools. During the course of civil disobedience movement the campaign for removal of untouchability continued and Gandhi said that ‘Remember that in Swaraj we would expect one drawn from the so-called lower class to preside over India’s destiny’. [Young India, 3 April 1930]. Thus the nationalist leadership was very concerned with the sufferings of Dalits and made efforts to initiate actions for securing social justice to Dalits in order to have their support in the movement against the colonial rule. In the next section we will discuss that how the nationalist leadership succeeded in persuading Dalit intelligentsia to accept joint electorate system in place of their demand for separate electorate system for the larger interest of the nation.

30.4 POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

In the 1920s, when the process was set in for electoral reforms aiming at making the government more broad based and representative, the issue of representation of the Dalits created divergent views within the local society. Among the Dalits at the national level two major identifiable groups emerged in the late 1920s, one around M.C. Rajah and the other around B.R. Ambedkar. M.C. Rajah and his associates who dominated the All India Depressed Classes Association decided not to accept proposals of the Simon Commission in the absence of separate electorates. They were of the opinion that joint electorates would return only

dummy representatives of the Dalits backed by upper caste Hindus. However, in the ensuing struggle within the Dalits to represent them in the proposed round Table Conference in London, Ambedkar was nominated by the British government to represent the Dalits. In a bid to check Ambedkar, M.C. Rajah convened an All India Depressed Classes Leaders special conference in August 1930 at Allahabad. This conference disowned the resolutions taken at the first session of the All India Depressed Classes Congress committee under the leadership of Ambedkar and declared the All India Depressed Classes as the real body. But Rajah, failing to get the British support in favour of his claim, came close to the Indian National Congress. Indian National Congress was also seriously trying to get the support of the Dalits so that the unity among Indians remained strong. Equally anxious were the Hindu Mahasabha leaders to find some way out to check the disintegration of the Hindus. In this process M.C. Rajah and B.S. Moonje, president of the Hindu Mahasabha, entered into an agreement known as the Rajah-Moonje Pact in 1932, based on the principle of reservation of seats in joint electorates. Opinions among the Dalits were divided over the Rajah-Moonje Pact. A section of the Dalits made a statement that the All India Depressed Classes Association was not representative of the Dalits in India. They expressed their support in favour of separate electorate. Ambedkar was very much opposed to the Rajah-Moonje Pact and stated that the Dalits had repudiated the Pact.

30.4.1 Communal Award

Next important development on the question of ensuring political rights to Dalits was the announcement of Communal Award by the British government. The Communal Award gave the Dalits voting right along with caste Hindus in the general constituencies and also an extra vote in special 'Depressed Classes' constituencies numbering 71 for a period of 20 years. The announcement of Communal Award was considered as clear indication of widening the rift between the Dalits and caste Hindus posing a serious challenge to Indian nationalist movement. Gandhi opposing the segregation of the Dalits into a separate electoral group wrote,

'So far as Hinduism is concerned separate electorate would simply vivisect and disrupt it. For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious....I feel that no penance that caste Hindus may do can, in any way, compensate for the calculated degradation to which they have consigned the Depressed Classes for centuries. But I know that separate electorate is neither penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under.' (CWMG, Vol. LXIX, p. 191).

Gandhi in his letter to the British government informed his decision for going to fast unto death unless the government withdrew the scheme of separate electorate for the Dalits. He further explained that he might be wrong in taking this decision but to him the scheme of separate electorate was against the interest of the Dalits. Gandhi was supportive of adequate representation of the Dalits but he was not agreeable to the proposal of separate electorate. He differed strongly on this matter with the leaders of the Dalits. The weapon of fast used by Gandhi aroused strong public opinion and public meetings were organised in different places to bring the caste Hindus and the Dalits together. Even leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha appealed to their followers to demonstrate equality in religious and social matters towards the Dalits. Appeal was also made to the Dalits not to

press for separate electorate. Gandhi confided to his close associates that the Dalits would fail to understand his decision of fasting when they were granted some privileges. Ambedkar's response to Gandhi's decision of fast was different and he said, 'I do not care for these political stunts. This threat of Mr. Gandhi to starve himself to death is not a moral fight but only a political move. I can understand a person trying to negotiate with his political opponents on equal terms but I will never be moved by those methods....If Mr. Gandhi wants to fight with his life for the interests of the Hindu community, the depressed Classes will also be forced to fight with their lives to safeguard their interests.' The British government saw in Gandhi's fast a ploy to coerce the Dalits in accepting the Congress viewpoint.

30.4.2 Poona Pact

The British government justified its action of announcing the Communal Award on the ground that Indian leaders failed to arrive at an agreement on the issue of representation of the Dalits in the Round Table Conference. In the given situation to protect the interests of the Dalits the government had announced this scheme. But Gandhi's moral weapon forced various sections of Indian leaders to work out a compromise formula between the separate electorate and joint electorate. Gandhi in principle was opposed to reservation of seats either through joint or separate electorate. But sensing the prevailing mood of the Dalits, he agreed to accept reservation of seats in joint electorates. In spite of opposition to Gandhi's approach to the issue of representation of the Dalits, Ambedkar agreed to consider Gandhi's proposal provided that the scheme guarantees better than the Communal Award. Ambedkar after meeting Gandhi who was at that time at Yeravda jail got the assurance of Gandhi that the interest of his community would be safe in the proposed scheme. Gandhi assured that he would end fast as soon as the separate electorate was replaced by joint electorate. This softened Ambedkar's attitude. After prolonged deliberations between the leaders of the two groups a formula based on the principle of joint electorate was devised. In place of 71 seats given by the Communal Award, 148 seats were reserved for the Dalits in the provincial legislatures. As regards the central legislature 18 per cent of the total seats meant for general electorate would be kept for the Dalits. It was also decided that continuance of reservation would be decided in future by mutual agreement. On 24 September 1932 the Poona Pact was signed between the leaders of the Dalits and caste Hindus and the same was sent to the British Prime Minister for acceptance. The major provisions of the Poona Pact are as follows:

'There shall be seats reserved for the Depressed Classes out of general electorates. Seats in the Provincial Legislatures shall be as follows – Madras 30; Bombay with Sind 15; Punjab 8; Bihar and Orissa 18; Central Provinces 20; Assam 7; Bengal 30; United Provinces 20 (Total-148).

Election to these seats shall be by joint electorates subject, however, to the following procedure:

All the members of the Depressed Classes, registered in the general electoral roll in a constituency, will form an electoral college which will elect a panel of four candidates belonging to the Depressed Classes for each of such reserved seats by the method of the single vote; the four persons getting the highest number of votes in such primary election shall be candidates for election by the general electorate.

Representation of the Depressed Classes in the Central Legislature shall likewise be on the principle of joint electorates and reserved seats by the method of primary election in the manner provided for in clause 2 above for their representation in Provincial Legislatures.

In the Central legislature eighteen per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India in the said legislature shall be reserved for the Depressed Classes.'

At a conference of the Hindu leaders in Bombay to ratify the Poona Pact Ambedkar said,

'I was immensely surprised that there was so much in common between Mr. Gandhi and myself....My only regret is why did not Mr. Gandhi take the attitude he took now at the Round Table Conference. If he had shown some consideration and the same attitude as he took now, I think it would not have been necessary for him to undergo the ordeal.' (*The Times of India*, 26 September 1932).

In the same conference the president made a resolution in the following words:

'This Conference resolves that henceforth amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same rights as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads, and all public institutions. These rights shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.'

'It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by caste-men upon the so-called untouchable classes including the bar in respect of admission to temples.' (*The Times of India*, 26 September 1932).

As promised Gandhi ended his fast after the signing of the pact. He found in this victory of his political and social goals. This further encouraged him to carry forward his movement for social equality. The promise of a large number of seats for the Dalits aroused the hope of strong voice of the Dalits in public life.

To Ambedkar rights of the Dalits were most important compared to political independence, whereas Gandhi was fighting a two-pronged battle, one for India's independence, the other for maintaining the cohesiveness of Hindu society. Gandhi explained the essence of the settlement in the following words:

'The settlement is but the beginning of the end. The political part of it, very important though it no doubt is, occupies but a small space in the vast field of reform that has to be tackled by caste Hindus during the coming days, namely, the complete removal of social and religious disabilities under which a large part of the Hindu population has been groaning. I should be guilty of a breach of trust if I did not warn fellow reformers and caste Hindus in general that the breaking of the fast carried with it a sure promise of resumption of it if this reform is not relentlessly pursued and achieved within a measurable period....the message of freedom shall penetrate every untouchable home and that can only happen if reformers will cover every village.' (CWMG, Vol. LI).

30.4.3 After Poona Pact

Apart from the importance ensured by the Poona Pact in representing Dalits in decision making process, it was proclaimed in the Poona Pact that one of the earliest legislations in free India would be to provide for the statutory recognition of equal rights for Dalits. In 1932 the Harijan Sevak Sangh was founded and next year it started a mouthpiece called Harijan. Removal of disabilities of Dalits through constructive programme of social, educational and material development of Dalits was the objective of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Securing the entry of Dalits in temples as equal citizens was the other major agenda of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Although Gandhi succeeded in drawing large number of people to the Harijan movement but there was also reservation within the Congress towards Harijan movement. There was also opposition to the legislation for temple entry and removal of untouchability. Seeing the opposition to the passage of anti-untouchability legislations Gandhi observed three weeks fast in 1933. Gandhi travelled various parts of country during 1933-1934 to create awareness among people for temple entry and removal of untouchability. In some places Gandhi faced bitter opposition from orthodox people. The joint electorate and the harijan movement definitely succeeded in making an impact in society in general and the massive victory of the Congress candidates from reserved constituencies in the general election of 1937 may be considered as indication of this impact.

30.5 DALITS' PERSPECTIVE ON NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Efforts made by leaders of nationalist movement succeeded in bringing a section of Dalit leadership in the fold of national movement besides the participation of Dalit masses in various popular movements against the colonial rule. But majority of Dalit intelligentsia was critical of the lack of commitment on the part of the Congress to share power with Dalits and expressed serious doubt about the commitment of upper caste leadership to bring social equality. The best example of this was Ambedkar's book he wrote in 1945, titled 'What Congress and Gandhi had done to Untouchables'. Ambedkar was so much concerned about oppression and exploitation faced by Dalits that any form of struggle without referring to the abolition of internal oppression had no importance to him. To Ambedkar, without ensuring equal rights of Dalits political freedom had no meaning. Gaining political freedom from the British was not adequate to him unless the struggle for freedom ensured the dignity of life and equal rights to all its citizens. Ambedkar said, 'the freedom which the governing class in India was struggling for is freedom that rules the servile classes in India'. He wrote:

'Words such as society, nation and country are just amorphous, if not ambiguous, terms....Nation though one word means many classes. Philosophically it may be possible to consider a nation as a unit but sociologically it cannot but be regarded as consisting of many classes and the freedom of the nation if it is to be a reality must vouchsafe the freedom of the different classes comprised in it, particularly those who are treated as the servile classes.' [BAWS, VOL.9, PP. 201-2].

'I am sure, many have felt that if there was any class which deserved to be given special political rights in order to protect itself against the tyranny of

the majority under the Swaraj Constitution it was the Depressed Classes. Here is a class which is undoubtedly not in a position to sustain itself in the struggle for existence. The religion to which they are tied, instead of providing for them an honourable place, brands them as lepers, not fit for ordinary intercourse. Economically, it is a class entirely dependent upon the high-caste-Hindus for earning its daily bread with no independent way of living open to it. Nor are all ways closed by reason of the social prejudices of the Hindus but there is a definite attempt all throughout the Hindu society to bolt every possible door so as not to allow the Depressed Classes any opportunity to rise in the scale of life. Indeed it would not be an exaggeration to say that in every village the caste-Hindus, however divided among themselves, are always in a standing conspiracy to put down in a merciless manner any attempt on the part of the Depressed Classes who form a small and scattered body of an ordinary Indian citizen.' [BAWS, vol.9, p. 311].

'We feel that nobody can remove our grievances as well as we can, and we cannot remove them unless we get political power in our own hands. No share of this political power can evidently come to us so long as the British government remains as it is. It is only in a Swaraj constitution that we stand any chance of getting the political power in our own hands, without which we cannot bring salvation to our people. [BAWS, v.2, pp.503-06].

In the high noon of India's struggle for freedom Dalit intelligentsia in a big way expressed its support to the British government on the ground that the upper caste Hindu leaders were not inclined to share power with Dalits. They felt that, without social revolution giving equality to Dalits, change in political leadership would further strengthen the hold of the upper castes over Dalits. Analysing Dalit movements in Maharashtra, Andhra and Karnataka Gail Omvedt has observed that '...the Dalit movement and the overall radical anti-caste movements were a crucial expression of the democratic revolution in India, more consistently democratic – and in the end more consistently “nationalistic” – than the elite-controlled Indian National Congress.' [Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*, p.16].

Valerian Rodrigues argued that 'irrespective of their other differences, dalit-bahujan thinkers conceive the nation as a good society where its members, considered as individuals or collectivities, respect one another, protect mutual rights and show concern and solidarity. Self-respecters, therefore, felt that as long as there is the existence of untouchability, all talk of freedom and self-rule is empty. Periyar argued that the liberation of the Shudra was contingent on, and would be complete only with the liberation of the Panchama'. [Valerian Rodrigues, *Dalit-Bahujan Discourse, Critical Quest*, Delhi, 2008, pp. 24-25]

What is important to note in this context is that strong advocacy of Dalit intelligentsia for giving primacy to their socio-economic and political rights and not to anti-colonial struggle was primarily rooted in their experiences of living in an unjust society. Their notion of nationhood was based on abolition of existing inequalities and also having equal rights in every sphere of life. To the mainstream nationalist leaders uniting Indians against the atrocities of the colonial rule and to compel the British to leave India was the major goal before the nation. It is also important to note that Dalits were not a homogenous group and there were differences at various levels within the Dalit leadership and in many popular

revolts like Tebhaga movement in Bengal Dalit masses in large numbers took part in movement against the wishes of their caste elders.

30.6 SUMMARY

Historical tradition of anti-caste ideology in the form of Bhakti, Buddhism or other religious traditions along with the changes brought in by the British rule encouraged a section of Dalits to challenge their given social identity and to assert for socio-economic and political rights. Through the creation of alternative tradition to legitimize their claim social dignity and justice Dalit leadership engaged themselves in bargaining for political power in decision making process and also support for education and employment opportunities. Leadership of the national movement, particularly Gandhi, viewed the problem of Dalits as predominantly a religious matter and in no way he wanted any division within the Hindus for the greater cause of political emancipation. Gandhi said, 'Without eradicating untouchability root and branch the honour of Hinduism cannot be saved. That can only happen when untouchables are treated on par with caste Hindus in every respect.' In spite of his concern for Dalits Gandhi could read the design of the government in creating division within Indian society by announcing the Communal Award. This forced Gandhi to announce his decision for going to fast unto death to resist the contemplated separation of Dalits. This decision of Gandhi succeeded in bringing different groups together and the outcome was the Poona Pact which ensured for the first time 148 reserved seats for Dalits out of general electorates in Provincial Legislatures. Whereas Gandhi and other mainstream nationalist leaders were concerned with uniting divergent sections of Indian society against the British, the visible section of Dalit intelligentsia strongly believed that without liberating and empowering Dalits from their existing state of sufferings any form of political freedom was not going to make them equal. The efforts made by nationalist leadership to create public awareness about the sufferings of Dalits and the initiatives taken by the Congress through anti-untouchability movement, constructive programmes and temple entry movements paved the way for taking direct action to empower Dalits. Therefore it is essential to understand the challenges before the mainstream nationalists to integrate Dalits in the national movement and also the dilemmas of Dalit leadership towards the upper castes.

30.7 EXERCISES

- 1) Why were the important Dalit leaders in favour of separate electorates?
- 2) Discuss the provisions of the Poona Pact.
- 3) Discuss the manner in which the nationalist leadership tried to integrate the Dalits within the mainstream of the national movement.